

3. Conclusion

Marriage relations discussed above among different castes and sub-castes (*jātis*) of Brahmins as mapped out very structurally, thematically and also in a tabular form in “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar” of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati provides fresh insights for academic social sciences including that of Sociology and Social and Cultural Anthropology. The fact that this text from 1926 was ignored completely by social scientists comes across as an enigma. It is written primarily in Sanskrit and Hindi with some English references as well. Apart from being more rigorous in its substance, even in its methodology “Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar” reverses the narrative of colonial caste censuses which was done only in English by colonial officials not having sufficient knowledge of Indian languages and knowledge traditions, being often inimical to anything Indian, and relying on unknown ‘native’ informants. Therefore, this work also upends to a great extent, all the research since (on the history of Brahmins and marriage relations among them in particular), which relies quite heavily, if not solely, on colonial caste censuses and colonial authors or on those who can be characterised as ‘colonized natives’ even in its post-colonial mint.

We also find that the term “Bhumihar” itself is a new terminology popularised by Sahajanand since 1920s for Brahmins who took to mostly secular professions as against the more ritualistic and sacerdotal functions (Saraswati 2003a; A. Kumar 2005). Brahmins with either Kanyakubja Brahmin or Maithil Brahmin origin who took to mostly secular professions, for the lack of a better word, but retained their marital alliances with Kanyakubja Brahmin and Maithil Brahmin, have now been collectively clubbed as a “new caste” enumerated in the colonial caste census as Bhumihar Brahmins since 1911. Therefore, to start the analysis with the colonial caste census is an epistemic violence and denies the social reality of marriage relations, for example, on which the caste-community structure is dependent. Pachchima Brahmins/Bhumihar Brahmins are illustrious Brahmins who took to mostly secular professions, due to land grants since at least the Gupta period or acquisition through military service [Sharma 1980 (1965, 1st edn.)], to support their less fortunate brethrens pursue religious and ritualistic pursuits. R.S. Sharma in his pioneering work on Indian Feudalism writes, “The grants to priests can be traced back to pre-Maurya and Maurya times. Kauṭilya recommends grants of land in new settlements according to the *brahmadeyya* tenure, which carries freedom from taxes and punishments. But the position changes in the Gupta period. Commenting on the term *brahmadeyya* in the early Pāli texts, Buddhaghōṣa, who flourished during the 5th century A.D., states that the *brahmadeyya* grant carries with it judicial administrative rights, which is corroborated by contemporary epigraphic evidence. This interpretation of the term *brahmadeyya* does not reflect the

position in the pre-Maurya period but in the time of the commentator. Thus the widespread practice of making land grants in the Gupta period paved the way for the rise of brāhmaṇa feudatories, who performed administrative functions not under the authority of the royal officers but almost independently. What was implicit in earlier grants became explicit in grants from about A.D. 1000, and was well-recognised in the administrative system of the Turks. Whatever might be the intention of the donors, the grants helped to create powerful intermediaries wielding considerable economic and political power. As the number of the land-owning brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them gradually shed their priestly functions and turned their chief attention to the management of land, in their case secular functions became more important than religious functions [Sharma 1980 (1965, 1st edn.):4-5].”

Those “social scientists” who have based their main analysis on the colonial caste censuses also do not realise that Pachchima Brahmins/Bhumihar Brahmins often became Maithil Brahmins and then reverted back to being Pachchima Brahmins to even become Maithil Brahmins once again (please see Appendix I below). This fact is very well recorded in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar. The sudden decline in numbers of Bhumihar Brahmins (in 1931 census) and the rise in the number of other Brahmins, especially in North Bihar, should be seen in this light and not as a matter of some Brahmanizing claim (Bose 1991).⁵⁸ The steep decline in the number of Babhans/Pachchima Brahmins/Bhumihar Brahmins from 1921 census to 1931 census is recorded which is attributed to how around half the Babhans correctly reported themselves to be Brahmins (estimates suggesting as high as 40%; Jha 1972:74)⁵⁹ and were counted as such with societal acceptance by other Brahmins like Maithil Brahmins and others (See Appendixes I, II and III below). A self-proclamation amounts to nothing

⁵⁸ Pradip K. Bose makes a factual error by basing his argument on the colonial caste census alone without bothering to discursively engage with any of Sahajanand’s primary writings. He makes an additional mistake by having a factually incorrect view on the Kisan Sabha not having a mass following which all the primary documents as well as the secondary writings prove (Kumar 2021) just because the bulk of its leadership was primarily drawn from Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmins. Leadership of any society is first provided by its socially elite, progressive and enlightened members who are also willing to make huge personal sacrifices, a trait displayed amply by Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins during this period and most certainly in Kisan Sabha leadership and politics. This factual mistake is accompanied by an additional factual error of claiming huge membership for some marginal sectarian organizations from this period without providing any authority, whether primary or secondary.

⁵⁹ Shashishekhar Jha’s otherwise interesting work is unable to contemplate how the distinction of Brahmins into Maithils and Pachiaras (coming from the West) in North Bihar (Mithila) is actually Maithil and Pachchimas, where Pachchimas are actually Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins. This is an error which he has repeated throughout his work. He would have understood the Brahmin society’s structure and marriage relations better if he had explored the primary writings of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati including his Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar, even when he is largely sympathetic to Sahajanand, Kisan Sabha and the first band of dedicated communist leadership drawn predominantly from Bhumihar Brahmin background.

unless there is wider social acceptance in a differentiated and hierarchized social structure based on “structural distance” (Srinivas 1969:16-17) reinforced through connubial ties bound with commensality. It also means how half of those who are counted as non-Bhumihar Brahmin-Brahmins are actually Bhumihar Brahmins/Pachchima Brahmins/Dogamia Brahmins even now as hundred years ago when Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was conducting his field-study. A more realistic and reliable picture emerges by studying their marriage relations which is exactly what Sahajanand did. Therefore, such sociological, political and other social science works require a new and fresh approach to studying Indian society, and Brahmin society from the middle-Gangetic plains in particular, which is the primary concern of this work.

In another work, *Jhootha Bhay Mithya Abhiman* (False Fear, Fallacious Arrogance), Swami Sahajanand Saraswati has criticized the fallacious arrogance of the landed and lordly Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmins (Saraswati 2003c). If at all, the *jajmani* system/prestations was developed by Brahmins in secular professions, who had maximum land ownership promoting the Hindu society by supporting their priestly brethrens and temples for practical reasons, as they had little time to perform their own ritualistic oblations leave alone performing it for others and in temples. Swami Sahajanand also brings to light how Bhumihar Brahmins perform traditional Brahmin ritualistic functions (six functions) in Prayag (Allahabad); in the famous Sun temple in Deo, Gaya “(the priest Kheda Pandey, etc. of the Sun temple in Deo, Gaya are descendants of Sonbhadariya mool Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmin Mayurbhatt (Saraswati 2003a:334; Saran & Pandey 1992:169-171)”; the Gayawal Pandas in Gaya also have Bhumihar Brahmin lineage; besides performing the traditional role of priests from times immemorial in the Hazaribagh region “(Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins from Chatra and Itkhori stations in Hazaribagh have their traditional profession as Brahmin priests of Mahuri Vaishyas, Rajputs and Kayasthas and it is recorded in genealogical records and archives (Saraswati 2003a:334)”; among others (Saraswati 2003a,b,c). Bhumihar Brahmins have been respected Brahmins in the courts of Kshatriya Rajput principalities of Rewa Raj, falling in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh today and Dumraon Raj in Bihar and the Maithil Brahmin Maharajas of Darbhanga (Saraswati 2003b:97). The Subah (principality/feudatory, an example of subinfeudation) of Pipra in the (then) Hindu Kingdom of Nepal has been held by the descendants of Pandit Gopal Mishra, who are Basmaid mool, Garga gotra Pachchima Brahmins, and are very well-respected and regarded Brahmin scholars in the court of the Kings of Nepal (Saraswati 2003b:97)⁶⁰. The leading Nepali political leader Bhadrakali Mishra and Ram Narayan Mishra belonged to this family, which had zamindari on

⁶⁰ Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins in Nepal, which is further North of Mithila (and thus further North of Ranti in Madhubani) are referred and recorded as Pachchima Brahmins by Sahajanand which contradicts the assertion of Kailash Chandra Jha mentioning the term

both sides of the border between India and Nepal, and took active part in India's independence movement as well as playing a prominent role during parliamentary monarchy in Nepal. Another member of the family became a prominent Indian independence activist and later the foreign affairs minister of India, Shyam Nandan Prasad Mishra. In the Brahmanical social system, it was a practical ordering through this efficient division of labour in secular and ritualistic pursuits. It became the two sides of support to the existing social order/system. It cannot be a question of brahminizing a Brahmin caste or any claim to Brahmin status to which it already belonged. It was more a matter of organizing their respective societies which every other Brahmin community like Kanyakubja, Jijhautiya, Maithil, Saryupareen, etc. had also organised themselves during colonial times.

