

# Symbiosis, Reciprocity and Village Exogamy in Two Villages of Uttar Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study attempts to articulate the relation between social reciprocity and 'village exogamy' in two villages namely Rajanpur and Tandwa of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The idea of village exogamy incorporates a social arrangement with local setting in which making marital relation is prohibited for the people. This social arrangement develops a kind of bilateral relationship among villagers by some socio-cultural practices in some span of time. Thus, some caste-based practices can be seen among villagers where they use some symbolic terms to keep dominance over other castes or for self-defense but symbiosis remain the same. In order to understand intra-caste relation, the paper also examines 'Ahir' caste who demonstrates a new identity, as so-called 'Yadav'. The analysis predicts that resources available in Rajanpur village (Sultanpur district) are highly concentrated in the hand of Yadavs while in Tandawa village resources are in the hands of Thakurs and Yadavs. Therefore, a brief description has been made of both villages in which few changes in leadership pattern as well as in multiple social strata have been counted.

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of 'village exogamy' is unique feature in northern India that saves villagers from sexual relation in certain local settings as a form of (informal) social control. The basic belief behind this is that 'the people from the same village belong to same *Deeh* or male chieftain [a deity]' that can be noted as a 'clan' of a village. According to Gould ('61), 'there are four factors which are associated with village exogamy in north India: (a) caste endogamy, (b) territorial stabilization of kin groups, (c) *gotra* or clan exogamy, and (d) the tendency to regard affine and consanguine kinship ties as mutually exclusive'. The result of which, the social units (man or woman) of a village address oneself with mutual obligations that create a

'close relationship' to some extent. The expression could be counted easily in 'everyday-life' by following symbols: '*kaka*' (uncle), '*kaki*' (aunty [for old-edge]), '*chachi*' (aunty [for young age woman]) '*bhaiya*' (elder brother), '*bua*' (maternal sister), '*nana*' (maternal uncle), '*dada*' (grandfather), etc.

The important things are that these relations bind to every caste, classes or edge-groups in certain social order. The basic principle behind this is 'to give respect', or 'for take respect'. This is the one aspect of mutual relation in rural areas. Whereas, the other dimension of reciprocities among rural inhabitants could be examined by hierarchal caste structure. Because caste based hierarchies and stratifications are unflawed realities among deferent strata of castes in a village. Although it appears, overriding these differences, interdependency (see Jajmani system,

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Wiser, '58) and symbiosis or coexistence in prognostic way are basic features or result of 'village exogamy'. In this regards, Hershman ('81) reveals that 'principle of village exogamy means that all villagers of the same clan, the same localized clan and the same village area is bounded by the morality of brother-sister and, therefore, that both sex and marriage are prohibited between members of village'.

#### IDEA OF MODERNITY AND RECIPROCITY

In general, sociologically, modernity is something that is rational, progressive, reflexive, comprehensive, universal and humanitarian etc (Singh, '86; Srinivas, '62). Although eminent scholar like Gupta (2000) identified few tenets of modernity for instance, dignities of the individual, adherence to universalistic norms, accountability in public life and elevation of individual achievement over privileges or dis-privileges of the birth in Indian context are very practical in day-to-day life. Whereas, from the view of lived experience, I got surprise during the conversation with the inhabitants of Rajanpur village; the idea of 'modernity' from the perspective of them was unique rather than what we learn in classroom. According to the villagers, in comprising, 'character, mutual respect, community honor, general consensus, holism, maintaining social conduct of society, social acceptance', etc. are tenets to being 'modern'.

#### *Commensality and Reciprocity*

On the one hand, 'Village Exogamy' offers a shape of uniformity and symbiosis for villagers while on the other hand there are few practices, antagonistically, create kind of division among villagers. For instance, the discourse of commensality in caste system is closely associated with two major things first, 'participating in a feast' or 'avoiding to participate in a feast'. It is most societal in nature that is maintained through the Biradari [by own caste people]) while second one is '*Hocca-Pani*' (smoking and drinking water pattern) that shows intensity of closeness, and it is more personified rather than the previous one (Dumont, '70:132-135). Moreover, the question of 'commensal relations' is aroused generally on occasion of 'marriage ceremony', '*Bhat*' (social commensality) and '*Bhoj*' (ritual commensality) in which kin or relative members uses to notice closely

into 'participants' as well as those who are not interested to participate in the feast. Those who are participating in the feast for them; it may refer such participants do not have any problem with social conduct of organizer. Whereas, those who are denying to keep commensally relation with organizer; it shows that they have some grievances either it may be personal or in societal term.

