RITES OF PASSAGE IN SHANTI NAGAR

RUTH S. FREED AND STANLEY A. FREED

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ABSTRACT

In the years of 1958 and 1959, Shanti Nagar was a traditional Indian village in the beginning stages of change toward modernization, primarily from influences emanating from Delhi. This study provides a descriptive ethnography of the rites of passage of birth, marriage, and death as they were at that time celebrated; it indicates what changes had been and were occurring and attempts to predict some that may occur in the future. In addition, the monograph provides a symbolic analysis of some of the ceremonies, rituals, stories, and songs based on the village beliefs regarding them, particularly in the context of Hinduism.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper describes, analyzes, and interprets the rites of passage of the life cycle celebrated in 1958 and in 1959 in a village in India here called Shanti Nagar. The fourth in a series of monographs on this village, it also discusses the effects of urban and other influences which cause change in the traditional rites of the life cycle in this small village located about 11 miles (17.7 km.) from the City of Delhi. In the first monograph of the series (Freed and Freed, 1976), we presented the general theoretical background of our research; basic information, such as the location of the village with regard to roads and railroads, climate, and demographic information; conventions of nomenclature, such as binomial names for castes (for example, Brahman Priest and Jat Farmer), the use of a capital letter to denote a caste name (for example, Barber, Farmer, and Priest), the use of a lower case letter to indicate profession only (for example, barber, farmer, priest); acknowledgments; and a detailed analysis of the social organization of the village. Two subsequent papers, one on economics, technology, and ecology (Freed and Freed, 1978) and the other on sickness and health (Freed and Freed, 1979) reported additional data, some of which are closely related to the subject we discuss in this monograph. A minimum of information from the three earlier volumes essential to an understanding of the topics discussed in the present paper is repeated.

One aspect of the presentation adopted in the earlier monographs is followed here. Because in 1958–1959, the period of fieldwork, Shanti Nagar represented both a traditional village and one in the initial stages of response to strong urban influences emanating from Delhi, a city that was experiencing rapid modernization and Westernization, we will describe both the traditional rites of passage and changes that had occurred or were taking place.

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A NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF HINDI WORDS AND NOMENCLATURE

Proper names of persons, castes, organizations, places, annual festivals, and

geographical features, and of all words contained in Webster's "Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged" have been reproduced in Roman script. Other Hindi words (and a few Sanskrit words), the Romanized spellings of many of which have become more or less standardized, because they frequently appear in English publications, have been italicized and spelled in their customary forms without diacritics. English plurals and possessives have been used (except when Webster's gives the Hindi plural), for example, *barat, barat*s (pl.).

In general we use binomial names for castes. The first word is the usual Hindi designation for the caste; the second, an English word that denotes the traditional occupation of the caste and/or translates the Hindi term. For example, the English translation of Nai is barber, the traditional occupation of the caste; hence, the caste designation, Nai Barber. Jat does not mean farmer in English, but the Jats are traditionally farmers: hence, the caste designation, Jat Farmer. There were two castes of potters (Kumhars) in Shanti Nagar, the Gola Kumhars and the Mahar Kumhars. Rather than use a cumbersome three-term name, we designate the castes, Gola Potter and Mahar Potter. When the same caste is mentioned several times in succession, we often shorten the name after its first use either to the Hindi or the English component. In such use, the English word is capitalized. Words such as potter, farmer, and priest when not capitalized refer to occupations and not to castes; for example, "Ram Kishan, a Brahman Priest, was a farmer" means that the foregoing member of the Brahman caste worked as a farmer.

MONEY AND MEASURES

We use Indian units to designate money and measures, especially since in the context of rites of passage the numbers have symbolic meanings. With respect to money, the several devaluations of the dollar since 1959 and the steady attrition of its purchasing power may mislead the reader into underestimating the purchasing power of the sums of Indian money that we report. Monetary conversions were made on the basis of the rate of exhange that was 4.76 rupees to one dollar in 1958; at that time, the Indian rupee was worth more in terms of the dollar than it is now. Moreover, to keep in mind that the dollar to which we refer was more valuable in 1957–1959 still fails to convey adequately a realization of the value of the Indian rupee. Perhaps the best appreciation of its value can be obtained from the estimate that Meier has made of the cost for an individual of a minimum adequate standard of living in New Delhi in April 1960, "a level of living well above subsistence and one which permitted cultural activity as sophisticated as any that has been achieved up to the present day—so long as such cultural activity renounced conspicuous consumption of material goods or energy" (Meier, 1962, p. 304). The total annual cost was Rs. 1030, a figure that included prorated sums for essential urban services, such as police, schools, and public health that amount to a total of Rs. 365 (Meier, 1962, table 1). For detailed descriptions of the economic aspects of rites of passage see Freed and Freed, 1978, pp. 106–130.

There were two monetary systems: one, the ancient traditional system; the second, the decimal system. The Government of India had decided to convert its currency to the decimal system, but in 1957–1959 both systems were in use. In the traditional system, the rupee, abbreviated Re., Rs. (pl.), is divided into 16 annas. An anna is divided into 12 pie, three of which equal a pice. In the decimal system, the rupee is divided into 100 naye paise (later shortened to paise) abbreviated nP. We will give sums of one rupee or more in the decimal form, reserving annas for sums of less than a rupee: for example, Rs. 8.25 (8 rupees and 4 annas). Because the rupee was worth 21 cents, an approximate value in dollars of a sum of rupees can be obtained by dividing by five.

The unit of weight in the Shanti Nagar region was the seer, approximately equivalent to 2.05 pounds (.93 kg.). Consequently, one can easily convert seers to pounds by multiplying by 2. The seer is divided into 16 chhataks. A maund, equal to 40 seers, is approximately equivalent to 82 pounds (37.2 kg.).

HINDUISM IN SHANTI NAGAR

Since the rites of passage occur in a socio-religious context and their analysis depends on an interpretation of these Hindu rites as practiced in Shanti Nagar, this interpretation is to some degree symbolic. That the villagers all spoke Hindi and were Hindus is pertinent to the interpretation because these features indicate that the villagers shared a long tradition of linguistic and other cultural symbols based on their language being a part of the Indo-European linguistic stock and having derived from Sanskrit. Although Shanti Nagar is situated in the Union Territory of Delhi, culturally it is part of the Haryana region, which extends into the Punjab. The Haryana region is both a cultural and linguistic area where the language is Haryana, a dialect of Western Hindi influenced by Punjabi and Ahirwati, the latter a dialect of Rajasthani (Rao, 1971, pp. 18–19). The dialect spoken in the City of Delhi differed from that of Shanti Nagar; many villagers, especially those who worked in Delhi, were adept in both dialects. The origins of the religious beliefs and cosmology of Shanti Nagar were recorded early in time, for the villagers inhabited an area of India associated with ancient Hindu mythology: Kurukshetra, the battlefield of the Mahabharata lay to the north; Mathura, Vrindaban, Braj, and the Jumna River—places associated with the god Krishna—were situated somewhat to the southeast; Ayodhya (Oude), the mythical capital over which the deity Rama Chandra ruled, supposedly was located somewhere in this region (Dowson, 1950, pp. 38–39, 161, 172; Zimmer, 1956, pp. 8–9, and appendix b; Morris, 1969, pp. 1496, 1498–1502, and endpaper).

Although the villagers shared Hindi traditions, within the village there were some differences in belief between castes and families, as is not unusual throughout India. These differences represented changes which had occurred through time in Hinduism and in the practices associated with various castes. Hinduism has never had a central organization to perpetuate the faith, but rather has developed numerous cults and philosophies with regard to belief and interpretation. In this respect Shanti Nagar reflected the overall characteristic of Hinduism, a toleration of a number of different interpretations and practices of religion. In general, the religious practices fell into three categories: Orthodox Hinduism, known as Sanatan Dharma, which in the village primarily followed Vaishnavite practices; the Arya Samaj, a reform sect of Hinduism which believed in one God only; and a miscellaneous assortment of religious practices in which deities and customs of the little tradition of Hinduism were followed in contrast to those of the great tradition followed by Sanatan Dharma and the Arya Samaj. Included within this last group were some Islamic practices. All three of these divisions are pertinent for understanding the rites of passage celebrated during the life cycle; however, the influence of the Arya Samaj in the village should especially be taken into account in explaining the differences from caste to caste in the rites of passage. Hinduism and ceremonial in Shanti Nagar cannot be understood unless this influence is made clear. Although all the villagers had been influenced to some extent by the Arya Samaj movement, many did not subscribe to Arya Samaj tenets and did not know they had been so influenced.