Great Mithil Mimāṃsā (one of the major schools of Indian philosophy) scholar, Mahamahopadhyaya (traditional title of a great classical scholar) Pandit Chitradhar Mishra opined how Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins are coming from different Brahmin families (like Maithil Brahmin or Kanyakubja Brahmin and others) and not from one single group who became rich and landed at different points of time (Saraswati 2003a:298) and there was no need to enlist them separately from other Brahmins. The great Sanskritist, scholar and academic Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ramavatar Sharma in his work *Priyadarshi Prashastiyān*, writes, "Babhan is just the pronounciatory Apabhraṃśa of the Brāhmaṇa word. This word (Babhan) is also found in the Ashokan inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE. Reference to this word is also found in the inscriptions of Satavahana kingdom from the 1st and 2nd century CE. For example: *Eko Babhanoham*. Bhasa (3rd century CE): *Ujjayiniya Babhano*. Prithviraj Raso – *Babhan Hoi Pradhan Sada Rakhbai Nishchinto*. Vidyapati- *Tesar Bairi Bhela Narad Babhan, Jaun Ghar Ayat Narad Babhna*. Kabir – *Tu Babhan Main Kashi ka Jolha*. Bhushan – *Aur Babhanan Dekhi Kahat Sudama Sudhi*. Nanddas – *Babhan ko Dhan kuval Bhiksha*. Surdas – *Kallar Babhan Karan Kasai*. Tulasidas – *Gyan Marsi Guru Babhangan*. (*Priyadarshi Prashastiyān* 1916: 6, 14, 17, 38; cf. Chaudhary 1990: 246-247)."⁶¹ In fact, according to Pandit Raghav Sharan Sharma, the famous mystical poet from 16th century and the author

Dakhinaha Brahmins, and not Pachchima Brahmins which is how Sahajanand has recorded about Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmins throughout the Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar text.

- ⁶¹ Emperor Ashoka, the Great, 3rd Century BCE, was a Mauryan Emperor and left extant inscriptions across the Indian sub-continent (Nikam 1959; Tieken 2023); Satavahana Kingdom, 1st to 3rd century CE (Sharma 2006); Bhasa, Sanskrit poet and dramatist; Prithviraj Raso is an epic written in Brajabbasha from the 12th century CE attributed to Chand Bardai; Vidyapati, the most famous of poets from Mithila, whose works started the new language of Maithili much like Dante for Italian and Chaucer for English; Kabir, disciple of Swami Ramanand, a devotional and mystical poet from 15th century who is quoted and sung popularly even today; Nanddas, a mystical poet from 16th century; Surdas is a famous devotional poet from 16th century; Tulasidas, from 16th century, is one of the greatest poets in world literature most famous for his work *Ramacharitmanas* which gave a new rendering to Ramayana in

of *Ramacharitmanas*, Goswami Tulasidas is either a Saryupareen Brahmin (according to Shyam Sundar Das) or a Bhumihar Brahmin (according to Kuldeep Narayan Jhadap), which is extremely likely, because after all, Saryupareen Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins have extensive marital relations with each other (Sharma2023: 271).

Given all the historical records, genealogical records, scriptural authority and social practice of marriage relations of Bhumihar Brahmins with Kanyakubja Brahmins, Jijhoutia Brahmins and Saryupareen Brahmins in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and among Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins in North Bihar attests to the falsity of colonial caste census with regard to just one caste or ethnic community. A separate enlistment of Bhumihar Brahmins in the colonial census report was itself a species of the colonial census and not social fact or lived social reality of Indian social system.⁶² It is just one instance highlighting how the whole enterprise of colonial caste censuses is discreditable and this colonial enterprise of the structuring and ordering of Indian social system is flawed. Much of the sociological literature since these censuses take the censuses as the defining epistemology of Indian social system of caste committing an epistemic violence which post-colonial thinkers rightfully highlight. The very discipline of sociology carries the colonial methods and the same locations of knowledge production offering panegyrics and justifications for some of the most revanchist “sociologists” out to “study” the rest of the colonised world of Asia, Africa and South America (Steinmetz 2023). Often times, these “western” institutions carry on in the same vein as if the people of the rest of the world are still “subjects” of their study (Steinmetz 2023).⁶³ Unless, one is trained in a western institution or its imitation in the rest of the world, is well connected with western academia, is English educated and makes scientific production in that language published in western journals and “falls in line” with the European/Western line of thinking, or is subservient and servile to the line of thinking of those of specific European/Western institutions and departments, he is deprived of the platform and centres which are “centres” of knowledge production and the recognition and prestige which such association, platform, connection, publication and presence which brings with it. The

the commonly spoken language of the time, Awadhi, and his work is sung and revered across North India.

⁶² Rajendralal Mitra, an erudite Sanskrit scholar and polymath from an illustrious background, the first Indian president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the 19th century, employing Hindu ideas of social classification put Babhan and Brahmin together, which indeed they are, linguistically synonymous and sociologically equal, in his recommendation to the then Census Commissioner of Bengal (Cohn 1987:245).

⁶³ The study of institutional biases and prejudices of social and cultural anthropology is still very far away from critical enquiry and lacks a comprehensive “auto-critical work” like that of Steinmetz for French sociology, for example. It generally falls into “post-colonial” critical thinking again inspired by the western trinity of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault and uniformly negative predisposition of Edward Said.

most reputed journals and publications are in the west and have their own control mechanisms to ensure adherence and compliance and can often pass off their deep-seated institutional prejudices as matters of procedure and “quality control”. It is a system in and of itself, an autopoietic system which because of its opaqueness to facts and the changed environment would lead to system destruction (Teubner 1993). In India, where there is a clear divide between well-funded and well-connected central and private institutions which have English as their medium of instruction and state universities and colleges in small towns and cities where teaching is done in local languages, in all fields of knowledge including sociology, there is already a huge divide in the possibilities it can offer at every stage of life including jobs, scholarships, publications and so on (Jha 2005). But the curriculum and prescribed textbooks adopted by even state universities and colleges are by European/Western writers leading to a proliferation of poor quality translations and cheap imitative works in local languages (Jha 2005). The curriculum and prescribed textbooks create an anomaly for those studying academic sociology as cheap, imitative, poor translations of those European and American authors are taught, since their works are the academically prescribed works, rather than teaching and referring to a rich and extensive availability of original works written in local Indian languages and original Sanskrit works, which can be taught along with translations and commentary in any of the many Indian languages to be included as prescribed textbooks in curriculums of academic sociology teaching in Indian universities and colleges (Jha 2005). It can then be supplemented by original works from the western world which would then add to knowledge and make the Indian intelligentsia, both teachers and students contribute originally and substantially to sociological knowledge and knowledge production. Otherwise, it would create a stock of Indian sociologists unconnected to their own society – colonialism *ad nauseum* and *ad infinitum*.⁶⁴

One possible reason for separate enlistment of Bhumihar Brahmins from their other fellow Brahmins is because they were the main landed proprietors in addition to the Rajputs from Eastern Uttar Pradesh up until some districts of Bengal as well, and played a significant role in leading multiple revolts against the British colonial rule since the second-half of eighteenth-century (Bayly 1983; Yang 1989, 1999; Alavi 2002; Ansari 2019). They had a huge following among Brahmins and Bayly records how, if required, Kashi Naresh in Benares could easily muster troops of more than 100,000 at his beckoning to wage a guerrilla warfare apart from related kings from Hathwa and Bettiah provid-

⁶⁴ Some of the best known sociologists of India like G.S. Ghurye, Irawati Karve, M.N. Srinivas, T.N. Madan, Andre Béteille and many others had excellent training and knowledge of their “local” mother tongues, besides many of them had a sound knowledge of Sanskrit. No wonder they created a trail blaze of original works of sociology when their sound knowledge basis was coupled with field-work.

ing the support of another 200,000 close-knit community members (Bayly 1983:17-18). The Mughal State had also not tampered with the social order and pre-eminence of the landed gentry belonging to Bhumihaar Brahmins, Maithil Brahmins and Rajputs to keep the imperial order intact (Bayly 1983; Yang 1989, 1999; Alavi 2002; Hasan 2005; Ansari 2019). As early as 1730, the Brahmin Maharaja Tribhuwan Singh of Tikari along with the Ujjainiya Rajput rulers in Shahabad had asserted their independence from Mughal suzerainty (Alam 2025: 178). The Nawab of Awadh also never interfered with the functioning of these regional satraps (Bayly 1983). Professor Muzaffar Alam attests to this, “Conflicts and compromises with the zamindars were an integral part of the history of the Mughals in India. The zamindars were hereditarily in control of land and its wealth in the countryside. They were also the local political and administrative elites. No power from outside could have ventured to sustain a claim over the surplus produce without their support, following either an all-out war against them or often a series of diplomatic manoeuvres and bargains (Alam 2025:182).”