However, the commensal relation cannot be bounded within the framework of interpersonal relationship. It is also functioned with few other features like in-between two factions, social groups, villages, caste *panchayats* (council), along with community basis feast, etc. by certain 'intensity of relation' that helps to builds reciprocal affiliation, caste network as well as a general consensus. Apart from this, another important discourse in commensal relation is 'taboo' that plays very important role in mutual reciprocities. In this regards, Dumont ('70) points out Blunt's work where he listed seven kind of 'taboo' to know the commensality pattern through following questions: with whom one eats, who prepares the food, what sort of food, what are the ritual observances, from whom one accepts water, with whom one share pipe, and what vessels one use. In addition, the idea of mutual sharing of food can be distinguished into two ways:

*Kachchi ceremony*: The first day of feast is known as *kachchi*. On the occasion of *kachchi*, boiled food is served. The term *kachchi* that is closely associated with *kachcha*. Etymologically, *kachcha* can be referred similarly with the term 'ripe' or 'uncooked' or 'boiled' as well as which is not fried by the means of oil. For instance, rice, bread and pulses, etc items can be identified as '*kachcha* food'. In comprehensive way, through the pattern of *kachchi*, the gap or relationship in between two or more castes can be examined. Mostly, this ceremony is celebrated with such people who are in the same strata either they belong to same caste or other castes but exceptionally those people who belong to same village are also invited with certain prohibitions. For instance, few backward castes (like Kurmi, Kahar, Nayi, Ahir, Kumhar etc) are being participated in higher caste's (like Tiwari, Dube, Mishra) *kachchi* (feast) while higher caste (like Brahmin) never participates in the *kachchi* of lower castes if the food is not made by

their own caste person (any Brahmin castes). However, the term *kachchi* feast may be referred to traditional pattern of commensality where hierarchy has been maintained in-between two castes through certain ideology.

*Pakki ceremony:* On the occasion of *Pakki* ceremony, it has been noticed that the fried food is made by few experts from Yadav community. The food has been cooked by the means of oil and milk (like sweets, *kheer*, *poori*, cheese etc). It is also symbol of social acceptance, mutual participation, hierarchy maintenance, and mutual relations with some norms and values.

*Reciprocity and Intercaste Relation:  
Textual Interpretation*

The phenomena of second decade of Indian independence, it appears due to the freedom of religion<sup>1</sup>, people from lower castes were oriented towards ritual activities by the same way ritually higher strata's castes used to perform for instance wearing the *Janeo* (sacred thread) or performing some ritual sacrifices, etc. This emulating process shows a kind of interconnectedness and also a gap (in reciprocity) between two strata's castes. In this regard, eminent social thinker Srinivas ('52) coined a term "Sanskritisation" to this process. The term "Sanskritisation" indicates such social reciprocities that had happened during the first decade of India's independence in caste and religious route. However, relative deprivation was the reason behind this pattern of caste mobility, because from the long time especially in colonial period such citizens who belong to lower or backward castes, they could not get the legal rights to perform such ritual activities. In the same way, few other sociologists also noticed such caste mobility and reciprocities in Srinivas' line like "De-Sanskritisation" (Majumdar, '58), "Tribalisation" (Kaliya, '61), "Civilisational" or "Rajputisation" (Sinha, '65), etc.

In term of continuation of caste system, eminent thinker Ketkar (2009) asserts, 'the restriction of intercaste commensalities' is a responsible factor for sustaining caste system. But his idea of 'restriction' is not able to explain how 'village exogamy' and 'mutual reciprocity' exist together in antagonistic way (p. 24). In addition, a western social thinker Dumont

('70) points out that the relative opposition of pure and impure, on the basis of 'beliefs, value and behaviour', are determinant factors for 'multiple hierarchies'. He supposes to maintain a purely relative non-competitive ranking that is oriented towards a single idea of higher and lower. His analysis of 'opposition' 'on the basis of purity/impurity, multiple hierarchy/single hierarchy' does not stand on the modern existence of 'moderate brotherhood' in antagonistic atmosphere to some extent.

*Intracaste Relation and Social Cohesion*

The idea of 'social reciprocity' within a community framework among Ahir caste can be exemplified through a consensus of "Ab to Ahir, Yadav ban gaye" (now Ahir is recognized as Yadav [modern]). In terms of 'being a Yadav' syndrome, before going into whole debates on intercaste and intracaste relation, let me articulate who is Ahir, and what are the basic arguments behind claiming a new identity – 'Yadav'.

