

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VILLAGE IN TRANSITION

#### I

Before the introduction of afus cultivation in Haria, it constituted a little village community with Anavils as landowners, Dublas and Naikas their traditional servants, and six other servicing castes. The Anavils enjoyed the highest social, economic and political status in the villages; and, therefore, even though they were numerically less strong than the group of Dublas and Naikas, they formed the dominant caste group in the village.

But the Anavils themselves were divided into two status-groups, viz. Desais and Bhathelas. Among them, the Desais enjoyed a higher social status than the

Bhathelas. They stood in hypergamous relationship, the Deasais receiving girls in marriage from the Bhathelas but not giving theirs to them. The Desais also received a marriage dowry. On the contrary, the Bhathelas, who experienced a shortage of marriageable girls, had either to pay a bride price, or give a girl exchange for another, if they wanted to marry.

The Anavils, as a caste-group, were dhaniamos or masters of Dubla/Naika halis or permanent labourers.

The master-servant (dhaniamohali) relationship was known as Hali system, and was prevalent in whole of South Gujarat. The traditional crop-pattern involved a heavy schedule of work which was spread over the whole year. It was, therefore, quite essential for the Anavils to recruit a permanent labour force. This was made possible through the Hali system. Not only the hali labourer, but his wife and son all together worked under the same master. In return of their services, the master paid them mostly grain wages. In a similar way, the Anavils paid grain wages to various other servicing castes of Haria and some other surrounding villages.

The cash requirements were minimum and business transactions within, and outside the village, were carried out through goods instead of cash. Nevertheless, a small part of receipts and payments was made in cash.

It was this type of social system where both intercaste and intracaste relationships were determined by the norms of social status. The village Panch consisting of four or five elderly members from among the Anavils was influential in the village affairs. The caste Panchs also wielded authority in their respective spheres of castes. Both the types of Panch functioned effectively as they were both powerful and influential.

## II

The introduction of a new commercial crop in the village by <sup>the</sup> beginning of the present century brought in its train several forces of social change. With the gradual spread of afus cultivation in the village more and more people were thrown out of the village

economy. The process of migration to urban areas began around the year 1930, and since then more and more people continued to leave the village in search of jobs. This drift to urban migration was arrested only after the establishment of a big factory in proximity of the village.

The new commercial crop and urban migration brought the village community in a close contact with the outside world.

The new cash crop changed the very basis of the village economic organisation. With the advent of a cash cultivation, money became the chief medium of exchange and money economy was becoming more and more prominent. Price was the one factor that governed values, and human touch which was characteristic of the traditional social system was gradually disappearing. The trend was towards greater and greater monetization of social relationships. All these tended to increase both social and spatial mobility of different people of the village. This, in turn, affected the structure of the family, institution of marriage and social

relationships in the village. The joint family was financially much strengthened than before; and although it was broken into two or more separate residential units, it maintained its social and economic jointness. In essence, the joint family brought about the adjustments necessary in the changed social order. The spirit of jointness and the attachment to the ancestral home have still maintained some of the important elements of joint family in tact.

The impact of urban culture on the institution of marriage is clearly observed as there has been much simplification of the ritual. Marriage ceremony, which was spread over three days formerly, has now become one-night affair; and that it brings together now a much less number of relatives and caste people than it used to do before. Similarly, it is found that in dress, diet as well as standard ~~of~~ of living of the village people, there are elements of Urban culture.

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Perhaps, more important of all these changes was the Sanskritization of the lower castes of the village. They have gradually adopted vegetarianism and teetotalism and have Sanskritized their religion. The Dublas and Naikas offer worships to Sanskritic gods and goddesses and observe some other religious vows, and the Dheds have also been found doing so to some extent.

Added to this were the effects produced by the establishment of a big factory near the village. It offered employment opportunities to Haria people; and thereby served as an additional source of income to those who owned land, and as a more stable source of income to those who did not own any land. However, it aggravated some of the forces of change which were operating in the Social system of Haria since the introduction of the new commercial crop.

Thus, we have seen how economic development led to loosening of economic as well as social bonds between the Anavils and Dublas/Naikas. The migration of some of the village people under economic pressure,

the advantages of cash wages, the opportunities offered by the factory, and the efforts of the government to improve the position of the depressed classes, have all served to raise their status in the village. The Anavils, who had for long been the undisputed masters of the Dublas and Naikas are now opposed to the Dublas and Naikas improving their position. This has given rise to tension between the two main groups of the village.

Similarly, the economic levelling between the two status groups among Anavils themselves has <sup>disturbed</sup> ~~distributed~~ their hypergamous relations and thrown their status system itself into a melting pot. In this case, however, the tensions are less explicit than those between Anavils and Dublas/ Naikas . The differential intensity of tensions in the two cases is due to the fact that the Desais and Bhathelas, being members of the same caste, are linked up by kinship ties, whereas the Anavils and Dublas/Naikas are two separate castes who had a traditional master-servant relationship.

In more than one sense, these changes have brought the social system of Haria within the orbit of a much wider society than before. The intercaste relationships do manifest some important changes. The upper landowning caste, the Anavils, have lost much of their economic control upon the lower castes due to the coming of both afus and Atul. This has no doubt strained their inter relationships.

Nevertheless, it has not led to any significant change in the village hierarchy. The village labourers still partly continue to depend upon the landowners. Of course, this dependence is now of a temporary nature. Similarly, the other service castes of the village, to some extent, depend upon the Anavils. Therefore, the dependence of the labourers and of the service castes, still forms the basis of the existing patron-client relationship in the village.

Thus, whatever changes - economic, social or political - have taken place, they have not undermined the traditional pattern of social structure of the village. The adjustments brought about in the life



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of the village people, have been gradually absorbed so as to fit in the changed pattern, without breaking up the traditional pattern. All various counteracting forces under the impact of both the urban culture and the industrial culture have been so operating that there is gradual absorption of the new values in the social system of the village.

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