In order to break the solidarity and continue their divide-and-rule policy inter-se Brahmins and between Brahmins and Rajputs; as the leading leaders of the Sanyasi rebellion; the protracted war of Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi of Huseypur (Jha 1982; Yang 1989; Pandey & Upadhyay 2000; Dixit 2007; Pandey 2008: 23-32; Mishra 2008:88-100; Sinha 2011; Aounshuman 2022; Sinha 2025); rebellion of Raja Chait Singh of Benares (Bayly 1983:27,103,319; Aounshuman 2022); Babu Jagat Singh’s fight against the British (Qureshi & Pathak 2024); the restive kingdom of Tekari under Maharaja Mitrajit Singh (Diwakar 1958:640; Chaudhary 1980); or the revolt of 1857 led by Kunwar Singh and his brother Amar Singh who were Rajput rulers but had immense support from Bhumihaar Brahmin feudatories and they fought together valiantly against the British (Datta 1957b; Downs 2002); was enough reason for the British to develop policies inducing subservience among the ruling classes of the Indian elite apart from insulting them for having rebelled against the colonial regime.

The Babhan/Ayachak/Bhumihaar Brahmin rulers of Huseypur State, in the modern-day Saran District, but also spread into the adjoining districts of Uttar Pradesh was a family closely related to the ruling families of Hathwa Raj in Bihar and Tamkuhi Raj⁶⁵ and Anapur Estate in the adjoining regions of Uttar Pradesh controlling vast territory and having immense following and support of common people. Huseypur/Hathwa Raj’s history is traced back to 6th century BCE in traditional accounts making it one of the oldest ruling families in the world (Jha 1980:54). And the last ruler of Huseypur branch Raja Fateh

⁶⁵ Tamkuhi Raj has also emerged from the same family of Maharaja of Huseypur, Fateh Bahadur Shahi, much like the Maharaja of Hathwa. Some stories based on facts, oral history, of this principality has been recorded by an emerging Bhojpuri-Hindi poet Sanjeev Kumar Tyagi (Tyagi 2021).

Bahadur Shahi led a war against the Company Raj (English East India Company), soon after it got the diwani rights of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa after the Battle of Buxar (1764)⁶⁶, and he continued fighting a guerrilla war for more than thirty years (1765-1795), without ever being caught or having surrendered and in the late 1790s he took to asceticism and disappeared (Jha 1982; Yang 1989; Pandey & Upadhyay 2000; Mishra 2008:88-100; Sinha 2011; Aounshuman 2022; Sinha 2025). He even executed his cousin heading the Hathwa Raj then for having sided with the British (Jha 1982; Aounshuman 2022). The British were oppressive in their rent-exactions and imposing war indemnities from local rulers and ruling families. Not just the then nominal Mughal suzerain in the 1760s but the Mughal authority even at its peak did not suppress the local ruling families to avoid revolt and continuous warfare. It meant relatively better autonomy for local rulers but also relatively better conditions of peasants and lesser proportion of landless agricultural labourers. It was only with the establishment of Permanent Settlement of land tenure in 1793, that the most oppressive *zamindari* (landlord) system was structured and implemented by the British where they did not just directly exploit the Indian masses through unfair trade, destruction of local cottage industries, treating India like a captive market but also set up a small class of Indians to squeeze as much resources from the hinterland as possible (Jha 1980; Das 1982; Guha 1999, 2016; Kumar 2021).

The period of resistance by Fateh Bahadur Shahi also corresponds to the Sanyasi Rebellion which continued intermittently for a century from the 1770s to the 1870s and whose leadership and following was provided by military Brahmins though support and following was widespread coming from Rajputs, Banias and even from Muslims (Bhattacharya 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Burdhan 2018:94-101; Aounshuman 2022). The leadership and following also came from the dashnami order of sanyasis, the ten-fold order of sanyasis among whom the dandi sanyasis holding the ritual staff are the highest, the order to which Sahajanand belonged, and those who carry the title of Saraswati and are drawn only from among Brahmins, and they waged a guerrilla war against the British and made control and governance difficult for the colonial regime (Pinch 2006; Bhattacharya 2007, 2012a, 2012b). The widespread support, including from Muslim fakirs, which these sanyasis (ascetics) received was also because of the high social esteem of an ascetic and certainly that of a Brahmin ascetic in a military role of revolt against the British. It is also noticeable how the Bhumi-

⁶⁶ "The status of this family as *raja* was recognized by the Mughal emperors also. After the fall of the Mughal Empire, at the time of the grant of Diwani in 1765, Fateh Sahi held the raj. He refused to acknowledge the sovereign or quasi-sovereign rights of the Company. When towards the end of 1767, the Revenue Collector of Sarkar Saran demanded rent on behalf of the Company, Fateh Sahi not only refused to pay it but also drove out the Company's troops who were sent against him (Jha 1980)."

har Brahmin *zamindaris* in Bengal like Lalgola (in Murshidabad, bordering Bangladesh), Natore (now falls in Bangladesh), etc., were from the Bhojpuri regions of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and were directly related to Maharaja Fateh Bahadur Shahi's family and to Benares (Kashi Raj) (Sinha 2023). Lalgola Raj's Kali temple was the supreme deity for the Sanyasi rebellion in 1772-1773 (Sinha 2023). Most of the monks visiting Lalgola Raj and its Kali temple were from the Bhojpuri speaking regions of middle-Gangetic plane who spearheaded the Sanyasi Rebellion (Sinha 2023). There are Bhojpuri speaking villages in Lalgola and adjoining regions of Bengal (Sinha 2023). The famous writer and the father of modern Bangla novel-writing, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya was inspired to write the famous novel *Anand Math* during his stay with Maharaja Jogendra Narayan Rai of Lalgola Raj and hearing about the history of Sanyasi Rebellion and the famous Kali temple located there and the hymn *Bande Mataram* was inspired by the prayer invoked to the goddess in Lalgola Raj Kali Bari (Sinha 2023). Here the Goddess Kali's depiction "represented as bound in chains in a grim ambience, representing the difficult times of British rule; while Jagaddhatri, protector of the world, glowing in bliss, reflected the aspirations of the awakened nation (Sinha 2023)." The history of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's stay in Lalgola is also worth noticing, "In the 1870s, Bankim came in contact with the Lalgola zamindars while serving as magistrate at Berhampore, says Bhakat. According to him, one December morning, as he crossed Barrack Square on his way to work in a palanquin, British army officer Lt Col Duffin stopped him and insisted he change his route — they were playing a game of cricket. When Bankim refused, Duffin assaulted him. Enraged, Bankim filed a case against him; the incident was reported in the press. The then zamindar of Lalgola, Jogendra Narain Rai, appeared as witness in his support and ultimately the British officer had to apologise in open court. [...] Sensing the gravity of the situation, Bankim went on long leave, and the Lalgola zamindar took him to his residence for protection. During his stay there, Bankim was so inspired by the ambience of the place that he wove it into his novel (Sinha 2023)." If we go by the historian Kishan Chand Bhakat of Lalgola in Bengal's Murshidabad district (Sinha 2023), it is quite likely that Lalgola Raj's adjoining zamindars of the Nimtita Raj were also Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmins who were great patrons of art and music, and based on the life of one of the family members and a declining zamindari, Tarashankar Bandopadhyaya wrote a short story "Jalshaghar (The Music Room)" which was immortalised by Satyajit Ray in his film by the same name (Bhura 2018). The story is of a declining Brahmin *zamindar*, proud of his bearings, Upendra Narayan Chaudhuri (Bishwambhar Roy in the film) not budging an inch, for example, to not borrow money from the local money-lender Mahim Ganguly for the sacred-thread ceremony of his only child, or to generally look down upon the upstart and boorish local moneylender and a general disdain at the changing times and then its tragic end

are quite iconic in the story and its beautiful sardonic representation in the film (Bhura 2018).