MYTHS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE AHIR

The 'Ahir' word is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Abhira' which means 'fearless'. It is also argued that the term *Ahir* comes from *Abhira*, who were once found in different parts of India, and who wielded political power' (Rao, '79:124) in several places. It appears, Ahir caste believes that their dynasty is derived from 'Yadu' dynasty, meanwhile, Das ('12) points out that 'Bishwaparwa' mythology of *Mahabharata* (it is a section of sacred text 'Mahabharata') reveals that the second name of 'Yadu' was Ahir because he killed 'Ahi'<sup>2</sup> (snake). In this regards, Bhattacharya (1896) referred to the 'Padampuran' text where Vishnu informed to Abhiras, "I shall be born among you, O Abhira, at Mathura in my eight births... Madhu say all the territory of Mathura belongs to Abhira (Ahir and Abhira often used synonymously)." In addition, Mittal ('92) found the modern Ahir are the descendants of the Abhira of ancient time. He emphasizes that Abhira tribe played an important role to establish the Satvahana dynasty in the middle of the third century A.D. In evidence, Abhira are mentioned in the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta as one of many tribes who paid homage to the Gupta emperor.

In Hindi belts, the main sub-castes of Ahirs were Venuvansi, Bhirgudi, Doha, Dhandhauri, Gaddi, Gomala, Gujar, Rajoriya etc. Mostly, Ahirs were divided into three units in hierarchal order: the Yaduvansi in Haryana, and Nandavansi and Goalavansi in Mathura (U.P.). Same divisions can be found across the country. First two categories are specific in term of the affinity and dynastical relationship with reference to 'Yadu mythology'. Although most of Ahirs with mutual consensus in Hindi speaking belts traces their descent from the text of *Mahabharata* in which lord Krishna of Yaduvansh (Rao,'79; Singh,'98) is identified as an important mythical figure.

Few other contemporary thinkers also try to trace a few historical evidences with comprehensive arguments. For instance, Thapar ('78:149) argues, "Among the tribes of indigenous origin also referred to as *vratyas ksatriyas* in some sources are listed the Dravida, Abhira, Sabara, Kirata, Malava, Sibi, Trigarta and Yaudheya. The majority of such tribes tended to be the inhabitants of the Himalayan and Vindhyan region...". Whereas, Rao ('79) reveals that "The Abhiras (or the Ahiras) came to be identified with the other pastoral groups such as the Gopas around sixth century AD...[T]he Abhiras and Ahirs were replaced by the Kathis in Kathiawar in eight century AD (ibid)." However, after reviewing these arguments, it can be said that authors are agreed regarding the previous position of Abhira as 'tribe' and later they (these pastoralists) mixed with local cattle breeding groups and gradually settled down in many parts of the country as well as they also became peasants.

#### *Native Consensus and Myths*

The inhabitants of Rajanpur village of Sultanpur district refer few myths (regarding Krishna and milk selling identity) which reveal that Ahir were cow herder and traditionally their business was based on milk production. However, Ahirs believe that their cult belongs to lord Krishna (Krishna is key figure in *Mahabharata* text) segment that is why their occupation is based on 'selling and producing milk'. This reflection can also be seen in their daily life and in local collection of poems called '*Ahir Gaurav-Gatha*' (Ahir Pride Tales), that tells about their popular traditional story and beliefs in the form of *Birha* (a

popular folklore of Uttar Pradesh).

#### YADAV: A MODERN IDEOLOGY

The term 'Yadav', literally meaning descendants of the Yadu's (a king [Kshatriya] dynasty<sup>3</sup>, is used as an umbrella term to include several localized but allied castes<sup>4</sup>. In other word, the term 'Yadav' is referred for such group of people or a community or a cluster of cognate castes or 'ethnic block' and a category who are, probably, found across the territory of India as well as its neighboring countries likewise Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, etc. Broadly, they do not marry outside of their community (Yadav) but do so in clan or lineage specific at the village level (Michelutti, 2008). Moreover, the two things are common to these cognate castes. First, they express that the traditional occupation of their community was 'milkproduction' or 'milk selling'. Based on milk seller identity, now they claim to be the descendants of the Yadu dynasty to which Lord Krishna belonged (Rao,'79:124; Jaffrelot, 2003). Second, the idea of being a 'Yadav' is also carried out by modern tools: the achievements in the arena of politics and education. However, the caste fabric among Yadavs and idea of modernity from their perspective can be revealed in the following way.