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883), a Brahman from the region of Kathiawar in the state of Gujerat. From about 1845 to 1860, as a student and holy man, he journeyed to many of the sacred places of India, particularly Varanasi (Benares), Hardwar, and Mathura. Subsequently, from approximately 1860 to 1863, he sat at the feet of a Punjabi spiritual teacher, Swami Virjananda, during which time he is said to have formulated his doctrine of "back to the Vedas." In 1875, he published his influential *Satyartha Prakasha* (*The Light of Truth*). From 1860 until his death, Swami Dayanand founded a new Hindu cult and established a religious-political organization that extended through northern India, one of the functions of which was to provide care for indigent Indians. Uttar Pra-

desh, the Punjab, and the Delhi region form the area where the major impact of the Arya Samaj was felt (Rai, 1967, p. 7, chaps. 2 and 15; Shastri, 1965, chap. 1; Ghosh, 1976, p. 118).

According to our informants, an Arya Samaj preacher first visited Shanti Nagar in 1923. Although direct contact through a preacher of the Arya Samaj may have been relatively late, knowledge of the Arya Samaj and of Swami Dayanand had spread earlier throughout the region, and the general climate of village opinion was compatible with Arya Samaj philosophy and reforms. The teachings of the Arya Samaj were particularly acceptable to members of the Jat Farmer caste, the dominant caste in Shanti Nagar and one of the important castes of landowners in the Union Territory of Delhi, Haryana, southern Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh. The Jats, renowned as practical, industrious farmers, found the anti-Brahmanical position of the Arya Samaj congenial, for they were in some measure opposed to the power of Brahmans before the introduction of the sect (Temple, 1883–1885, I, p. 134). In addition, they had been influenced by the concept of one God as a result of centuries of Islamic contact. Religiously, they tended toward monotheism rather than monism (Blunt, 1931, p. 297). As a result of Arya Samaj teachings, the villagers emphasized the concept of rebirth as being of more importance than the concept of release from the round of rebirths which was more akin to the Brahmanical tradition of Sanatan Dharma, and they eliminated temples and idols from the village. There were no religious schools, gurus, swamis, or sadhus in Shanti Nagar as a result of Arya Samaj influence.

Saraswati was influenced to some extent by monotheism and other Western values introduced by the British (Farquhar, 1915, pp. 101 ff; Ghosh, 1976, p. 118). Accordingly, his interpretation of the Vedas does not follow orthodox tradition or the earlier generally accepted translations and interpretations of Sanskritic scholars (Farquhar, 1915, pp. 116–118). He was against the many cults within Hinduism, such as those arising from the worship of the different reincarnations of Vishnu. He argued strongly against the cult of Krishna worship as described in the Bhagavata Purana, saying, "each Purana vies with another in humbuggery" (Saraswati, 1956, p. 489). He denied the existence of ghosts and miscellaneous spirit forces and denounced all forms of magic and miracles, claiming that illness should be cured by fumigation with fire and incense and by cleanliness and that curing should be practiced only by those with a knowledge of physiology and physics, his definition of medical knowledge. He opposed the vested interests and powers of the Brahmans although he himself was one, and he was against Brahmans soliciting alms. Although he believed in the efficacy of prayer when coupled with Vedic hymns and the fire ceremony, he disapproved of fasting and the repetition of mystic syllables (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 46, 469–474, 479–489, 500–505, 531–533, 556–557, 853, 854–856, 857).

As a result of the Arya Samaj, at least a part of the village population believed that fate alone did not govern them but that to some extent they could control their own destiny. The Arya Samaj provided the villagers with a nationalistic pride by interpreting the history of India as a glorious one and by arguing that through a return to the Vedas, it might be possible to restore a Golden Age in India. The concept of an earlier Golden Age in India has provided a psychological defense against the prestige of Western industrial-scientific culture. Max Müller says of Swami Dayanand, "To him not only was everything contained in the Vedas perfect truth, but he went a step further, and by the most incredible interpretations succeeded in persuading himself and others that everything worth knowing, even the most recent inventions of modern science, were alluded to in the Vedas. Steam-engines, railways, and steam-boats, all were shown to have been known, at least in their germs, to the poets of the Vedas, for Veda, he argued, means Divine knowledge, and how could anything have been hid from that?" (Müller, 1898, Rig-Veda, pp. 144–154, quotation on p. 151). The villagers, following in Saraswati's footsteps, updated him by observing

that the weapon with which the hero-god of the Ramayana, Rama, slew the demon Ravana was an atomic missile.

Swami Dayanand appears to have had more of an impact on Shanti Nagar than any other recent historical figure. He achieved a philosophical accommodation between traditional Hinduism and Western ideas that was congenial to the people of north India as well as in Shanti Nagar. He established an organization to propagate his ideas, which eventually resulted in the appearance of preachers of Arya Samaj doctrine in villages. His teachings not only provided a defense against cultural penetration by British ideas and values, but he, also, by a judicious selection of traditional Hindu values to which he gave some modern twists, helped to prepare India for the modern world. He advanced a view of life that fostered a work ethic, valued scientific knowledge, was oriented toward the future, reduced the cost and number of ceremonies, and provided freedom from Brahmanical domination and hence greater democracy in religion. He did so by stressing that his concepts came from the Vedas and, in so doing, he made it possible for villagers to cope with the onslaught of new ideas from the West without a sense of cultural loss or any feeling of demoralization.

Although Saraswati taught that the Vedic hymns referred to one deity only and the names of deities were simply ways of referring to his attributes, this type of interpretation was compatible with earlier beliefs in Bhagwan, one great God, and the tendency toward monotheism. The Arya Samajis in Shanti Nagar, following their guru, said, "Light is one but it has many flashes." In stating that the symbols for the deities and their characteristics were the attributes of one deity, Saraswati was not far from other philosophizing tendencies in Hinduism. However, his denouncing many of the beliefs of Sanatan Dharma and miscellaneous religious cults and implying that many of the so-called deities were only historical or legendary figures led to the suppression of their names and other symbols pertaining to them. Therefore, in the village these religious symbols were apt to be the most distorted and veiled. Deeply embedded, culturally conditioned beliefs about deities die hard so that, despite the Arya Samaj, numerous references to Ram Chandra, Sita, Krishna, Shiva, and other deities of Hinduism as well as to their attributes appeared in stories, songs, and in particular during the celebration of the rites of passage of the life cycle and the yearly round of village festivals.

CEREMONIAL COMPONENTS

We use the phrase "rites of passage" to refer to those ceremonies, rituals, and events which are organized around the life cycle of an individual and provide a passage, essentially a transition, from one status to another. This definition is applicable whether the rite pertains to a single individual, to two individuals operating dyadically, or to a group of participants. Descriptions of rites of passage include the individuals who make the transition, their relatives, and members of their communities, for all are affected and many persons organize, participate in, and observe the rites.

For the purposes of analysis, we use the following terms as here defined. There are three rites of passage: birth, marriage, and death. Each of these rites includes many ceremonies, rituals, and events and generally takes place during a period of from a few months to several years. In their transition from one status to another, the main actors in the rites pass through three phases that are characterized as separation, transition, and incorporation.

A rite of passage includes all the ceremonies, rituals, and events related to birth, marriage, or death. A ceremony is a complex of ritual behavior, often named, that occurs within a rite of passage, for example, the ceremony (*Chhathi*) that occurs on the sixth day after a birth. A ritual may occur within a ceremony, which is composed of a number of related rituals, or it may exist by itself. In marriage ceremonies, for example, tying red threads on the right wrist or placing a tilak on the forehead of participants may be part of a complex of rituals. At birth, however,

placing the newborn infant on the ground is a ritual by itself and not part of a ceremony. Examples of events which regularly occur as part of a rite of passage are a father's search for a bridegroom for his daughter, the assembling of guests, and the preparation of food. Although these events take on some of the characteristics of rituals due to their predictability, they are generally not sacred acts and are best classified as events rather than rituals or ceremonies.

With regard to religious beliefs of the Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharma, and the little tradition, the rites of passage had two principal ceremonial components: the samskaras and ceremonies of the little tradition. The samskaras were orthodox rites of passage recognized by followers of both the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma as established in Vedic literature. They were conceptualized as the threads that connected the events of one's life and ultimately reconciled life and death. Repeatedly occurring in the round of rebirths, life and death were cyclical; the samskaras affirmed this continuity. Among the rites of passage ceremonies, the samskaras were easily recognized because they were conducted by a professional Brahman priest and usually featured a fire ceremony. The ceremonies of the little tradition that were observed at birth, marriage, and death were enacted by the involved family, their relatives, or by religious specialists other than professional Brahman priests.

There were differences in detail and elaboration of all of the rites of passage ceremonies. These ritual differences, whether occurring in the samskaras or other ceremonies, were generally based on differences between Arya Samaj precepts, Sanatan Dharma, and, especially for the low castes, lack of knowledge. They were often related to specific castes, and the varying economic statuses of families. All castes who were not Arya Samajis celebrated ceremonies of the little tradition, which were often banned by Arya Samajis.