Babu Jagat Singh, belonging to the Bhumihar Brahmin Kashi Raj family led a revolt against the British in 1799, and he was to be exiled to St. Helena, before Napoleon was to be exiled there, but he jumped into the Ganges and drowned himself rather than face indignity as a British prisoner (Qureshi & Pathak 2024). It is also interesting to note that as a learned Brahmin aristocrat, new facts and archival records have emerged to prove that it was Babu Jagat Singh who had discovered the Sarnath stupa which is wrongfully attributed to Alexander Cunningham in a typical colonial historiography (Qureshi & Pathak 2024). Maharaja Jugal Kishore Singh of Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmin Bettiah Raj also refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of English East India Company in 1765 and he refused to pay any revenue to the British (Ansari 2019:232). The company forces invaded Bettiah and the Maharaja fled to Bundelkhand for safety, but still the British were unable to raise any revenue and had to finally relent and request Maharaja Jugal Kishore Singh to take back the rein of his kingdom and give revenue to the British on terms favourable to Bettiah Raj and to its agnatic lines leading to the establishment of Babhan/Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmin Shivhar Raj in Muzaffarpur district and Babhan/Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmin Madhuban Raj in Champaran district (Ansari 2019:232). All this shows the immense opposition the British received from small to big Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmin principalities which quite likely shaped their colonial attitude and disdain for them. Most of the Bengal army sepoys were these “military” Brahmins and Rajputs from the Bhojpuri speaking region who revolted against the British led by Mangal Pandey in 1857, leading the British to disband the Bengal Army, which was never to be reinstated, besides there are many regiments named after different caste-communities but there was never a Brahmin regiment of the British Indian Army. As India’s intellectual class which played a leading role against Company/British Rule, a psychological warfare was induced on the Brahmins by the British with their depiction as an evil class of priests besides spreading the gibberish of depicting the entire Hindu population as “effeminate, subservient race” which required the “masculine, master English race” to “guide and rule them” (Metcalf 1995; Ganguly 2018). Part of the psychological warfare was to divide the different group of Brahmins and pit one against the other with few loaves of space in the lower rungs of British officialdom. The colonial census started soon after the revolt of 1857, and both in the decennial census as well as the district censuses, the British ethnographers and census officials kept changing the structure, order and the number of caste-communities in their census enumerations. Much as the British administration gave titles of Rajas, Maharajas, princely state status with different number of gun salutes, Rai Bahadur, Khan Bahadur; the whole colonial census exercise with shifting vertical order of communities without any structure was a farce to begin with.

It must be added here how the revolutionary and leadership tradition of revolt led by Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins against exploitative British colonials continued well into the twentieth century; with the revolts against the colonial planters in Champaran in 1914 (Pipra) and 1916 (Tirkaulia) were organised even before Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha (Brown 1974:55); leading role played in the revolutionary organizations Hindustan Republican Army (HRA) and Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) by the likes of Yogendra Shukla⁶⁷, Basawon Singh⁶⁸, Baikunth Shukla⁶⁹, Suniti Devi⁷⁰, Kishori

⁶⁷ Yogendra/Jogendra Shukla/Shukul alias Sohan Singh or Bhai or Rathorji (1896-1960) – born in village Jalalpur, Lalganj police station of Muzaffarpur district, now Vaishali; read upto matric in village primary school, Lalganj middle school, and Greer Bhumihar Brahman College, Muzaffarpur; came under the influence of Acharya J.B. Kripalani with whom he spent many years in the Punjab and United Province (now Uttar Pradesh) and smuggled arms; tried to escape to America by getting a porter's job in Calcutta in a ship but failed in his efforts; came in contact with Chandrashekhar Azad and other revolutionaries in Benares; arrested in Faizabad in the middle of 1923, lodged in Benares Jail where one day he caused consternation by entering into the water tank of the jail, released after a fortnight; became a member of the Central Committee of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) after its formation, 1928; convicted in Tirhut Conspiracy Case and transferred to Cellular Jail, Andamans in December, 1932; joined the Congress after his release in 1938 and elected Vice Chairman, Muzaffarpur District Congress Committee, 1938; later joined the Congress Socialist Party; arrested in 1940; became a member of the Central Committee of the All India Kisan Sabha; scaled the walls of Hazaribagh Central Jail in 1942 and along with Suraj Narayan Singh helped four others including Pandit Ramnandan Mishra and Jayaprakash Narayan escape; arrested in Muzaffarpur, December 7, 1942; lodged in Buxar jail, released April, 1948; nominated as a member of the Bihar Legislative Council, 1958 on behalf of the Praja Socialist Party and continued there till 1960 when he died as a blind and sick man in a government hospital after suffering years of torture during British Rule.

⁶⁸ Basawon/Basawan/Basavan Singh/Sinha (1909-1989) – alias Ram Basawan Singh alias Lambad, a name among revolutionary circles given by Yogendra Shukla for being very tall; one of the prominent socialist leaders in the country; took part in the Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22; joined Dacca Anushilan Samiti, 1922; joined Hindustan Republican Army, 1925 and then was the founding member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), 1928; participated in revolutionary activities and imprisoned several times; was a prominent member of Jogendra Shukul's revolutionary organization and worked closely with Barindra Ghosh and Bhupendranath Datta; absconded in the Tirhut Conspiracy Case, arrested in Patna, August 6, 1930, along with Keshab Chandra Chakravarty, a close friend and notorious Bengal revolutionary; escaped from Bankipore Jail, August 9, 1930; rearrested in Calcutta on September 25, 1930; accused in Tirhut Conspiracy Case and sentenced for six-and-a-half years in prison only to be released in 1936; had started a fast-unto-death against cross-bar fetters which continued for a record 57-days and the British Indian government was forced to accept his demand; joined Congress Socialist Party, 1936; organised labour and peasant movements; formed the Rohtas Industries Mazdoor Sangh at Dehri-on-Sone in 1938 and nearly 500 trade unions over the course of his life and spreading across Assam, Bengal, Bihar (including today's Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including today's Chattisgarh), Odisha and Uttar Pradesh; set up the Tata Collieries Labour Union along with Subhas Chandra Bose, became its President after Bose left the country in 1941; participated in the Quit India Movement, 1942; arrested 1943, released 1946; associated with the All India Railway Men's Federation, its Vice President, 1946; in independent India was member, Bihar Legislative Assembly, 1952-57, 1957-62 and 1977-79, and Bihar Legislative Council, 1962-68 from the Congress Socialist Party (never changed his party but the party changed names over the

Prasanna Singh⁷¹ and others; and the most restive regions of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh including Tirhut, Begusarai, Patna, Monghyr, Ghazipur, Deoria, Azamgarh and adjoining regions which *were* and *are* preponderantly Bhumi-har Brahmin villages and regions, with overwhelming social support of all communities, led the Quit India Movement of 1942, and where the British cracked-down most heavily with its colonial might by burning down entire village after village in these districts displaying their medieval brutality and purportedly halcyoned ‘rule of law’ (Henningham 1983:130-179; Niyogi 2010).

The Trikarma/Ayachak/Pachchima/Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmins did not just define and structure the Hindu Brahmanical order in the fertile plains of the middle-Gangetic North India, often as carriers of that knowledge and tradition, and indeed was always its benefactor, supporter and sustainer, across time and place. It was true a hundred years ago as much as it is true now. If the land they own today (39%) is more than the combined ownership of the land owned by the rest of the upper castes, inclusive of the rest of the Brahmins (16%) and Rajputs (19%) combined; they were of course at the apex of Hindu social order to support and sustain its culture a hundred years ago. Much as

years); Cabinet Minister, Government of Bihar, 1967 and 1979; absconded and headed the *Jan Sangharsh Samiti* (People’s Resistance Council) against internal emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi’s government during 1975-77.

⁶⁹ Baikunth Shukla/Shukul (1910-1934) – School teacher turned revolutionary and relative of Yogendra Shukla; joined HSRA to avenge the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru by killing Phanindranath Ghosh whose testimony led to their hanging as well as the arrest and imprisonment of most of the revolutionaries across the country; he alongwith Chandrama Singh killed Phanindranath Ghosh with a *Khukri* in 1932; later he was caught, tried and hanged on 14th May, 1934; as a final and lasting act of colonial brutality even his dead body was not given to his family members to perform the last rites (Sinha 2011a).

⁷⁰ Suniti Devi was labelled „Jhansi ki Rani“ among revolutionary circles; she was a member of HSRA and did not use to cover her head and used to wear kurta-pyjama; she was a sharp-shooter and excellent horse-rider; as a traditional Brahmin woman in a rural-traditional Bihar after marriage with freedom-movement leader Kishori Prasanna Singh she did not remain confined to the household but joined India’s struggle for independence alongwith her husband; died prematurely in the 1930s.