#### *Garlic-Caste Structure (GCS) and 'Yadav' as an Identity*

Caste is not a unified system which can be generalized for entire community because it has also some regional or local features. Therefore, I am using here a metaphor 'GCS'<sup>5</sup> to get proper understanding about the articulation of collective identity<sup>6</sup> of Yadav community. In this regard, the term 'GCS' can be used to articulate for such caste based social structure which is constituted by (like the parts of garlic) deferent unified castes but these cognate castes are not hierarchal in local setting. Here, the parts of garlic can be correlated with provincial units of a caste of Yadav community, for instance, 'Goal, Ahir, Ghosi, Goalla, Yadvan, etc. castes manifest a regional identity but as a whole they fallow 'Yadav' ideology (descendent of king Yadu) to show a unified (pan) identity in which ideologically the multiple hierarchies is not existed at present. In the sense of 'garlic', the title 'Yadav' as an umbrella term can be attributed as a whole part of garlic.

In other words, the cognate castes of Yadav community were fragmented, divided, and they practiced endogamous relation separately within their own caste boundary but over a period of time (during second decade of 19th century) they began intermarrying with ambition of a pan identity (Rao, '79). It appears, for instance, the new generations have no idea whether they are Ahir or Goala in both the villages. Popularly, they manifest themselves as 'Yadav', and they are known as Yadav in both the villages.

Thus, for better understanding, the idea of 'GCS' can be correlated with 'Onion-Caste Structure' (OCS)<sup>7</sup> in which caste system is considered, respectively, in ranking order (with deferent layers) as well as 'multiple hierarchies' (Dumont, '70). In addition, I would like to refer few arguments of respondents which I received from Yadav community. The first argument goes like this, "If I (Hans Raj Yadav) look at few decades back, my community (cattle-herder castes) was divided into multiple segments but (onwards 1924) due to some efforts of AIYM (All India Yadav Mahasabha; a formal organization of Yadavs) the fragmented castes/subcaste were begun to polarize for pan identity". In addition, another respondent namely Ram Aasare Yadav told that, "...in the present scenario, the notion of multiple hierarchies among new generations is being vanished".

Although the old cattle breeder identity still exists among them. Whereas, with respect to regional differences among Yadav community (like Goalla in Andhra, Ahir and Gwal in Hindi speaking belts, Addyar and Konar of Tamil Nadu etc), they have a native identity, same as garlic parts, where the notion of multiple hierarchies are being vanished. In addition, if we compare of these cattle herder castes, it is found that the notion of superiority or multiple hierarchal orders (like layers of an onion) are being disappeared from the last few decades. In this regard, one of the respondents responded, namely Raju Yadav,<sup>8</sup> "When someone says that 'you are Ahir or Goala', I feel something 'awkward' but when someone says 'Yadav', my chest expand because 'Yadav' is a 'modern' identity, that shows, educated, politically empowered and socially dominant."

In sum, due to some organizational activities, such as, 'Ahir Yadav Kshatriya Mahasabha' (1910), 'All India Yadav Mahasabha' (1924), etc. Ahir caste

and its subcastes received enthusiastic support from new 'political elite'. The organizational effort is creating 'social capital' among them. Therefore, the result of which, politics has become fertile land for them during the last few decades. The presence of Yadav community in various public spheres including petty business, local politics, etc can be seen at large. Although the traditional occupation of Yadav are production and selling of milk especially in rural setting. Milk related occupations give a space them to interact with other castes either they belong to Dalits (ex-untouchable) or ritually higher castes. Therefore, the intensity of reciprocal relation both intercaste as well as intracaste among them can be found higher.

#### *Yadavs and a Few Other Essays*

Apart from the above articulation few literatures on Yadav community reveal about social mobility of 'Yadavs'. In this regards, few literatures deal with the issues on political mobility, identity, Yadav movements. On the one hand, Jaffrelot (2003) tries to understand the political orientation among milk seller castes (Ahirs, Goala, etc.). He writes that the political mobility of Yadavs can be understood through deliberating speech of '*Yadav Mahasabha* (organisation)' which was held in Madras (in 1980, Chennai). He reveals that they were divided into many castes in 20th century but later 'Yadav leader succeeded in their social fusion project science they persuaded their fellow caste member to downplay the endogamous units into which they were divided: there were even some interregional marriages. Fusion was made easier from the 1930s onwards when North Indian Yadavs migrated from their villages to urban areas... (p. 189)'. In addition, Michelutti (2004) argues that 'the *Mahasabha* proclaims the process of *Yadavisation* (forming a collective identity) is legitimized by the assumption that all the descendants of Krishna (a mythological god of Hinduism) share the same substance and therefore, 'cattle herder castes' like Ahirs, Goalas, Gops are Yadavs'. However, the decision of intercaste marriage (within community framework) was initiated by Ahir caste, and the decision became an important turn for cattle-herder castes. Rao ('79) deals with historical background of Yadavs and their affiliation with 'AIYM', especially how Yadavs are playing important role in 'caste