The fire ceremony consists of basic Hindu rituals. It was enacted by a professional Brahman priest in Shanti Nagar except among some of the Arya Samajis who sometimes carried out their own domestic ceremonies because Saraswati taught that one need not be a Brahman to perform a fire ceremony. Although the growth of literacy in the village had increased the number of qualified persons, the complexity of many samskaras was such that few non-Brahmans were willing to undertake them. For the most important ceremony, the wedding, a skilled priest carried out the fire rituals. A Sanatan Dharma fire ceremony featured a square drawn with five colored substances on freshly dunged earth. The square was internally divided into nine small squares in a three-by-three pattern, each one containing a symbol that represented one of the nine *grahas* (the sun, moon, and five planets, which were considered deities and for which the days of the week are named, and the ascending and descending nodes of the moon, conceived of as demons). A separate square was provided for the fire, with a five- or seven-pointed star drawn in it, five for Arya Samajis, and seven for Sanatan Dharma. The Arya Samajis did not use the square with the nine *grahas* because it represented deities, demons, and polytheistic beliefs. The beauty and elaborateness of the two squares, especially that with the *grahas*, depended upon the skill and esthetic inclination of the officiating priest. The squares and the ceremony represented all the deities and their part in the universe. During the ceremony, the priest chanted hymns, sprinkled water, and fed the fire with traditional sacred substances: sandalwood, clarified butter, and rice, which were offerings to various deities or to God. Although the fire ceremony was a purifier, it was also an index of status. The square or squares and the rituals of the ceremony were more elaborate for the Brahman caste than any other caste, and more often performed for males than for females. The amount of substances used to feed the fire emphasized prestige, wealth, and caste status.

In a fire ceremony, the priest and participants, such as a bride and groom, had symbols indicating that they were in a sacred state. A red thread would be tied around the right wrist; a tilak, usually of turmeric but sometimes of rice and turmeric, would be placed on the forehead. We did not observe the use of betel in Shanti Nagar and inquired

about its apparent absence. We learned that the villagers did not use betel in ceremonies or daily life with one exception. In the prenuptial letter called *Lagan,* a betel nut was enclosed.

The principal ceremonial specialists were priests and Nai Barbers. Priests in Shanti Nagar were classified as either the professional priest capable of conducting complex ceremonies, or the family priest (*purohit*) who performed relatively simple ceremonial tasks for feasts. Except for one elderly man who participated as a professional priest in ceremonies but required assistance because of his age, no male Brahman of Shanti Nagar had the erudition necessary to enact complex ceremonies. For such ceremonies, professional priests from a large neighboring village or elsewhere were summoned. However, high-caste village families who were not of the Brahman or Jat castes and who were too poor to finance elaborate rituals asked one of the Brahman priests of the village to conduct the ceremony even though he was not a professional priest and would of necessity simplify the ceremony. Mathur (1964, pp. 184–185) reports a somewhat similar simplification of the rituals of a fire ceremony in Rajasthan.

The general role and functions of the family priest and the Nai Barber are described in Freed and Freed (1976, pp. 95, 125–126, 128). Both Brahman Priests and Nai Barbers served all castes of Shanti Nagar except the two lowest, the Chamar Leatherworker and the Chuhra Sweeper.[1] These two castes called upon members of their own or slightly higher castes to serve them as priests. Generally, a respected man of the same caste and lineage officiated. For birth ceremonies, a Chuhra Sweeper woman and a Nai Barber woman had ceremonial functions; the Nai Barber woman also helped at weddings. In addition to ceremonial specialists, there was a fixed cast of participants for specific activities consisting of family members and other relatives who played designated and well-understood roles. Such participants frequently were from other villages as well as from Shanti Nagar.

Included among the ceremonial components were relatives of the persons making the transition from one status to another as a result of a rite of passage. The supporting cast of relatives not only participated in numerous ceremonies and events during the rite but also was involved in a complex system of gift exchange associated with it. This system of economic exchange reinforced a kinship network composed of both consanguineal and affinal relatives.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RITES OF PASSAGE

Four modes of thought contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the rites of passage of the life cycle found in Shanti Nagar. First, the ethnographic descriptions of the rites provide the main body of data. Second, the organization and presentation of the rites and the sequence of ceremonies, rituals, and events which compose them are based on van Gennep's classic study of the rites of passage written in 1908 (van Gennep, 1961, p. xxi). His analysis of a rite of passage identifies three stages, separation, transition, and incorporation, by which individuals change their status and role behavior and during which they pass in and out of sacred and profane states. The third mode of thought is an eclectic, psycho-cultural approach in which culture is a conditioner of individuals so that they become enculturated to meet the norms of the community. This conditioning results in suppression and expression of emotions in forms of behavior more or less controlled by cultural norms. In psychoana-

[1]In Freed and Freed (1976, pp. 100–111), a distinction was made between high castes (Brahman Priest, Baniya Merchant, Jat Farmer, Bairagi Beggar, Lohar Blacksmith, Mali Gardener, Jhinvar Waterman, and Chhipi Dyer) and low castes (Mahar Potter, Gola Potter, Nai Barber, Chamar Leatherworker, and Chuhra Sweeper). For the purpose of analyzing ceremonies, however, we modify this classification and define as high castes all those served by Brahman Priests in life cycle rites. On the basis of this criterion, only the Chamar Leatherworkers and the Chuhra Sweepers are low caste. The rest are high castes.

The houses of the same caste tended to form a cluster in the village; the clusters of the low-caste houses generally were situated adjacent to one another. Hence, one can speak of a low-caste side and a high-caste side of the village.

lytic theory the process of conditioning results in aspects of experience becoming conscious, unconscious, and subconscious, as well as in the development of a conscience which monitors behavior (cf. Spiro, 1979). This cultural processing is related to the fourth mode of thought, namely, that ceremonies in the rites of passage contain many symbols that provide a ritual language which may be deciphered to reveal meaning. These symbols contribute to the process by which individuals become socialized and enculturated; they also may be translated to obtain their meaning.

To understand the method to be used in interpreting the symbols in the rites of passage, it is essential to explain symbolic analysis, to define a symbol, and to provide an illustrative example of symbols found in Shanti Nagar. Symbolic analysis should delineate the boundaries of each symbol and indicate the kinds of things to which it refers (Spiro, 1969, pp. 209–211). A symbol represents an idea or set of ideas, which may be directly or indirectly perceived and may require translation. A symbol may be a drawing, a plastic or sculptured figure, a gesture, a form of ritual activity, a verbalization, or any one of a vast number of items or behavioral activities, but it is usually a brief form of reference to a thought or idea, or to a complex of thoughts and ideas. Unless one can find a means of translating the symbol in context, one who is not culturally conditioned to it may not understand the thought or thoughts behind it. In using symbolic analysis, one deals with symbols at the overt level in recording data, at the overt and covert levels in the interpretation of the symbols, and then selects and pieces together the various meanings to form a coherent whole, which for the purposes of simplicity is here termed a translation. The translation depends on the meanings behind the symbols together with rules for organizing them. The context of the symbol is a body of cultural data which generally has been transmitted for generations, even centuries, as in the case of symbols of Hinduism. Because of the long time span involved in the process of transmission, symbolic interpretations have been considered to be a part of the racial unconscious, or of a collective psyche and unconscious—the idea being that universal concepts appear in various races as a result of this collectivity from the beginnings of mankind (cf. Mullahy, 1948, pp. 145–149). However, in this analysis and interpretation of symbols, the theory regarding their transmission is based on learning and consists of first an imprinting in the earliest stages of infancy by the parents and other members of the infant's community, then of imitation, and gradually of more complex levels of learning. These kinds of learning are what is meant by the transmission of a tradition of symbols through cultural conditioning (cf. Sullivan, 1953, pp. 186–187).

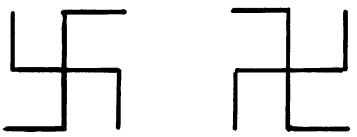

FIG. 1. Swastikas.

An example of a symbol is the swastika, used in the Hinduism of Shanti Nagar as an auspicious sign to convey the idea of good luck, that all may be well. The nine points that help serve to define its form represent the nine *grahas*, which in effect represent all the deities and the universe (Freed and Freed, 1980). The central point of the swastika is equivalent to *bindu,* the place at which there is a beginning. Its crooked branches indicate that knowledge of the supernatural is not within the realm of human logic. This same symbol in Western history brings to mind the rise and fall of Nazism and all that has been associated with it although the swastika in both the Indian and German contexts derived from its origin in the Middle East about 6000 years ago. Whatever the context, the swastika signifies supernatural power and auspiciousness to its users (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 295, 296, 353, 355, 357; Heiden, 1969, pp. 45–46, 142–144; Freed and Freed, 1980). In Shanti Nagar, the swastika was used to replace a ceremonial square representing the nine *grahas* after the priest had completed a ceremony. The vil-

lagers considered the replacement of any supernatural symbol by the swastika as auspicious and necessary to ward off evil which could enter where an empty space existed.

The basis for the translation of symbols lies in the cultural context of the subject analyzed, which in this study consists of descriptions of the rites of passage celebrated by the population of Shanti Nagar. The rites of passage, defined as consisting of both ceremonial and other activities which occur during the period of transition of individuals from one stage to another in the life cycle, provide a ritual language of symbols. As Kluckhohn (1942, p. 58) pointed out, "both myth and ritual are symbolical procedures and are most closely tied together" to provide control of those aspects of life which prove the most difficult, disturbing, and least subject to technological and rational controls.