⁷¹ Kishori Prasanna Singh (1903-1984) – Joined the freedom struggle from 1920 centering around Hajipur Gandhi Ashram where he came in contact with other revolutionaries like Akshayvat Rai, Basawon Singh, Ramdeni Sharma, Vasudev Khalifa and others; after Gaya Congress Session of 1922 came in contact with Subhas Chandra Bose and left for Calcutta; he used to help edit the journal Forward Bloc; was a main pillar of Congress Seva Dal in Bihar and took part in Madras (1927), Calcutta (1928) and Lahore (1929) sessions of the Congress; jailed anumber of times; was married to revolutionary Suniti Devi; spearheaded the salt satyagraha of 1930 at Gandhi Ashram, Hajipur during the Civil Disobedience Movement; joined Congress Socialist Party after its formation in 1934; took part in peasant movements spearheaded by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati; active in labour/trade union movements; joined the Communist Party of India for ideological reasons in 1940s; after independence became member of Bihar Legislative Assembly from Hajipur Constituency in 1967; died in 1984; his autobiographical reminiscences in Hindi *Raah ki Khoj Mein* (“In Search of the Pathway”) [Singh 2003], as part of the oral history account of interviews conducted by Hari Dev Sharma at Teen Murti was published posthumously in 2004.

agriculture is depressed and neglected by the state today, a hundred years or more ago, it was the primary source of economic and indeed social prestige and pre-eminence. And Ayachak Brahmins were in a position to support the Hindu culture and social order including supporting their less fortunate and poor Brahmin brethren; and fighting shoulder to shoulder alongwith Rajputs and other members of society against the British.

In this light, it is also rather surprising, how without providing any reference, either literary⁷² or epigraphic, some Maithil Brahmin historians like Upendra Thakur as a form of “insinuation” wrote that those Brahmins who became Buddhists in the Magadha region and then later came back to the “mother” faith were called Babhans or later Bhumihaar Brahmins and constituted a separate class of Brahmins [Thakur 1964:10; Thakur 1988(1956)]. Thakur sums up the entire history and contribution of Pachchima Brahmins or Babhans or what came to be known as Bhumihaar Brahmins in just one paragraph. This is discredited by Professor Ram Sharan Sharma (Kumar 2005), besides Bhumihaar Brahmin as a coined terminology is of a recent vintage, whereas *Babhan* is a Pali-Apabrahmsha⁷³ terminology for the word Brahmin/Brāhmān and is a very ancient usage to refer to *all* Brahmins. This historically inaccurate version is then quoted by everyone else since then as a textual authority, which actually did not have any scientific basis or contextualization with any scriptural, epigraphical, land records, social practice, marriage relations, etc. Upendra Thakur also fails to refer to Sahajanand and his work Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar.

As a matter of record, it is in the Mithila region where the mother goddess is worshipped in the form of Tara, which is actually an import from Tantric Buddhism, suggesting how the Brahmins of Mithila could have reverted back to Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma) from Buddhism and not the Babhans of Magadha (Thakur 1964: 126-142; Shrivastava 1982: 540-562). It is actually in Magadha where Buddha and Buddhism received maximum opposition from Brahmins, who went on to form Brahmin kingdoms starting with the Śuṅgas led by Pushyamitra Śuṅga, but a series of Brahmin kingdoms like the Kaṇvas, Sātavāhanas, Vākātakas, Kadambas, and so on, centering around the middle-Gangetic plane, where Ayachak Brahmins like Babhans are still numerous and have maximum landholdings since the late ancient, early medieval period,

⁷² Any literary source, in any case, has to be assessed for its antiquity and originality, rather than a modern or early-modern text like different *jati-tikas* (individual caste histories) claiming antiquity and in such name and style trying unsuccessfully to denigrate some fellow Brahmin communities with “spurious” and invented mythology, specially for the Ayachak Brahmins like Chitpavan Brahmins and Bhumihaar Brahmins, for example.

⁷³ Pali is the language spoken during the times of Buddha, circa 6th century BCE. Apabrahmsha is a generic term for the spoken languages of late ancient early-medieval period (6th century CE to 13th century CE) and their different branches and sub-branches many of which are full-fledged languages with a rich history and literature today.

medieval, early modern, modern, and up until today (Upadhyay 1979: 203).⁷⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising how *Śuṅguniā* and *Kutilā* (from Kautilya, the author of Arthashastra) *mool* Brahmins are found only among Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins, living in the southern banks of Ganges, which would fall under ancient Magadha (Raghav S. Sharma, 2015).

To give the entire history of feudalism and sub-infeudation from the ancient to modern times; sociologically and substantially constituted by the Brahmins in the middle Gangetic plains, including modern eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal; is beyond the scope of this work, but one can certainly provide some illustrative examples. Syed Nurul Hasan records how land tenure remained largely intact at the local level from ancient to medieval times, which would have been the case both to maintain control and peace and to avoid any unrest or revolt (Hasan 2000; Alam 2002; Hasan 2005; Ansari 2019; Alam 2025). Irrespective of the sociological or communal identity of the central authority-ruler-sovereign, since ancient times they would make use of Brahmins as traditional agricultural acientists coupled with being feudatories for newer land settlements through cutting of forests or using better agricultural techniques in the existing settlements throughout the Indian sub-continent to raise revenue and exercise better control of local societies to avoid any kind of rebellion because of the social esteem of Brahmins (Sharma 1980, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2006a; Jha 2023). The practice continued in Mughal and even British times when Brahmin landlords and feudatories would expand new lands for cultivation by cutting forests, bringing fallow and marshy lands under cultivation and expand new settlements, which is commonly referred to as settling of *raiya*ts including tenants and workers.

Some Brahmins like Chandar Bhan Brahman did occupy high position in Mughal bureaucracy and achieved wide fame in Persian scholarship (Kinra 2015). The neat distinction and animosity amongst Hindus and Muslims is also upended when we come across the instance of Hussaini Brahmins, who had fought on the side of Imam Hussain and much like the Shia Muslims, mourn his demise during Muharram (Ahmad 2008). They constitute a small section of Brahmins of Mohyal Saraswat Brahmin group of North-West India, a section of which had migrated and settled in Bihar and constitute a part of Bhumihar Brahmins (Ahmad 2008), among whom belonged Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh from the illustrious Dutt clan of Mohyal Brahmins long since settled in Bihar and also the longest serving Minister in the entire history of British Indian Empire since diarchy was established (1923-1936; Kumar 2004). These

⁷⁴ Govind Prasad Upadhyay's is a good introductory work on the history of Brahmins in Ancient India, despite his emphasis and preference on the ritualistic and sacerdotal functions of Brahmins, rather than on their secular functions and advancement in knowledge, science and philosophy. On the overall success of Brahmins socially, culturally and politically, the work by Johannes Bronkhorst (Bronkhorst 2024) is instructive.

Ayachak Brahmin feudatories proclaimed practical independence when central Mughal authority declined in the eighteenth century in the vast and immensely fertile area spread out from eastern United Provinces through Bihar into Bengal (Bayly 1983; Alam 2002: 84-112; Bayly 2002: 165-198; Cohn 2002: 225-248; Rizvi 2025). A contemporary historian of eighteenth century, Ghulam Husain Khan in his work *Siyaru'l-muta'akhkhirin* (*The History of Latter Days India in the Eighteenth Century*) written in Persian records about the Ayachak/Babhan/Bhumihar Brahmin rulers like Raja Sundar Singh Brahman of Hathwa, and about the Brahman Rajas of Banaras, Tekari and Maksudpur, for example (Khan, Thackston 2023). These rulers/feudatories freed themselves from Mughal suzerainty and did not acknowledge company rule because after all the legality of Diwani to the British is disputed, besides, how could a company exercise sovereign rights over states/feudatories which often times predated the Mughals.