politics'. In sum, the process of reciprocal relation among them was not usual but due to some efforts of educated people, the social gap is being fulfilled.

In sum, overtly it seems, the notion of 'mutual reciprocities' in a village are demonstrated into two ways: firstly, in intracommunity basis which is practiced through popular mythological traditions and beliefs in ancestry (heredity). For instance, in case of Yadav community, the notion of intracommunity reciprocity and brotherhood seems in a positive aspect such as hierarchy-less equal social stratum, brotherhood and fraternity. Now they are connected by the kinship network in between same group of castes (like Ahir, Gwal, Gop, Ghantiha etc) with the mythology of Krishna descendent<sup>9</sup>.

Secondly, intercommunity relation can be identified in rural areas based on principle of 'village exogamy' and multiple daily necessities<sup>10</sup> in which social relation is maintained through socio-cultural and economic fulfillment. In addition, such villages where many castes exist with divisions of many factions, caste and socio-economic status for their mutual interest, it appears, two types of consolidated mutual relational patterns exist: the intracaste faction<sup>11</sup> and the intercaste factions.

#### METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyze the behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (Bryman, '88:46). In qualitative research, there are three basic tenets which give more reasonable and argumentative weight for qualitative inquiry. These following three tenets are: locating as a researcher, experiential baggage of researcher and getting closer to research participant.

In addition, the debates discussed in this paper are based on primary data that was collected from Rajanpur and Tandawa village in which respondents are leaders, *Chaudharis* (heads of a caste), *Mukhiya* (head of the family), *Gram Pradhan* (elected leader in village Panchayat), organizers and participants of the *Bhoj*. The multi-sited ethnography, oral history, interview schedule and mutual discussion with research participants have been used to enrich the in depth understanding.

#### *Field Area*

Both the villages are located in northern parts of Sultanpur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Sultanpur is situated at south corner of Faizabad (or Ayodhya is known for the birth place of Lord Ram [a Hindu deity]) district. Sultanpur is dominated by Rajput, Brahmin and Muslim community. But its neighboring districts like Faizabad, Jaunpur and Ajamgarh are largely populated with Yadav caste as a dominant caste. Moreover, Sultanpur district is consisted with fourteen blocks and four tehsils. Both the villages are located in Kurebhar block of Sultanpur district, and recognized as multi castes village (the village in which many castes live together) and was selected for the purpose of in depth study. The inhabitants of both the villages represent the deep rooted beliefs in ritual practices. On the one hand, for appropriate understanding of reciprocity and its affiliation with caste, Tandawa village is very important because the living pattern, family based conflict, social adjustment, reciprocity and brotherhood among villagers exists together in antagonistic ways. Thus in order to understand mutual reciprocities, intracaste relation, etc Rajanpur village is very important. Therefore, it is important to know briefly about the villages under study.

#### *Rajanpur Village*

Rajanpur is numerically dominated by Yadavs therefore, in order to know intracaste relation, this village is very important. It has good irrigation facilities, electricity, primary school, and linked with *pucca* road. It is also interlinked with Sudanapur market and Madanpura village. Sudanapura village represents to Kurmi and Chamar castes while Madanpura represents to Brahmin (dominated) community. It has also good financial prosperity (in terms of suitable business, land position, personal tractor, and two wheelers) than other village, because they (mostly, Yadav) have good 'social capital'. In sense of numerical strength, Yadav community is enjoying here with dominant position. The result of this, Yadavs can be identified as 'dominant caste' in Rajanpur village. Moreover, they also keep dominance on few other native villages.

Now most of the Yadav families are also taking interest in Samajwadi Party (current ruling political

party in Uttar Pradesh). The villagers of Rajanpur migrate for seeking job and business purpose in many states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra. Few villagers are also engaged in tilling the land for economic surplus. Slowly and gradually, people of Rajanpur are purchasing the land nearby *Chauraha* (market) and urban areas. The inhabitants of Rajanpur can be divided into three caste groups, namely Yadav, Darji and Chamar in which Yadav represents to 'sixty-five families' while Daraji and Chamar caste have sequentially two and five families. Overall, it represents more than five hundred inhabitants.