The descriptions of these rites of passage are based on observation, participation, and interviewing informants. The validity of data was checked by questioning several informants on specific points and by observing as many ceremonies as time permitted. The interpretations and analysis of the rites of passage are based on their occurrence in the context of the lives of individuals and of village life, but also on the interpretation and symbolic analysis of ritual activities together with myths, stories, songs, religious beliefs, and any other cultural data pertinent to the subject obtained during the course of the fieldwork. Symbolic interpretation depends on the premise that the individual who grows up in a village, such as Shanti Nagar, will, through the process of enculturation, be subjected to a multitude of symbols imprinting themselves on the various senses from an early age in both ceremonial and everyday events. These symbols so pervade life that they form a mythic system of communication for a host of ideas, many of which stem from the vast literature of Hinduism, even though the individuals may never have read this literature.

The kinds of thought processes which are at work in a mythic system of communication possess an inner ordering unknown to those who use such a system although some individuals may have occasional flashes of insight beyond the overt level of understanding. A symbolic system of communication operates at the emotional level and is based on everyday learning situations in family and community. These learning situations provide the means of culturally conditioning individuals through the largely unconscious processes of enculturation and cultural change. Implicit in them are a number of subprocesses: resistance, compatibility, acceptance, selectivity, distortion, embroidery or elaboration, reworking, taking the form but not the substance, carrying the substance in a different form, and masking. These subprocesses affect the symbols as well as the individuals who learn them. They provide a structure by which the symbols are tied together, comparable to a grammar by which words are ordered in a sentence. Therefore, these processes should be considered in symbolic analysis.

The following procedure is the means by which analysis of symbols is carried out. First, the symbols and overt meanings are abstracted from the cultural context of Shanti Nagar; second, van Gennep's ideas constitute a primary source for interpreting symbolic behavior in the rites celebrated in Shanti Nagar; third, Freud's theories regarding dream symbols and the processes by which they are reworked have been adapted along with the principles of Cassirer, as well as van Gennep's; and fourth, a number of sources on Hinduism have been consulted to provide further clues to the symbols.

We have used Freudian dream symbols and the processes related to their interpretation because they are well known, are relatively easily found in Freudian literature, have been amply criticized so that they are best interpreted broadly in context, and because this study takes the position that learning theory is basic to anthropology as a behavioral science, for the individual learns to conform more or less to the norms of a culture.

In using Freudian concepts and theories, we recognize the resistance which many individuals, even highly capable scholars, have

to psychoanalytic and symbolic concepts regarded as universal. Part of this resistance may stem from the lack of a universal language with which to express these universals, part from the resistance of individuals to allow anyone, including themselves, to know their minds, and part to reaction against the Freudian-defined symbols which refer to the sexual processes.

As Freud stated, "An overwhelming majority of symbols in dreams are sexual symbols. . . . When they are interpreted, therefore, the result of this peculiarity gives universal offense, for, in contrast to the multifarious forms of its representation in dreams, the interpretation of the symbols is very monotonous. This is displeasing to everyone who comes to know of it: but how can we help it?" (Freud, 1962, p. 161). A similar monotony in symbolic translations is found in van Gennep's analysis of symbols for rites of passage, which over and over again are either incorporating or segregating. Because van Gennep did not translate them as sexual symbols, the resistance against his interpretations has not been as great.

In our translations of symbols, whether using Freudian (1962, 1967) or other sources, we have conveyed the thoughts behind them according to the focus and context of the particular rite of passage, religious view, and the context of the culture. For example, in the birth rite of passage, the focus is on creation. The translation may be from Freudian sexual symbols, the segregating-integrating symbols of van Gennep (1961), or the Hindu cosmology which views its deities and other supernatural beings as generating energy on which creations are based. For the symbols of Hinduism, we have relied on the following for supplementary clues: Temple (1884–1900), Pathak (1946), Dowson (1950), Daniélou (1964), and Stevenson (1971).

Since the effectiveness of methods used to probe the mind of human beings is often questioned, it might be useful to bear in mind that many methods of research and scholarship are partially science and partially art. In this sense, symbolic analysis or translation may be compared to a physician's diagnosis. The physician learns a roster of categories regarding disease symptoms and looks for them in the symptoms of his patient, some of which may apply to one or another disease and some of which may not be pertinent. In order to diagnose illness accurately, he needs to recognize the symptoms in the patient and fit them into the categories constituting specific diseases. His analysis is based on how well he knows the categories of diseases and their related symptoms, which of these categories overlap and which do not, how well he applies his knowledge to the actual patient, distinguishing the real from the imagined symptoms, and then how skillfully he combines his knowledge in a cogent whole. So, too, it is with a symbolic analysis. In spite of the partially subjective nature of symbolic analysis due to the thought process of association, we have tried to spell out our methods as carefully as possible and to indicate within the description of the rites how such translations were reached.

Although all the foregoing sources were employed in the analysis, they were not used to the same degree. Many of the symbols were repetitive. Once we have identified them, we do not necessarily re-identify them in each ceremony in which they were used, although subsequent interpretations of ceremonies may be based on them. Translations of symbols range from specific to abstruse, but, in context, the translations when fitted together show great concern throughout the cultural fabric with life and death, union and birth. The overall interpretation derived from these rites and their symboling was that individuals sought immortality by passing through the stages of life, death, and then rebirth. The way to do so was by celebrating the rites of passage, thereby tying all of the threads of life, death, and rebirth together. In this way the life cycle and its attendant rites came full circle from birth through marriage and death to rebirth.

To simplify the range of ideas behind the term "symbol," we have borrowed a phrase from Daniélou (1964, pp. 334–336), "thought-form." He uses the phrase as a translation of the term, mantra, otherwise defined as a syllable, word, or verse, which was revealed to a seer in meditation or as an embodiment

in sound of a deity (Morgan, 1953, p. 411). The expression "thought-form" provides a brief, workable definition for the meaning behind symbols.

Van Gennep

Van Gennep's study of rites of passage has influenced anthropologists to observe and study them in many societies. Although the idea of ritual symbols pertaining to rites of passage was not a subject of van Gennep's study, the description of the behavior taking place during the rites was often symbolic. By defining and comparing rites of passage, van Gennep outlined symbolic aspects of culture which occurred regularly during the life cycle in all societies.

Rites of passage have three phases: separation, transition, and incorporation. Associated with these phases are the dichotomous terms, sacred and profane, although these two terms are used relative to the normative status of the individual. The condition of an individual in the transitional or liminal phase is considered to be sacred; otherwise, the individual is in a profane or secular state. An individual in the profane state is a part of the normative social order and is not considered to be a threat to the community or to be in danger; in the sacred state the individual may be considered a threat to the community or may be in danger. In each instance, the sacred and profane are not always easy to understand, for an individual during a series of rituals takes on degrees of sacredness or its opposite, the profane. These dichotomous traits are relative to the ceremonies and the individuals involved. Van Gennep (1961, pp. 12–13) employed the phrase "the pivoting of the sacred" and the sacred state as "magic circles" through which an individual passed when changing from one status to another in a society. Since these changes cannot occur without disturbing a society, rites of passage are therefore basically the means by which a society protects its established order from disorder. The rites provide an ongoing, lifelong process of stages by means of which an individual is enculturated, and they incorporate new individuals or strangers by introducing and smoothing their way into a society (van Gennep, 1961, pp. vii, xii, xiv).

The ceremonies of separation, transition, and incorporation are symbolized by physical acts, drawings, songs, stories, religious observances, and material objects. Basically all ceremonies are either separating or incorporating, but one of these qualities does not necessarily exclude the other in a particular ceremony or ritual. The marriage rite of Shanti Nagar illustrates this principle, for bride and groom throughout this long rite of passage are constantly separated or incorporated into one or another of the two kin groups represented by the young couple. In birth, for example, when the mother has already been separated from the adult male members of the household, the newborn child is separated from the mother through the process of delivery and almost immediately incorporated into its lineage and family by being placed on the ground.