“Agraharams” were rent-free land (*bhumi*) grants to Brahmins and temples given since the later-Vedic age, “As in the case of pre-feudal Europe, most of the grants during the Epic period were in favour of the priestly class. *Yāgnavalkya* lays down in this connection what may be called the official procedure relating to the issue of royal charters for the donation of lands to the Brāhmaṇas. Such endowments, evidently were not only revenue- free and perpetual, but also carried with them the right of alienation. In the chapters relating to the settlement of the new and old tracts the Arthaśāstra enjoins the king to grant lands exempted from taxes and fines (*adanḍkarāni*) to the following classes of persons: the sacrificing priest (*ritvik*) the preceptor, the domestic chaplain (*purohita*) and those learned in the Vēdas. Kautilya even while inculcating the methods of raising the revenue during emergencies, expressly enjoins the immunity of the Brāhmaṇas learned in the Vēdas (*srottriya*) (Husaini 1959:138-139).” Besides, Buddhist texts also attest to land-grants to Brahmins, “The Pāli canonical work *Digha Nakāya*, which represents Buddhist traditions and which was written after the Buddha, reports at the beginning of the third *sutta* that the Brāhmaṇa Pauskarasadi was endowed with the village of Ukkatta by Pasenadi, king of Kōsala. Similarly, at the beginning of the fifth *sutta* we read that the Brāhmaṇa Kutadanta was endowed by king Bimbisāra of Magadha with the village of Khānumata. The twelfth *sutta* begins with the mention of Salavatika, a village that had been given by the Kōsalan king to a Brāhmaṇa, Lohichcha. The tradition of such royal gifts of villages goes back to the middle of the first millennium before Christ (Husaini 1959:139).” But land began to be given on a large scale since the Gupta Period⁷⁵, perhaps also because of making new

⁷⁵ “During the Gupta period we may mention the Gaya Copper-plate of Samudragupta, the Nālanda plate of the same ruler, the Bhitari stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta, the Khoh copper-plate inscription of Sarvanātha, the Ārang copper-plate of Mahā-Jayarāja, the Rāyapur Copper-plate of Mahā-Sudevaraja, the Siwani copper-plate of Pravarasena II, the Majhgawām

settlements or organising older ones, leading to feudalism and sub-infeudation as a complex and stable socio-economic structure of rural society and the relationship of central power whether Gupta, or Mughal or later the British with the rural village society was mediated through this feudal structure – and the control of “agrahar bhumi” by Brahmins could be one reason for popularising land-owning Ayachak/Trikarma Brahmins as Bhumihar Brahmins since the late-nineteenth century (Sharma & Jha 1974; Ram S. Sharma 1980; Coulborn 1968). This is most likely the case because rent-free land granted to Brahmins alone could be referred as “agrahar bhumi”, “It can be observed that a village endowed for the settlement of learned Brahmanas is called agra-hara and epigraphs expressly refer to it as such (Deglurkar 1979).” Therefore, the two-fold “professional” distinction between Ayachak/Trikarma and Yachak/Shatkarma was already taking shape though not rigidly formed in the early years of the Common Era, with such huge land-ownership, and taking to “secular” professions by Brahmins, “It cannot be argued that commendation of the population to religious people could not amount to a feudal commendation; for as the number of the land owning Brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them shed their priestly functions and turned their attention to the management of land; in their case secular functions became more important than religious functions (Husaini 1959:147)”. The occupational and the large two-fold distinction shows the remarkable capacity of Brahmins to adapt to new challenges despite not losing their roots, ritualistic and sacerdotal functions, and their valued commitment to learning, the Vedas classically, but taking to the new sciences, “the new Vedas” with a zeal (Khare 1970). The broad two-fold professional distinction among Brahmins is brought forth by the enumeration of the Anthropological Survey of India, a major post-independence anthropological survey conducted in the second half of twentieth-century headed by its remarkable academic administrator, Kumar Suresh Singh (Singh 1998:470-471). This ancient professional distinction, coupled with small principalities and evolution of local linguistic-cultural groups since the middle ages, and disappearance of Hindu rulers as central authority since the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule, led to a proliferation of groups/jatis/castes/sub-castes among Brahmins from the thirteenth-fourteenth century onwards. Thus, any non-European theoretical conception of modernity will have to take into account the study of the “society of Brahmins” who are modern yet traditional and traditional yet modern.

Then there are others like, Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey who are unable to grasp how caste as a social identity is not class and is crucially dependent on connubiality and commensality (Mishra & Pandey 1996). They

copper-plate of Hastin, the Kārta-lāi copper-plate of Jayanātha, the Khoh Copper-plate of Jayanātha, and the Khoh copper-plate of Sarvanātha. In most of these cases the Brāhmaṇa donees enjoyed all items of royal dues which are specifically recorded in the inscriptions. The donees could punish or evict tenants who refused to pay their dues (Husaini 1959:139-140).”

seem to have written with a single-minded devotion of hate towards those who constitute Bhumihaar Brahmins and also Rajputs (Kashtriya caste), and how they are responsible for what Mishra and Pandey refer to as “casteism” in the province of Bihar. First, they are unable to understand caste as community and community identity as caste-identity and the cultural function of having solidarity and support based on caste-community identity, which is not a specific trait of Bhumihaar Brahmins and Rajputs alone (Sahay 2004; Lee 2020). It is a common social behaviour among all caste-community groups, not just in Bihar, but all over the country. Every political leader had a social context and often many had community affiliations but they all worked hand-in-hand first for India’s freedom and then its development thereafter. It becomes a problem when this group-behavior spills over into the political realm with nepotism, which surely has been problematic in the country. But Mishra and Pandey put every single political actor, left, right or centre, especially if they belong to the Bhumihaar Brahmin background into the same basket committing lot of inaccuracies in the process. One instance is where they mention how Basawon Singh was close to Shri Krishna Singh, without providing any source or reference, which is patently wrong and does not meet the requirements of academic propriety (Sharma 2022; Mishra & Pandey 1996:335). Basawon Singh was the leader of opposition from the Congress Socialist Party/Socialist Party/Praja Socialist Party and at his instance there was a no confidence motion issued against the then Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Krishna Singh in 1957 for not having delivered on his political/electoral promises even after staying in the helm uninterruptedly since 1946 and even earlier from 1937-39 during colonial times as the Premier of the Province of Bihar during British India (Kumar 2017). Basawon Singh was rather close to Anugraha Narayan Sinha, who was not from his community or party or ideology, and Anugraha Narayan Sinha as a matter of fairplay as industries minister organized a plebiscite in Dalmianagar where he held the Rohtas Industries Mazdoor Sangh to be the representative trade union headed by Basawon Singh as against the spurious union set up by the Congress (Sharma 2022)⁷⁶. If at all, Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha,

⁷⁶ The audacity to spread lies is quite spectacular in Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey, where without knowing the trade union history of Dalmianagar/Delhi-on-Sone or rather purposefully misrepresenting its history, they hurl an insult at the great revolutionary and freedom fighter Basawon Singh for having colluded with the management again without providing any references or sources (Mishra & Pandey 1996:364). They should have gone through the archival records, the history of Basawon Singh’s role in its trade union movement through Rohtas Industries Mazdoor Sangh since 1938 till his death in 1989, his inaugural speech as industries minister in 1967 where he narrated the history of the trade union movement and how he had threatened to self-immolate if Mr. Abdul Qayum Ansari, a leading Congress leader, did not detract from his „loose statement“ of saying that Basawon Singh had colluded with the management. Mr. Abdul Qayum Ansari detracted and apologized publicly in the assembly. But such meticulous detailing before making „loose statements and assertions“ is not a characteristic of Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey. Girish Mishra’s

a Bhumihar Brahmin of Kanyakubja Brahmin descent (Singh 2001), went out of his way to promote the career of Mr. Lalit Narayan Mishra an able and the most famous Maithil Brahmin political leader of twentieth-century Bihar and national politics (Shahi 2008:125-129; Chaudhary 2009).⁷⁷ At Shri Babu's (short form for Shri Krishna Sinha) behest the illustrious son of Bihar Dr. Amarnath Jha, Professor of English literature, son of Sir Ganganath Jha and former Vice Chancellor of Allahabad University was made the Chairman of Bihar Public Service Commission from 1953 till his sudden death in 1955 (Singh 2014). Dr. Amarnath Jha had taken premature retirement from Allahabad University for some institutional problems despite his sterling contribution (Jha 1997).⁷⁸ Whatever development happened in Bihar happened during Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha's tenure lasting from 1937 to 1939 in colonial times and with the formation of interim government in 1946 until his death in 1961 (Sinha 2012; Singh 2013, 2014). Bihar has only seen decline since Sri Babu's demise. Additionally, by painting a narrow picture of Kisan Sabha and the role of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati in India's freedom movement and his single-minded role in the abolition of *zamindari* (landlordism) in the country starting with Bihar in 1950 betray their lack of historical understanding (Kumar 2021). For opposing landlordism, Kisan Sabha was actually accused of being "traitors to the community" and Pandit Karyanand Sharma of *Barahiya Bakasht Movement* (movement for the rights of peasant-tenants, share-croppers and incrementally for agricultural labourers)⁷⁹ fame was brutally assaulted by his own community members of Babhans/Bhumihar Brahmins and thrown into the river Ganges for "daring" to fight election against Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha as a candidate of the Communist

own background is worth noticing. His father was a second-rank politician working under the leadership of Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha in the Congress Party and he lost election to one of Basawon Singh's closest political allies, who was like a younger brother, Thakur Ramapati Singh. Dr. Shri Krishna Sinha was a Bhumihar Brahmin and Thakur Ramapati Singh was a Rajput. Perhaps this made him harbour prejudice against both these then politically dominant caste-communities.