In term of cultural practices, most of the villagers deeply believe in origins of the caste as well as its tradition that is why the tendency of active participation in ritual activities is very high (about sixty-two percent). Most of the villagers believe in purification, domination and superiority feelings. Mutual relation (within Yadavs) and village unity are operating there through the intracommunity basis whereas few social activities like *Deeh Puja* (the worship of village deity), *Hoond* system (mutual sharing group of laborer activities for agricultural purpose) and participation in *Bhoj* (community feast), etc give space to make intercaste relation.

#### *Tandawa Village*

Tandawa is neighboring village of Rajanpur. It is located in Kithava village *panchayat* (local monitoring unit). This village constitutes semi-*pacca* road, irrigation facilities, electricity (more than eighty percent household), and most of the families have own hand-pump. The inhabitants of Tandawa can be confined with representation of three hundred and twenty-two people who are equipping an area of more than one thousand acres, of which as much as, all land are under cultivation (Census of India, 2011). More than sixty members of this village are engaged in agrarian activities. Few families, those who are smaller landholders specially Pasi and Kahar caste engage in *Adhiya* (sharecropper) and *Rehan* system (leasing land for cultivation). Other sources of income of villagers are milk-production and petty business.

In brief, eight families have their own shop including restaurant, furniture shops, merchant and cosmetics shop. Apart from this, other families are

engaged in private jobs in many cities like Sultanpur, Gurgaon, Noida, Delhi, Mumbai and Gujarat, etc. Few families are engaged in caste based traditional job like Sheep and Goat farming, making leaf plates, making clay pots, etc within village especially who belong to Kumhar, Gaderiya and Banmanus castes.

It is found that 'Jajmani' system also exists as a part time source of income while major sources of livelihood are agriculture and milk productions. Years back, 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Grantee Scheme' (*MGNREGA*) became extra source of earning money but after BJP (ruling party in centre) government they feel disappointment. For economic surplus, two self-help groups (SHGs) give a hope of ray to thirteen families. In sum, these phenomena create a kind of economic reciprocity with mutual perceptivity in between the villagers.

#### *Social Stratum and Caste Representation*

The inhabitants of Tandawa are divided into ten castes but, economically and socially, Yadav and Thakur castes have good position. Most of the village's lands are under the control of Yadav's and Thakur's families. Therefore, the lower castes are working as a wage labour in the field of Yadavs and Thakurs caste. According to the Census data (2011), out of sixty-two families, thirty-seven families are identified under the list of below the poverty line (BPL), and two families are under the list of *Antyodaya* (most backward). Among villagers, the forty-two per cent population are being counted as 'illiterate' while remaining fifty-eight per cent villagers are counted as 'literate' (it means those who can read and write a language). However, Yadav, one of the dominant castes, is the numerically larger group with membership of ninety people. Pasi (untouchable caste but upper than Chamar caste), Kumhar and Thakur castes are numerically the second larger castes respectively 68, 52 and 45 members. Apart from this, Carpenters (38 members), Merchants (33 members), Shepherds (25 members), Chamar (18 members) and Banmanus (8 members) are representing the ethos of Tandawa village.

#### *Social Settings and Changing Pattern*

According to one of the respondents, 'few decades back, traditionally higher caste like 'Thakur'

was dominant caste in Tandawa village. During that time, lower castes supposed to call them with the symbolically dominant titles of 'Babu' and 'Bhaiya' (same as a protector like a father). Lower castes were also used to touch the feet of so-called upper caste and few people were also use to wash the feet of *Brahmin* priest. During that time, *Thakurs* were requiring the 'Begar' and 'Harwahi' (unwanted or free wage labours) because during that time most of land was under their hand.

#### *Paradigm Shift in Leadership Patterns*

Eminent scholar like Jaffrelot (2003) writes that 'leadership has been described as a process of social influence in which one person can recruit the help of others in the achievement of a common task'. In this regard if we look at the implementation of *Panchayati Raj* (after 1993) in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh that has made distinctive change. This change can be measured in the mobilization of backward class in political landscape. Whereas, two other major factors so-called 'Quota Politics' and 'Kisan Politics' are also responsible for changing the scenarios in Hindi speaking belts.