Although van Gennep has listed rituals of incorporation and separation for birth, initiation, marriage, and death and provided ample examples (chaps. IV, V, VI, VII, VIII), basically the list of symbols is relatively simple, and some symbols are similar for both separation and incorporation depending on the situation. For a working list, we have condensed van Gennep. Rituals of separation are most often indicated by changing clothes, cutting, breaking, throwing away, releasing, shaving hair, closing eyes, removing jewelry or other items, burning property or cremating humans, changing food habits, dietary and other taboos, beating, insulting, making noise, purifying through various means, washing or being washed, bathing, ceremonial weeping, closing hands, making a fist, covering oneself with a large cloth or a veil, enclosing oneself in a space, litter, carriage or bullock cart, ransoming, hiding, and finding objects or persons. Rituals of incorporation may be represented by naming, placing on the earth, the first tooth, the first haircut, baptism or similar religious rites such as the fire ceremony at birth in Hinduism, ear and nose piercing, feasting or eating together, bathing, changes in time and space, making an individual into a man or woman whether

physiologically or otherwise, compensation for losing a member (this may be both incorporation and separation depending on who compensates), gift and other economic exchanges between two individuals or groups, tying two individuals together, being wrapped in a single piece of cloth, sitting on a seat together, entering a house or doorway which was previously barred or which is a new abode, or a round of visits. Sometimes the rituals for separation are just the opposite for incorporation; sometimes they are similar but the meaning depends on the context. Spatial symbols—that is, going around a village, mounting a horse or vehicle, going from one place to another—indicate transition from one stage of life to another although these symbols may be separating, incorporating, or both. Multiple repetitions of rituals, such as payments of a dowry in a number of installments or, as in Shanti Nagar, the repetition of a fertility ritual utilizing a coconut as well as sending a metal box to a Brahman bride, emphasize the separation of the bride from her family but also her passage from girlhood to womanhood.

Ceremonies may be concerned with strangers, strangeness, and the unknown. Van Gennep (1961, pp. 15–25) drew attention to this feature in a discussion of territorial passage, rituals which were enacted in space to depict the differences between groups of people and to bridge the gap between them. Further, van Gennep (1961, p. 9) attempted to classify rituals as being animistic or magical-dynamistic in an attempt to characterize the kinds of rituals and their aims. These classifications are not directly applicable to Shanti Nagar, but the purpose behind them is. For the most part these rituals are protective because they guard against strangers and the unknown, essentially danger or disturbances to the social order. Douglas (1970) has pointed out that purity and pollution complexes and their associated rituals are particularly pertinent to maintaining the social order. This theory is related to van Gennep's concepts of territoriality, strangers, and magical rituals of protection. In Shanti Nagar protective rituals symbolized the restoration of purity overtly, but covertly maintained the social order and so have been described and classified along with the other rituals in rites of passage.

All ceremonies in a rite of passage involve changes of status for the individuals around whom they are organized, and for their supporting cast of relatives. These changes involve status and role behavior by sex, age, rank, and sometimes education and occupation. In Shanti Nagar, there were no specific ceremonies for occupational change, and only the initiation ceremony of twice-born castes referred in any way to education. In recent times, an individual might vow to offer to a deity and to distribute candies when a son obtained a job or passed his higher secondary examinations, but there were no formal ceremonies celebrated by everyone for occasions such as these.

The principal rites of passage celebrated during the life cycle were birth, marriage, and death. The principles and symbols from van Gennep as outlined above have been applied to these rites of passage in Shanti Nagar. Although ceremonies of haircutting, ear-boring, and initiation were celebrated in Shanti Nagar, the first was related to birth, and the last two, to marriage. Of these three, initiation was the most important, ear-boring the least. Great expenditures of time, money, and energy were devoted to marriage, birth, and funeral rites. Marriage involved the greatest such expenditure; death, the least.

Freud

The set of symbols derived from Freud (1962, 1967) originated from his analysis of dreams. Freud (1962, pp. 157–158) called "a constant relation . . . between a dream element and its translation a *symbolic* one, and the dream-element itself a *symbol* of the unconscious dream-thought." This point of view may be compared with our definition of a symbol as presenting a thought-form on the covert level, for Freud recognized this similarity between dream elements and other forms of symbolic analysis and said "symbolism is not peculiar to dreams" (Freud, 1962, p. 159).

For the analysis of the symbols occurring in rites of passage, Freud's (1962, pp. 156–177) lecture on "Symbolism in Dreams," provides a useful set of symbols with explanations and examples of their use. He divided symbols into two categories. The first category includes a limited number of symbols representing the human body as a whole, parents, children, brothers, sisters, birth, death, and nakedness. For example, birth is symbolized by water, death by a journey, parents by exalted personages, and nakedness by clothing (Freud, 1962, p. 160). However, each translation has to be worked out in connection with other symbols and through the process of deciphering what Freud called the "dream-work." This first category of Freud's, which includes relatives, was particularly useful in translating symbols pertinent to family, kindred and other forms of social structure in Shanti Nagar. For example, the Sun and the Moon (deities and thus exalted) could refer to a father and mother or to a husband and wife, but more often they referred to the two opposing lineages represented by a husband and wife. This type of symbolic-structural analysis is reinforced by reference to the Mahabharata, one of the great epics of Hinduism, in which opposing sides in a battle are members of the lunar or solar race because of their derivation from these deities. This idea of two opposing sides persists in the social structure of Shanti Nagar where the relatives on the husband's side belong to one group; those on the wife's to another. The struggle between the two sides and the resolution of conflicts are reflected in the section on abusive songs sung during marital rites, in particular the song entitled "Chandrama and Surajmal" (pp. 431–433).

The second category of symbols which Freud used was much more extensive in the number of possible symbols but interpretation was simplified and limited because the symbols referred to "sexual life—the genitals, sexual processes and intercourse" (Freud, 1962, p. 161). These symbols are sufficiently characteristic of sex to be easily identified. For example, the penis may be symbolized by elongated objects, pencils, spears, and the like; the female genitals are often compared with containers, ovens, and identified with the hearth. In the marriage ceremony in Shanti Nagar, the bridal couple goes around a fireplace or hearth; the fire consists of a flame. The two not only symbolize female (hearth) and male (flame) but union. So, too, wood (the female component) is burned by fire (the male).

A general principle employed in using Freudian as well as other sources for translating symbols is that the meanings should be used in the broadest sense. They should be ignored or alternative solutions selected if the translation does not fit into the cultural context. The translation of symbols invariably begins with the village symbol and its overt meaning as given in the cultural context; then a configuration of meanings from myths and religious literature are considered along with meanings from van Gennep, Freud, and the rules of translation as worked out by Freud and others. These rules of translation are derived from Cassirer (1953) and Freud (1962, 1967). Daniélou (1964) was particularly helpful in the interpretation of numbers and religious diagrams.

The rules of translation invoke the overriding principle that symbolic thought is based on emotions and that, as a result of emotional processes, the symbol represents something other than what it seems to be. Symbols are never direct. They mediate between what human beings want and the means by which they attain them; therefore, they may represent a conflict situation. They often represent mythic thought, thought that is not logical and deductive but is based on the senses and the sensual affects resulting from sensory experiences (Cassirer, 1953, pp. 29–31, 88–89). Symbols may be compared to various ways in which perception is formed by cultural and individual experience. Such experience may mask, distort, condense, displace, reverse, repress, reduce, and multiply the reality being perceived (Segall, Campbell, and Herskovits, 1966, pp. 19–21; Hallowell, 1967, pp. 184–202, 216–235). Therefore, a symbolic analysis should take such possibilities into consideration.

The first rule of translation is that a symbol may pertain to but one small part of a ceremony, song, or story; or there may be a number of elements or references behind a symbol, but by itself a symbol need not add up to a whole (Cassirer, 1953, p. 96). This part leads to association with the larger context on the part of the translator. Freud (1962, pp. 179–180, 200, 248, 375) has labeled this principle condensation, for the symbol contains less than the latent thoughts. He provides a series of points to be noted:

1. Some elements are omitted.
2. Only a fragment of the content of a song, story or ceremony may be present.
3. Sometimes the element may be in the form of an ambiguous word, a joke, or a play on words.
4. The translation is built on the core of what the symbol refers to, which is covert and should be derived from the symbol and its context.

The second rule applies to the distortion of ideas, what Freud (1962, p. 182) called displacement. A latent element may be replaced by something more remote, similar to an allusion. The emphasis may have been shifted from what is important to what is unimportant. Distortion in the form of a symbol may be related to tabooed activities. These prohibitions stem from social laws or changes in value and belief within a culture. For example, in Shanti Nagar, due to Arya Samaj influence, symbols for Krishna and Shiva were often disguised because Swami Dayanand Saraswati opposed the worship of Krishna and, in particular, Shiva because he had been subjected to Shivaite influence in his youth in Kathiawar and had rebelled against it. Comparison of the Shanti Nagar data with Stevenson's (1971) study of the Brahmans of Kathiawar, which was carried out a century after Saraswati's birth, is justified because both regions came under the influence of the Arya Samaj that led to the repression and distortion, or masking, of symbols for Krishna and Shiva.

Other symbols subject to distortion are those that concern incest and tabooed sexual relationships. Distortion also affects symbols for sexual activities which are not referred to overtly or which arouse anxiety because they are not completely understood or because they are prohibited. Distorted symbols may also refer to death and dead persons so that circumlocutions for names, substitutions, or epithets may be used to prevent the designated person from dying or, in the case of the dead, to prevent them from returning as ghosts.