⁷⁷ There is a voluminous commemorative volume on Mr. Lalit Narayan Mishra without any mention acknowledging Shri Babu's role in bringing him into not just politics but national politics by requesting Pandit Nehru numerous times to find an avenue for him in Delhi by directly working with the Prime Minister of India (Thakur ed., 1982).

⁷⁸ Though one criticism could be how some of these appointments, including that of Dr. Amarnath Jha, were of fellow Brahmins, as Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins belong to the same group of Brahmins, but the fact is no one really matched Dr. Jha's qualifications, experience or brilliance as an academic leader and intellectual to hold such an office. Certainly no career bureaucrat could match it, as they are "mere" graduates with no scholarship or specialized knowledge to their credit as a matter of prerequisites for entering the services or doing their job as "babus" (how such bureaucrats are referred) as an unmistakable, continuous and lasting administrative legacy of the British Empire.

⁷⁹ Through the Barahiya Tal Bakasht Movement led by Pandit Karyanand Sharma as a Kisan Sabha leader set up and spearheaded by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the beneficiary tenants mostly belonged to low castes like Dhanuks who got a thousand bighas of land in 1938-39 itself at the cost of Bhumihar Brahmin zamindars (Frankel 1989:79).

Party which he was leading in Bihar (Jha 1972:80-81; Das 1982:63-64).⁸⁰ But, of course, getting beaten mercilessly and nearly killed by his own community was also not enough ideological commitment for narrow writers Mishra and Pandey. Mishra and Pandey also did not have any understanding of sociology, as they incorrectly mention that poor Maithil Brahmin girls are getting married into Bhumihar Brahmin families which is discredited nearly a century earlier in Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar. Maithil Brahmins married Bhumihar Brahmins of similar status because they belong to the same group of Brahmins and not because of class differential. In fact, in the heydays of peasant movement of 1930s, with an anti-Shrotriya sentiment, which constituted the landlords including Darbhanga Maharaja and his relatives among Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins, there was a solidarity against them among the poorer and tenant sections of Maithil Brahmins and Bhumihar Brahmins in Nehra village in Mithila including the widespread adoption of the common Brahmin surname of Sharma as against keeping the lordly Brahmin surnames of Thakur and Chaudhary (Singer 1997:67; Mishra 2023:195-216). Additionally, if class alone were a factor, today half of the toilet cleaners in Sulabh Shauchalaya public toilets in India, as a traditionally ritualistically unclean profession, are poor Maithil Brahmins from North Bihar (Raman 2022), they are not marrying into caste-communities from non-Brahmin background who might still be engaged in toilet cleaning despite sharing the same class and profession with them. In pre-modern times, before the colonial contact, such choice of profession due to economic or other circumstances would have invariably led to the formation of a new caste-community but today it has only led to the transformation of traditional hierarchy into an ethnicity (Lee 2020). Mishra and Pandey discuss the mool of Maithil Brahmins but overlooks it for Bhumihar Brahmins mentioning in a single sentence how it is not relevant for them, which is grossly incorrect. Many of the *mool/dih/root* of Bhumihar Brahmins and Maithil Brahmins are the same showing the same root with the same root ancestor as well as the same root village. It is not the same as gotra which is due to rishis/primal sages which Brahmins could also share with other varnas. *Mool/dih/root* both geographically as well as genealogically is more concretely founded in socio-cultural fact.

As the “initial” caste censuses conducted by British colonial regime was an incorrect and flawed representation of Indian social reality, so was its replication by the recently conducted caste census held in 2023 in the state of Bihar is flawed. In the second half of the twentieth century, the British had recorded 700 castes in Bihar which by the second half of twentieth century were reduced to 250 in number (Jha 2005:406). What criteria was employed for such a change? The British enumerators did not and could not and ought not to

⁸⁰ I would like to thank my friend Sugandha Sinha a leading law faculty from Chanakya National Law University, Patna for bringing this article to my notice.

have developed any structures of the caste system apart from the ritualistic, scriptural, societal and self-definitional categories which were all part of Indian societal realities and self-realities irrespective of whoever was the “ruler”. Then, we are brought back to the question of - what was/were the purposes of such caste censuses in the first place? Why such an “amorphous”, “unspecified”, “structurally” and “functionally” flimsy and “unorganized” characterization of Indian society was ordered by the British in the first place and adopted whole-somely by Indian intelligentsia and politics largely uncritically.⁸¹ And now in a classic example of British imperialism redux, the Government of Bihar did not just conduct caste census in 2023, but also created new and arbitrary caste categories, for example, the Donwar/Dronwar mool/root of Bhumihaar/Maithil Brahmins have been counted as a separate and new caste (for the completely erroneous creation of Dronwars as a separate caste-category, see Appendix I below); in an absolute act of discrimination the “third gender” is a new caste in Bihar (Business Standard 2023); in addition to the inherited “colonial” enumeration. Much like “Bhumihaar Brahmin” was a new terminology enlisted, new and other arbitrary enlistments are being done. And there is a new din in the demand for caste censuses coming from some leaders and parties who are keen to base their electorate on social dissention, violence and entitlement as the permanent allurements of the state (Kaviraj 2005) which is in a binary code with the constitutional system of the country (Luhmann 2008) in sheer disregard of its societal constitutionalisms (Teubner 1988, 1993, 2012). This is a question of sociology law and legal theory which is referred to as “law and society” or “socio-legal studies” in the Anglo-American jurisprudence.⁸² As mentioned in the preface this aspect will be addressed more directly and more

⁸¹ Either the structure of Indian society was “structurally” well-defined, indeed hierarchically the most well-defined in human civilization (Dumont 1998); or it was a mere “castes of mind” formed, organized and orchestrated by the colonial regime (Dirks 2002); rendering the colonial exercise of caste censuses useless in both instances and in the huge spectrum of different analyses between the two extreme positions of Dumont and Dirks, in how it was structured and implemented and its lasting negative repercussions in Indian society and politics up until today. Historical evidence of western and southern India in the immediate pre-modern period suggests extensive diversity not just in the horizontal but also in the vertical social “hierarchy” which was anything but uniform (Dharampal-Frick 1995:82-100). If not the “hierarchy”, but certainly diversity, differentiation and the lack of a rigid social order, can be interpreted for the entire Indian subcontinent. Though Dipankar Gupta believes even in the “modern period” of nineteenth century onwards, with colonial contact, the self-perception of “castes” as discrete identities as cultural-groups/communities/ethnicities was anything but devalued and in the *longue durée* of twentieth century the “ideology of the true hierarchy (Dumont)”, if it ever existed, has been checkmated by politics and economy (Gupta 1991:110-142).

⁸² „Law and society; also known as ,socio-legal studies; involves the study of law through the social sciences, in particular sociology and empirical political science. It is a broad group or movement, but tends towards the study of ,law in action; in contrast to the conceptual study of law one finds in analytical jurisprudence. [] Much of the work in the field fits the label ,law in action; investigations of the effectiveness, or just the general effects, of certain legal rules (Bix 2004: 118).“

comprehensively in an ongoing project relating to sociology of law, legal theory and constitutional law to be published subsequently. And it would be done in the framework of systems theory and societal constitutionalism.⁸³

Hence, its post-colonial life and message, nearly a century after it was written, lies in the fact that non-European sources of literature, primarily written in non-European languages, should be explored and discussed in greater detail which would lead to many new, fresh and unsettling details emerging out of it. It also unsettles rigidities in social and political structures which colonial administrations followed across empires in their zeal to govern through European categories of hierarchization and differentiation and which colonial 'subjects' often adopted as their own. Such an attempt would be the true decolonization of the mind which resonates through all post-colonial societies. One of its impacts could be a 'horizontal affiliation' among different castes and sub-castes of Brahmins in their own attempt to metamorphose from hierarchy to ethnicity.⁸⁴ This article attempts to show through just one example of the colonial form of knowledge and its serious limitations and shortcomings in "studying" the society of the "colonial subject". It is an attempt at decolonializing the mind, where what is knowledge, and how it is perceived and perpetuated even in post-colonial societies needs correction and therefore has global relevance.