The changing pattern of leadership can be seen in Tandawa village, for instance, during the last two decades backward castes have organized in Tandawa village under the leadership of Durga Prasad Yadav and Raj Bahadur Yadav who belong to backward caste as well as of middle background family. With the conversation of villagers, it is found that the mobilization began when Yadavs took the decision to stop *Begari* custom (unwanted free labour), *Harwahi* and *Charwahi* system (forms of bonded labour). The decision became politically fertile land for them. Now, villagers accept to Durga Prasad Yadav and Raj Bahadur Yadav as their leader, even *Thakur* caste too. According to respondents, 'few years back (in Tandawa village) there were lack of basic infrastructures like electricity, hand-pump, road, school, etc whereas due to the efforts of Durga Prasad Yadav now its face has been changed, and now these facilities are available there. It appears now the most of the villagers are aware about their political rights because of the accessibility of *Panchayat Bhawan* (the building of village Panchayat) in Tandawa village.

#### OVERVIEW

A celebrated quote of Karl Marx (1843-44) is relevant to put here, "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people...". The above quote gives a way to examine the social condition in Indian scenarios in which religion plays a grater role in people's life where they show 'helplessness' to some extent. Although in case of cattle herder commune like 'Yadav', their socio-political activism manifests that religion is a vital tool for them to achieve the ambition of political mobility, especially in Hindi speaking belts, for example, few organizations like Samajwadi Party (SP), Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Dal (United), All India Yadav Mahasabha (AIYM), etc have been established by them for their political objective. Yadav-leaders often claim that 'politics is vocation' for them. In addition, Michelutti (2004) cites the words of R.M.S. Yadav ('99), "Lord Krishna was a great man and the Yadav community should be proud of the path that he left to them. Lord Krishna gave them three principles: democracy, social justice and commitment to equality...he was the first person to begin a 'democratic way of governance'...".

Apart from the textual understanding, the religious notion can be seen among Yadav community in Rajanpur and Tandawa villages, which is reflected in their folklore so-called '*Biraha*'. The religious inspiration gives them strength in order to make effective and consolidated intracaste as well as intercaste relation form local to provincial level.

#### *Pattern of Reciprocity among Yadavs*

The pro-caste tendency, among urbanite middle caste group like 'Yadav' in eastern Uttar Pradesh, is existing since the establishment of AIYM and Samajwadi Party. Although at the village level, few caste based practices can be seen through socio-ritual activity of *Bhoj*. In the same order, after analyzing the oral history and personal narratives of respondents it can be said *Bhoj* is a form of social apparatus that plays very important role to make "organizational capital" as well as "social capital" among Yadav community. In the same way, Yadavs are carrying the



traditional values with the notion of village exogamy as well as propensity into socio-ritual activities like celebrating *Bhoj*, *Deeh* worship, etc for fulfilling their socio-cultural desire. Apart from that, it can also be noticed that they also give more weight for modern values like equality, fraternity, social justice etc within a local setting.

#### *Multiple Reciprocities among Villagers*

The reciprocal relationship among villagers of Rajanpur and Tandawa villages is practiced through many activities, for instance, few activities are based on 'mutual exchange' that is carried out through invitation and *Hond*<sup>12</sup> system while it is also noticed that communally performed practices like *Bhoj*, *Barahi*<sup>13</sup> and *Terahi*<sup>14</sup> also play very important role to build social cohesion. Thus, few other traditional performance like practices of worshipping *Kali-Mata Puja* (worshipping of local goddess), *Deeh Puja* (the worshipping of village's deity), etc also create a kind of atmosphere for 'social homogeneity'.

Apart from that few formal institutions like village Panchayats, schools, etc give a space to build intercaste relation in both the villages. In the same way, there are few other organizational activities that are performed by football teams, cricket teams, students' organizations, etc which create intercaste reciprocities in certain way (especially as a form of 'latent function'). It is also noticed that public places like weekly market and *mela* (yearly fair) also give a space to build mutual relationship in both the villages in larger context.

If we look at the facts of intracaste relation in both the villages, the whole process of maintaining caste relationships can be identified in two streams – traditional and modern. Customarily, traditional intracaste relation is being functioned by *Chaudharis* (caste heads), *Mukhiya* (family head) and *Panch Parmeshawara* (customary body of social justice). It appears that the tradition based political reciprocities are mostly being followed in a non-democratic way by village aristocrats. While the modern reciprocities can be exemplified through political domain like 'Village Panchayat', 'Block Panchayat' and 'District Panchayat', in a democratic way.