The distortions relating to incest and proscribed sexual activities are best known through Freudian symbols pertaining to castration and the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1962, pp. 339–341. 1946). Freud (1962, pp. 345–346) in commenting on these complexes said, "From the time of puberty onward the human individual must devote himself to the great task of freeing himself from the parents; and only after this detachment is accomplished can he cease to be a child and so become a member of the social community." Although we indicate the word or range of words characterizing a symbol or thought form in terms of the Oedipal-castration complexes, in piecing the various symbols together we arrive at a generalized interpretation of these thought-forms in the context of the situation. Since the Greek myths and dramas upon which Freud based his analogy for the maturation of the individual derive from the Greek pantheon, there are similarities between Greek and Hindu deities because of the joint Indo-European cultural-linguistic heritage and the probability that both the Greeks and the Hindus received their traditions from a cultural tradition originating about 2000 B.C. in the steppeland which stretches from Poland to Central Asia. From here nomadic bands of Indo-European speakers diffused to India, parts of Europe, and the Middle East (Basham, 1954, p. 29). It is, therefore, not surprising to find that many of the symbols in Hinduism may be translated much as were the symbols from the Oedipal legend.

The similarity of translations based on Freud, Daniélou, and Dowson is remarkable in the song of Chandrama and Surajmal, which relates all the problems encountered in bringing about a marriage. Many of the

symbols are Oedipal-castration symbols, but the general aim is the union of a couple through marriage in spite of a multitude of difficulties. Rather than translate the symbols from the point of view of individual personalities, we translate them in terms of the cultural view of the stage of life. All the rites of passage in Shanti Nagar contain symbols which concern life and death, union and separation, and creation and destruction. The translation of these symbols is compatible with van Gennep's interpretations, for his concepts of separation and incorporation are central to birth, marriage, and death.

Omissions of information in the symboling process may be due to the information being so well known that it is taken for granted. Stories in the village context were repeated frequently during rites of passage and were often brief. The best sources, under such circumstances, for obtaining the missing symbols were knowledgeable informants, and accounts of Hindu myths and beliefs obtained in extensive library research.

Plastic representations, or the transformation of words into visual images, is another kind of symboling which may be traced through word derivations (Freud, 1962, pp. 178, 183, 185). The power of names and sounds, an important concept of Hinduism, is similar to Freud's concept of plastic representations and is extended to a complex range of meanings stimulated by these names and sounds. A deity's name may stand for well-known characteristics or powers, which once learned become a part of the name for the deity. The goddess Saraswati's name calls to mind knowledge, speech, creation by the word, eloquence, wisdom, learning, art, music, poetry, language, the union of power and intelligence, a graceful woman white in color sitting on a lotus with a slender crescent on her brow, two or eight arms, a lute, a book, a rosary, and a series of other items, each of which says something about her (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 259–260). Her name also calls to mind stories related about her, one of which is that she is somewhat of a termagant (Dowson, 1950, p. 284) since by the process of projection even male deities have difficulty adjusting to learned women. Saraswati is one of many deities whose name calls forth many meanings. Since the names of deities were often given as proper names to individuals in Shanti Nagar, their characteristics too might have been imparted to the person bearing the deity's name or the parents who gave the name to a child might have hoped for such a result.

Plays on words or sounds are characteristic not only of Sanskritic writings but also of word usage in the Haryana dialect, all of which provide an additional kind of allusion for thought-forms. Mantras are another source of symbolic reference, sometimes for very complicated thought-forms. In Shanti Nagar, however, except for professional Brahman priests, not many mantras were recited. The mantras most often repeated were AUM and the Gayatri.

One of the best known mantras in Hinduism is AUM. The thought-forms in AUM are multiple. The proper pronunciation of this mantra must be learned, for the sounds expressed are not simply OM, the way in which the mantra is often represented in Roman letters, but rather each sound has a special way of being formed and its own multiple significance. A, U, and M represent sequentially Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, each of which calls forth additional symbols and thought-forms. There is also a half letter which is perceived only by the seeker of liberation; it represents what is not within the reach of mind and words. This simple, one-syllable mantra has eight components which when broken down represent everything significant in Hinduism (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 338–341). Although the villagers did not dwell on and may not have been aware of all the components of AUM, those who believed in release from the round of rebirths and union with the Universal Absolute or Ultimate Reality believed that by repeatedly reciting AUM and meditating on its meaning one could achieve these goals. AUM was also written as an auspicious, protective symbol in Shanti Nagar. AUM is said to include all language and all meanings, a symbol containing all symbols and their thought-forms (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 338–344). Although the villagers would not have put the meaning of

AUM in such complex language, the overall emotional affect in the use of AUM was similar. Daniélou indicates that AUM should be used at the beginning of all ceremonies, and so it was for fire ceremonies.

The second well-known mantra, the Gayatri, states, "AUM. O terrestrial sphere. O sphere of space! O Celestial Sphere! Let us contemplate the splendor of the solar spirit, the Divine Creator. May he guide our minds. AUM" (Daniélou, 1964, p. 345). This mantra should be recited by members of twice-born castes at morning, midday, and sunset. Brahmans in Shanti Nagar claimed that they did so. At the initiation of Brahman boys, the professional Brahman priest whispered it into their ears. The mantra consists of three times eight syllables (symbolizing Vishnu), and two times 12 syllables, and is called the solar mantra because 12 is the number symbolizing the sun (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 261, 337). This hymn is called Gayatri at dawn, Savitri at midday, and Saraswati at sunset, the three times when members of twice-born castes recite it (Daniélou, 1964, p. 261). The mantra, "May we know the Immense Being! Let us contemplate the transcendent Reality. And may that being guide us" (Daniélou, 1964, p. 346) is known as the Brahma Gayatri which may be recited by all castes and was the one most often used in Shanti Nagar.

The association of numbers with names of deities and with mantras accounts for the use of numbers in the village context as explanations of auspicious or inauspicious happenings. The same number might be either auspicious or inauspicious depending on the context, just as symbols in a ceremony might be separating or integrating contingent on the context. For example, the number four in Hinduism is written in a specific manner. It is usually auspicious. However, written in reverse, that is if the writer begins it at the end rather than the beginning, it takes on the aspect of black magic and is inauspicious. This principle applies to all symbols, for when they are reversed or used in an opposite context they may take on an opposite meaning.

In Shanti Nagar, the numbers one and two were not used by themselves as symbols to refer to religious or sacred matters. One and 13 were considered inauspicious and used primarily at death. Daniélou (1964, pp. 351–353) provides insight into these numerical usages when found in speech or used in magical diagrams. The number one represents the nature of illusion (maya). That which is non-dual cannot exist; existence is multiplicity (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 6–8). It is also used for the state of samadhi, experiencing oneness (Bharati, 1976, p. 46). The number two represents the element water, which is further represented by the arc of a circle, a crescent or a wave (Daniélou, 1964, p. 352). Three refers to the male principle (linga) and diagrammatically is represented by a triangle with its apex upward. The upward movement characterizes the fiery element, which also symbolizes the male principle. When the triangle has its apex pointed downward, it represents the female principle. The male and female triangles merged together in a six-pointed star represent union. When these two triangles break apart and form the hourglass shape (the drum of Shiva), "the world is destroyed; time ceases to exist" (Daniélou, 1964, p. 354). Five is representative of either Shiva or Shakti, for Shiva is the progenitor of life and Shakti the energy necessary for creation. The double five (10) also represents union. Although four represents the earth and is symbolized by a square, it is likewise a symbol of Vishnu. Multiples of four represent Vishnu and his rebirths.

The most overtly used numbers in Shanti Nagar were seven, five, and four. The use of seven and a seven-pointed star, especially at the time of marriage, represented a number of auspicious characters: the combination of three (standing for either male or female) and four representing Vishnu; the eternal elements of life, known in Hindu mythology as the Adityas, seven sons of Aditi, mother of the gods. An eighth son, whom Aditi cast away, is the sun, for all the Adityas represent life-giving principles. Later in Hindu religious literature, the number increases to 12 sons, the number representing the solar or life-giving principles. Whether seven, eight, or 12, the idea is one of life-giving elements or life (Dowson, 1950, pp. 3–4), and of the

three numbers, seven was most often associated in Shanti Nagar with marriage.

Freud (1962, p. 187) said that "there is no representation of 'No' in dreams, or at least none which is not ambiguous." This principle of non-negation is useful in the translation of symbols, especially when interpreting an idea which has been presented a number of times in one context, or in opposition. Freud based his statement on the belief that languages originally used one word to indicate both the positive and negative. Thus, in interpreting the opposites of a symbol, whether the negative or positive was indicated, the positive would be taken as what was intended. An example is the concept of birth, the opposite of which would be nonbirth. Both would be birth symbols. In such cases, the sense of the context also needs to be considered. For example, if a series of fertility-castration symbols occur together, as they do in marriage songs, the sense obtained from the overall translation is what determines whether fertility overcomes castration.

Since oppositions are further complicated by the number of times a symbol may appear, whether positively, negatively, or both, the context determines the meaning (Freud, 1962, pp. 186–187). An additional influence is exerted on the meaning by the number of times the symbol is used. Doubling or multiplicity usually wipes out a negative symbol such as castration; the same doubling or multiplicity with a positive symbol may contribute to a greater power, combination of powers, or a different thought-form than the symbol by itself. The numbers involved are often symbols for thought-forms in addition to the symbols which they double or multiply. This principle has been illustrated by the number four which represents Vishnu; its double (8) represents both Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, and the union of Vishnu and a female deity. As indicated previously, the same principle applies for Shiva, whose number is five. Often the important concept in the village for doubling was the idea of union. A general rule of thumb when such doubling and multiplicity occurred was that oppositions were eliminated and the positive symbol was translated.