To conclude, "Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar" is an excellent work on the history and culture of Brahmins, including their marriage relations, which needs to be explored. There are some shortcomings in the work which could have been rectified by the editor Raghav Sharan Sharma, like lacking modern form of citation with annotated notes and references, detailed and separate introduction to the work, and a detailed bibliography and index in the end. A non-Sanskritist contemporary reader will find it very daunting to assess the hundreds of original classical Sanskrit references only with their names provided. The oral method of remembering texts, verses and references has obviously found its

⁸³ „Luhmann's version of systems theory, autopoiesis, views social systems as entities that reproduce themselves by appropriating elements of their environment. Within Luhmann's theory, social systems are seen as basically systems of communication, which process meaning. Luhmann, Gunther Teubner, and others have tried to apply autopoiesis to law, discussing the ways in which and the extent to which law defines and controls its own meanings (e.g. the way that the question of whether something is 'legal' or 'illegal' is determined entirely by and within the legal system (Bix 2004: 131).“

Though, Teubner expanded the scope of systems theory by grafting societal constitutionalism on it, which leads to, for example, better theoretical-processual-practical protection of fundamental human rights in multiple system rationalities, which as a result of dense and ever-expanding functional differentiations due to industrial modernity, cannot be covered by the „classical“ state constitutional framework.

⁸⁴ Lee (2020). The horizontal affiliation in marriage relations among different sub-castes of Tamil Brahmins was already observed by André Béteille in the 1960s (Béteille 1966). Rajni Kothari, also in the 1960s, observed in politics in Gujarat that a horizontal affiliation was built among a diverse group of castes under the common banner of Kshatriya since the late 1940s (Kothari and Maru 1965).

way into the book which requires careful editing in its Sanskrit-Hindi original but also in any future translation into English and other European languages. Sahajanand has provided a comprehensive scriptural-textual structure backed by social practice, customs, livelihood and occupations of the internal social ordering of all Brahmins but, of course, he could not cover marriage relations and customary practices of Brahmins of the entire sub-continent within the confines of one work. By his own admission he could never work on the third edition of his book to at least enlist marriage relations among other Ayachak/Trikarmi Brahmins and Yachak/Shatkarmi Brahmin groups like among Mohyals and Saraswats, but also to discuss in particular details the social practices of other Ayachak/Trikarmi Brahmins across the country like Zamindar Brahmins (Rarhi Kulin Brahmins) of Bengal, Chitpavans of Maharashtra, Telugu Niyogi Brahmins and Anavil Desais of Gujarat (Kumar 2005)⁸⁵, among others. It is also interesting to observe how all these landed Ayachak/Trikarmi Brahmins/Brahmins engaged in secular professions, are linked in their origin myth with Lord

⁸⁵ Complementing on Swami Sahajanand Saraswati's work, Professor Siyaram Tiwari, an eminent litterateur and the former dean at Vishwa Bharti University in Shantiniketan (a UNESCO World Heritage Site now) set up by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore highlights about this nation-wide phenomenon on the emergence of Ayachak/Trikarmi Brahmins on the one hand and Yachak/Shatkarmi Brahmins on the other, since the medieval period, as a practical occupational ordering of Brahmin social world performing the dual role of secular (for the lack of a better terminology) and sacerdotal functions. When the erudite and singular Gandhian ascetic, Acharya Vinoba Bhave while leading Harijan (now called Dalits) entry into the famous Shiva temple in Deoghar he was wounded in an attack by priests, the then Chief Minister of Bihar Dr. Shri Krishna Singh got insinuated and led temple-entry for Dalits himself and all the priests of Deoghar had run away. Later Vinoba, who hailed from Ayachak/Trikarmi Chitpavan Brahmin family, started Bhoodan Movement (land gifting movement), and it received maximum support from Babhan/Ayachak/Trikarmi/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmin landowners who felt a sense of kinship with Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Despite its limited success, the Bhoodan Movement received maximum land gifts in Bihar and it should be a matter of sociological study of who gave how much land and to whom. In addition to his ideological commitment, Madhu Limaye as a "non-Bihari" Chitpavan Brahmin, used to receive Ayachak/Bhumihar Brahmin votes to win elections in Bihar as Bhumihar Brahmins considered him to be one of their kin. When Morarji Desai became part of Congress (O) in 1969 and later became the Prime Minister of India in 1977 leading the Janata Party government many Babhan/Ayachak/Trikarmi/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmin leaders left Congress (Indira) due to Indira Gandhi's undemocratic and heavy-handed way of running the party to join him as they also considered Anavil Desais of Gujarat, to which Brahmin community Morarji Desai belonged, as one of their own, in addition to his impeccable integrity. The Ayachak/Trikarmi Telugu speaking Niyogi Brahmins have given great scholars like Dr.S. Radhakrishnan, who also became the President of India and Dr. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, an eminent historian besides giving the former Prime Minister of India, PV. Narasimha Rao, who liberalized Indian economy and brought India "closer" to the world. It must be highlighted here that the Ayachak/Trikarmi Brahmins across the Indian sub-continent share the Parashurama myth, (who is the sixth among ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, and who are born on earth in the cataclysmic ages, when Dharma is endangered), as his descendants and Brahmin followers and students (Karve 1932).

Parashurama, a Brahmin warrior and the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu.⁸⁶ The assiduously ritualistic, as well as previously landed, among the Brahmins, are the Namboodiri Brahmins from the Malabar region in South-West coastal India, who also trace their origin to Lord Parashuram, in which the famous philosopher Adi Shankara who systematized Advaita Vedanta was born.

Sahajanand's field-work is confined to North India in general and the middle-Gangetic plain in particular. When Sahajanand is quoting from other sources and references like someone's speech mentioning Aristotle visiting India with Alexander and talking about Indian society finds no historical affirmation and it needs to be contextualized and discussed (like any other Greek reference to Indian society and to Brahmins but falsely attributed to Aristotle) by any future editor (though this part deals with the theoretical conception of a Brahmin; Saraswati 2003a:256). Besides, the brides are nameless in the work representing male domination and identification of genealogies based on male ancestor (*mool*) and marriage relations are solemnised between families where the name of grooms is mentioned (See Appendix I, II & III).⁸⁷ The well-off and illustrious families would marry their daughters keeping in mind her aspirations in an equally or more well-off and illustrious family but the individuality of both brides and bridegrooms did not matter much in the early twentieth century when this work was written.

Therefore, apart from being relevant to sociologists, social and cultural anthropologists, it is also important to social scientists and lawyers, because after all caste-politics is a tenacious presence in the Indian public sphere (Béteille

⁸⁶ The association of Babhans/Ayachak Brahmins/Bhumihar Brahmins with Lord Parashuram, who is reputed to have erased the earth of Kshatriyas for twenty-times could be the possible symbolical-mythological reason of local rivalry with Rajputs for dominance, which is the approximate Kshatriya community today.

⁸⁷ Although, it must be pointed out that women from Ayachak/Trikarma/Babhan/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmin background have played a pioneering role in India's freedom struggle. Manorama Devi (her husband was Pandit Punyadev Sharma, a non-cooperator in the 1920s) took active part in Civil Disobedience Movement and was jailed for her political activities for India's freedom from colonial rule; Suniti Devi was a revolutionary leader in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army in the 1930s, the only one from such an illustrious background, her husband was Kishori Prasanna Singh, a leading figure of revolutionary, socialist, trade union movement and later Communist Party in the State of Bihar. Rajkishori Devi, the daughter of a landed estate owner and married into an illustrious landed estate and the wife of Pandit Ramnandan Mishra who joined Mahatma Gandhi in Sabarmati Ashram and actively took part in India's independence struggle, even being incarcerated for taking part in the movement, would take great hardships to sell hand-spun khadi carrying it in baskets overhead like day labourers to popularize and raise funds for the independence movement. Tarkeshwari Sinha had played an active role in Quit India Movement and became the first woman minister in independent India's cabinet hailing from Bihar. The entire Reora Satyagraha was led by Bhumihar Brahmin women later joined by the menfolk in late-1930s (Kuwajima 2017). It is remarkable and perhaps even natural and predictable to note how in the state of Bihar, the first pioneering leaders who happened to be women, including an armed revolutionary against British colonialism, came from Ayachak/Trikarma/Babhan/Pachchima/Bhumihar Brahmin background.

2012) and 'caste' is also constitutionally entrenched for lawyers to eschew its study at their own peril (Shourie 2012). The demands on and from the state (Kaviraj 2005) are articulated in the language of 'caste' and the entire policy of reservation in educational institutions, public jobs, and even promotion is based on 'caste identity', giving the famed Manu, author of *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* (the Code of Manu), based on how he is characterised, a new lease of life from the backdoor and by reversing the traditional social order.