Apart from these two major divisions, it can be observed that most of the people are engaged in cattle

herding and agricultural activities. Therefore, the probability of dependency on nature in rural society is more than urban society. We can see among villagers of Tandawa, during the occurrence of flood, natural hazards or any other natural calamity, they use to help each other in reciprocal way without any expectation of getting return. These phenomena can be identified as 'situational reciprocities'. However, conflict and cooperation are the basic nature of human being, and positively this mutual cooperative tendency as well as the notion of reciprocity among villagers creates 'we-feeling' that is reflected in the principle of 'village exogamy'.

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#### NOTES

1. Right to freedom of religion has been covered in articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of Indian constitution which provides religious freedom to all citizens of India.
2. Literally, the term 'Ahi' means snake. Mythically, 'Ahi' was a powerful demon and known as '*Vishparva*' in Mahabharata text.
3. The mythology of Mahabharata (a text of Hinduism) reveals that 'Yadu' was a great king, and in the same dynasty lord Krishna (the main hero of 'Geeta' text) was taken incarnation. Yadavs believe that their antecedent was Krishna because he was also engaged in cow-herding in his early childhood.
4. These cognate castes are found in various parts of India. For instance, Ahir, Goala, Panwar, Dabre and Jangade, etc. in Maharashtra, Golla, Kurwa, Peragolla, etc. castes in Andhra Pradesh, Gaulla (They have also sub-castes like Hal, Hav, Kad, Kampe, Uja, etc.), Gauvali, Gopal, Kodar, etc. castes in Karnataka, Adayan, Aruman, Naiyar, Nambiyar, Konar, etc. in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Yadavan, Konar, Athiyar, Adiyar, Udayar, Vaduga, Adeyyar, Golla, Manthi, Karyalan, etc. castes in Pondicherry, Pradhan, Gola, Sadgop, Ahir, Das, Bhutiya, Yavat, Gurbholiya, Mahato, etc. castes in Odisha (see [www.yadavhistory.com](http://www.yadavhistory.com)), and collectively these allied castes is known as 'Yadav' (Rao, '79:124-125).
5. The metaphors like 'Garlic-Caste Structure' (GCS) and 'Onion-Caste Structure' (OCS) are used in this paper from the perspective of respondents. Researcher has used this term in order to understand the notion of caste hierarchy/hierarchies among Yadav. At present, respondents from Yadav community usually claim the notion of multiple-hierarchies among cognate castes have vanished but among localized castes still claim a separate identity. Therefore, both metaphors become important to use in this paper.

6. Collective identity of members of a caste is formed when the caste has certain features that can be understood in following way: (1) a common name which symbolizes the uniqueness of the community, which distinguishes it from it from others, (2) myth of common origin, which relates all the members to the common ancestors, birthplaces and foundation, (3) a shared history i.e. the shared memories of successive generation of the collective community, (4) some cultural characteristics', which can serve to distinguish members from non-members, such as institution, customs, or language, (5) a sense of solidarity on the part of at least a significant section of the collective community.
7. Decade back, there was popular conception about superiority and inferiority, gradation and multiple hierarchies among cognate castes of Yadav community. Therefore, I am using the metaphor 'OCS' in order to reveal the notion of multiple hierarchies among them. If we see the structure of an 'Onion', it can say that there are multiple layers. Interestingly, the idea of multiple hierarchies in caste system which is studied by many scholars is very important at present context in order to understand the propagation of a new pan identity called 'Yadav'.
8. He is 32 years old, educationally below the metric level, and working as a peasant but partly he is also an active member of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).
9. He is a deity, worshipped across many traditions of Hinduism in a variety of different perspectives.
10. It means mutual dependency (in sense of monetary relation), reciprocity (by *Jajmani* system), redistribution (mutual sharing) and exchange (including money, goods and eatable things) etc. where people keep relation accordingly time and situation.
11. This is a traditional ideological group who deeply believes in caste root. They have partial or one side devotion in favor of a particular caste, and they are also devoted to socio, economic, political welfare for own caste only.
12. It is a pattern of participation where peasants use to go for participating as a labour in the field of other peasant. This pattern is not bounded by any caste boundary but it can be seen that upper caste denied to participate in the field of lower castes. Whereas, this mutual participation occurred in between backward castes (like Ahir, Kumhar, Kanhar, Baniya, etc) and ex-untouchable (Pasi, Chamar, et.) castes.
13. The feast ceremony which is being organized after twelve days of new born baby mostly on the birth of a male child.
14. It is a feast that is being organized after thirteen days of death.

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