Although reversals may be oppositions, they should be considered in the context of the human body as a whole. For example, when one part of the body, such as the head or mouth, is the symbol, the translation may well be the opposite. For example, in Shanti Nagar the custom of a married woman covering her face in public symbolizes protection of her genitals from all but her husband. When clothing is a symbol, the translation may be nakedness. The same rule of reversal applies to sexual identifications, i.e., a male symbol may refer to a female, or vice versa. Moreover, oppositions may represent two opposing groups in the social structure, and the symbols may be translated as the way in which the opposite groups are reconciled. Thus, the symbols may stand for mediation between groups rather than oppositions or reversals.

The principle that individuals project the members of their family and kin onto the exalted personages known to them from their culture, whether supernatural, mythical, or historical had a reverse kind of symbolization in Shanti Nagar, where the names of individuals were often the names of deities and other exalted personages. As a result, they attributed village-like personality traits to the characters of exalted personages, as well as the reverse. By this process both the deities and the villagers were very human and also godlike.

The concept of secondary elaboration is useful in discarding elements in a song or story, for these elaborations may be elements which have been added at a later time to a myth or event in order to provide the story with coherence (Freud, 1962, p. 190). In the process, the story is rearranged and even masked so that translation of all the symbols in the order given leads to erroneous conclusions. The principle to follow in such cases is to trust to the sense and ignore what is inconsistent. When it is obvious that an element of a story or myth has been added to provide a clincher for the tale, that element is best dropped from the translation.

Since the order in which a story or song

is arranged may be misleading in recognizing the importance or unimportance of symbols (Freud, 1962, p. 185), the story should be broken down into its component parts and translated separately to see how pertinent each of the parts is to the whole. Sometimes what comes first may be introductory, minimal, or subordinate to the whole. Sometimes a very brief section in the middle or at the end provides the main clue to the translation.

Daniélou and Other Sources

As has been indicated when referring to numbers, diagrams, deities, and mantras, Daniélou in *Hindu Polytheism* (1964) provides a comprehensive source of Hindu religious and mythological symbols. He points out that in the cosmology of a Hindu all aspects of the manifest world, the world of human beings, spring from similar principles and ancestry and are represented by symbols. Supernatural beings are represented not only by objects but also by physical bodies and characteristics of the natural world (earth, sun, constellations, birds, flowers, water, fire, etc.) (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 3–4). They and their attributes are symbolized through pictures, elements of sound, meaningful and magical words, which otherwise might be meaningless, or through vehicles associated with a deity. For example, Krishna is often identified through his playing the flute or by being pictured with his vehicle, the white bull, Nandi. In addition, deities and their worship may be symbolized by numbers and geometrical religious diagrams called yantras or *mandala*s although the word, square (*chauk*), was used in Shanti Nagar, primarily because the followers of Sanathan Dharma were followers of Ram Chandra, one of the avatars of Vishnu.

One of the fascinating aspects of Hinduism is that regardless of the multitude of cults and deities, they are based on a relatively few similar principles. One may study Vishnu and his avatars, compare the beliefs about Vishnu with those about Shiva, and then be able to abstract similar principles about Hinduism from both. This similarity underlying deities, stories, and myths made it possible to look up the names of deities and other supernatural beings and concepts found in Shanti Nagar in the index of Daniélou (1964) and other sources and, proceeding from one name or word to a related name, word, or characteristic, eventually trace the intended thought-form associated with the symbol.

Two dictionaries proved useful. Dowson's *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature* (1950), with the Sanskritic or Sanskritic derived words written in Roman letters, lists names of deities, supernatural beings of all sorts, descriptions and stories about supernatural events, elements of the universe, geographical regions, and religious literature. For example, the goddess, Sita, who is best known as the wife of Ram Chandra, one of Vishnu's avatars, whose name is translated as the furrow, from which she sprang, then is a goddess of fertility and agriculture and representative of the earth mother and nature. Devaki, the mother of Krishna, is a reincarnation of Aditi, who herself was the mother of the gods, but also of the Adityas, the eternal sustenances of life. In different religious literature she is also the mother and wife of Vishnu, and the mother of the world (Dowson, 1950, pp. 3, 84–85, 294–296). Each one, Sita, Devaki, and Aditya is linked with Vishnu or his avatars and has parallel characteristics of creation, both of the universe and of human beings within the universe (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 112–113, 260–261).

Bhargava's Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language (Pathak, 1946) was employed if a word could not be found in any of the other sources. For example, in one song the name Banwari Lal occurred and turned out to be an epithet for Krishna. The discovery of this fact was essential in translating the song.

Stevenson's *Rites of the Twice-Born* (1971) was consulted as a basis for comparison of the rites of Brahmans in past times (1910–1920) with the rites of all castes in Shanti Nagar. Because many of the practices described in Stevenson's book are Sanskritic, this source provides a model from which change may have occurred in a general sense throughout India. This is not to say that in

1910–1920 the rites of passage celebrated in Kathiawar, Gujerat, were similar to those practiced throughout the subcontinent, or more pertinently in Shanti Nagar. Since that time, however, the process of Sanskritization, whereby the orthodox practices of the twice-born castes diffuse to other castes in their efforts to emulate the high castes and rise in the caste hierarchy (Srinivas, 1967, pp. 6, 165), has been implemented by the advent of education, literacy, and mass media throughout India.

Stevenson (1971) is also useful because Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was born early in the nineteenth century in a small town in Kathiawar, Gujerat (Rai, 1967, p. 7), in the same region in which Stevenson carried on her research. Saraswati, as a child, was raised in an orthodox Brahman family, the members of which were followers of Shiva. His experience with Shiva worship as a youngster and other influences in his life led to his eventual denial of polytheism, cults of Shiva, Krishna, and other deities, and probably the meanings behind many of the rituals which as a Brahman he had observed. Stevenson's model, although representing a later period than when Saraswati lived, is similar to Saraswati's early religious conditioning. Thus, Stevenson's descriptions provide clues to the many symbols of Hinduism which in Shanti Nagar have been repressed by Arya Samaj influences.

For example, the wedding rituals of the Arya Samaj dispense with a square divided into nine small squares in which various heavenly bodies, representing deities, are drawn and which are worshiped at orthodox fire ceremonies. The square on which the fire burns, however, is retained and in it is drawn a five-pointed star. Since Saraswati was a worshiper of Shiva in his childhood, it may be that he simply learned to draw a five-pointed star in the square for the fire without being aware that five was a symbol of Shiva, or he may have chosen to retain it but read a new meaning into it, namely, that it was representative of life. Both interpretations convey the same thought-form, that of life or creation.

Temple (1884–1900), Daniélou (1964), and Stevenson (1971) were particularly useful sources for interpreting the repetition of numbers in ceremonies, stories, and everyday events. While Daniélou provided the classical interpretations, Stevenson and Temple presented folk explanations which displayed attributes of Freud's concepts of secondary elaborations, and of doubling and multiplicity in the sense of supernatural power. The latter two arithmetical processes were related to the village concepts of auspiciousness. Although Temple's three volume work, *The Legends of the Panjab* (1884–1900), was not used extensively, his principal contribution was in synthesizing and generalizing his findings about Punjabi myths and legends in the preface to each of the three volumes. He identified and explained repetitive elements, motifs and plots.

BIRTH

"All the verses of the Veda can be said to be directly or indirectly but the praise of life. All the gods are the sharers of existence. All the names of divinities are but the different names of life" (Daniélou, 1964, p. 37).

CONCEPTION

Since life begins with conception, we start with the female who is to bear an infant. Two ideals were strongly fostered in Shanti Nagar and the surrounding area: a female was early inculcated with the idea that her function in life was to marry so that she would bear children, preferably sons. The family of a girl sought a husband for her so that she might fulfill this role, that she would be taken care of, and that she would not go astray sexually. To be a youthful adult woman and unmarried was almost inconceivable. Not to have one's daughter "safely" married was a sin on the part of the parents, for a fully mature, unmarried woman was a sexual object and a threat to herself and the whole community. The girl's family not only failed her if they did not see that she was properly married by

menarche, but also the family and the girl lost prestige. A young woman was expected to bear her first child any time after the first year of the first mating with her husband which should have occurred as soon as she had reached her menarche.

The average age of a woman at first intercourse was about 15.6 years; the average age at first pregnancy was 18.7 years (Freed and Freed, 1971, p. 283, and table 9). The average interval of slightly more than three years between first mating and first pregnancy was partly due to the fact that a young married woman customarily did not reside permanently in her husband's home until her first child was born. The custom of a wife spending considerable time in her natal home during the first few years of marriage allowed the young couple gradually to know each other and to adjust to married life. It also helped the girl make a transition from her natal family, which until the time of marriage she usually had never left.

Although the focus of a female's life was having children, particularly sons, the villagers had no ceremony for conception. However, in view of the desire for children, both the female conjugal affines of a young bride and the women of her natal family watched her closely for signs of pregnancy. The phrase, conjugal affines, has been adopted from Vatuk (1975, note 7). It serves to distinguish affinal relatives through ego's own marriage, for example, husband's mother, from natal affines, for example, sister's husband, who are related to ego by virtue of the marriage of one of ego's consanguines.

While family members warmly welcomed all first born children because they indicated that the young bride was fertile, still every family preferred a son. A son continued the family line, for in the Shanti Nagar region patrilineal descent and inheritance were traditional and perpetuation of lineage and clan was highly valued. In due time, a son might become the head of the family or leader of the lineage. He also performed the funeral rites of his father. Unequivocally boys were favored and girls were not. This favoritism was brought out through words and actions by males and females throughout the life cycle. Because parents were inculcated with the value of sons, it was the rare parent who was enchanted with the birth of a daughter.

Between families and castes, there were some differences. For example, if a family had only male offspring, a girl might be welcome. In landless families, the desire for boys was not so intense, especially in the lowest castes that were not greatly concerned with orthodox Hindu values and the need for a son to carry out the cremation rites of a father. In the Chuhra Sweeper caste, the lowest-ranking caste in the village, female offspring helped the Sweeper women in their work for the higher castes, just as did daughters-in-law. But as long as a family had to spend a considerable amount of money for a daughter's wedding, continued to send her gifts during her lifetime, and she lived in another village where she could no longer assist her parents, there would continue to be a preference for male children. This difference between the desire for and evaluation of male and female offspring stood out very vividly in the life cycle of every person in Shanti Nagar.

We heard only one man, a Jat farmer, dissent from the usual position with regard to the desire for male children. He said, "It makes no difference whether you have sons or daughters. If you don't spend money on marriages, you have to spend it some place else. It is only in the villages that people think a son is better than a daughter."

Until a new bride had shown that she was fertile, she was on trial in her husband's family. For those women who were slow to have a child and gave no indication of conceiving, a number of remedies were available. First, offerings and prayer were made to one of the mother goddesses or at the ancestral Bhumiya shrine (the founding ancestor of the village), which was regularly propitiated for and at births.

Second, when a woman had not conceived after a number of years of marriage, she could ask her husband, conjugal affines, or her own parents to take her to the Ganges River, usually in the pilgrimage month of Karttik (October–November). There she would drink Ganges water, which was be-

lieved to result in fertility, and promise an offering to the Ganges or to a mother goddess for a son. A woman who had brought forth only girls might likewise make such a pilgrimage. If she could not go to the Ganges, she would ask someone to bring back Ganges water for her; or she might go to a sister river, the Jumna, a substitute for the Ganges, with a party of women from Shanti Nagar on the day of the new moon although the Jumna was not considered as powerful as the Ganges. A few women mentioned the old belief that if a woman did not have a son, she should make a pilgrimage to the Ganges and promise the River Goddess her first son. The idea was that the first son would be thrown into the river. These women, however, hastened to add that this practice was no longer done. If a son was born, women substituted a doll to be thrown into the river or simply made offerings at a shrine at the Ganges or at Gurgaon, a town with a temple to the Mother Goddess for the welfare of children.

Third, at two festivals for the welfare of children, Hoi (the name of a goddess) and Sili Sat (Cold Seventh, a festival for the Smallpox Goddess), a woman might worship mother goddesses for a child. One woman said that on Hoi, she drew a Hoi Mata (mother) on the wall and said, "If you give me a son, I'll worship you." If the boon of a son was granted as a result of worshiping the mother goddesses at the festival of Sili Sat, the mother would distribute white sugar candies on the next Sili Sat.

A village woman, who had consulted a physician in Delhi when she failed to conceive after the birth of her first son, told the following story which illustrates the willingness of women to accept the potential efficacy of omens and supernatural practices in the unpredictable realm of the birth and well-being of male offspring. A childless woman who wished to conceive cut the foot of a little calf that belonged to the storyteller, a woman who had children. She believed that by cutting its foot she would be able to have children. The little calf died after a fortnight. Some people who were working at a sugarcane press witnessed the act but did not say anything because they were afraid there would be a fight. In fact, they were not sure of the woman's identity and thought at first that she was the owner of the calf. When the calf cried out and fell down, the woman ran away. The same day one of the storyteller's cows bore twin calves and her son ran a high fever. If a cow bears two calves, it is a bad omen; if the calves live it will ruin the whole family. According to the storyteller, the death of the twin calves saved the life of her son. The storyteller claimed that anyone could fool women because someone had told the childless woman that if she cut the leg of a calf of a woman who had children, she herself would conceive. The mixture of beliefs and modern and traditional practices, such as consulting a Western physician, reveal the attitudinal inconsistencies of the storyteller. She believed the ominous omen of the twin calves, perhaps because of its potential effect on her, but she did not accept the connection of cutting a calf's foot and conception, possibly because malevolent practices, such as wounding a calf, were frowned on by the villagers.

Fourth, for women who did not conceive, only a few families went to the City of Delhi for modern medical advice and treatment. Men never considered the possibility that lack of conception might be due to them. In one Brahman family, the wife had a number of miscarriages and had borne no children. Her husband, who worked in Delhi, took her to a physician for treatment. She said the physician gave her a series of injections and that she bore two sons as a result. Both sons, 10 and 6 years of age, were alive and healthy. This woman said that thereafter she had the physician sterilize her. The method which she reported was that "he gave her pills to have no more children." In any case she had not been pregnant since that time, had her menses regularly, and claimed to be 32 years of age. The villagers were aware of this treatment and regarded her as somewhat different from themselves. The general opinion was that it was risky to follow such a course of action, for both boys might die and the family would be without a male heir.

One of the reasons why this woman was

considered different from the rest of the village was the belief that to be sterilized was "tempting fate." The risk by village standards was too great. This Brahman family (consisting of mother, father, two sons and father's father, a man of 90) had bettered itself within a period of 15 years or less. Yet none of the villagers considered this betterment to be related to family size. Rather, they attributed it to the hard work of the husband, which was one of a number of causes. The industriousness of the husband was the kind of cause-effect relationship which the villagers understood. The possible relationship between a small family and social and economic benefits was contrary to their belief based on an agricultural economy, that the more sons one had, the more prosperous the family. This point of view has been explained in detail by Mamdani (1972, pp. 76–77, 90, 127) and Mandelbaum (1974, pp. 16–21). Families who were making the transition from a purely agricultural society to one supplemented by urban occupations might in time come to modify this view.

Although this Brahman woman had borne sons, another woman who had consulted a Delhi physician had been less fortunate. A wife in one of the large, well-to-do, joint Jat families, she was 28 years old and had borne a son 10 years earlier who had died. Then she had no more children, so four years later the family arranged for her to go to a female physician in Delhi. At this time she had her uterus scraped, a relatively minor operation, was in the hospital for a month and a half, and was quite ill. The physician wanted her to have a major operation to remove a ball in her stomach (a tumor perhaps). Her husband was in favor of the operation as he wanted children, but his elder brother (the head of the joint family) and the other family members decided that she was too weak, so they did not let her have the operation. She herself was afraid to have such an operation although the physician said that the ball would grow larger if she did not have it removed. She believed that if she were going to have children, she would have them anyhow. This was a household where the members frequently consulted physicians and went to hospitals when they were ill.

Gynecologists and obstetricians in the City of Delhi were females. Because of purdah concepts, neither males nor females in Shanti Nagar would trust a male physician for gynecological or obstetrical treatment. Villagers considered female gynecologists and obstetricians as not much more skilled than a midwife. Both attitudes contributed to the lack of use of free medical treatment for women in Delhi that was provided by the government.

The wife of the village shopkeeper, whose young son was taken to Delhi whenever he ran a fever, told us that her first child was born when she was 15 years old. However, she did not conceive for seven years after her first child and she went to the Lady Hardinge Hospital in Delhi for treatment, which continued for a number of years. Following the treatment she had two more children, but the first child died.

PREGNANCY AND PRENATAL CARE

From conception until childbirth there were no ceremonies for the mother-to-be. There was virtually no separation of a pregnant woman from the larger society although there were sexual taboos between a husband and his pregnant wife. It was believed that a prospective mother should conduct herself properly and avoid specific activities in order to have a healthy infant. A pregnant woman was not secluded; she continued her usual work until shortly before delivery. There was evidence from discussions with two of the professional Brahman priests and some of the women to indicate that formerly two samskaras, orthodox ceremonies, had been performed during pregnancy, one in the third to fourth month to strengthen the mind and body of the embryo and to instruct the pregnant woman about diet, and another in the seventh month, the purpose of which was not well remembered. Stevenson (1971, chap. VI) reported a great many prenatal rites for Brahmans, none of which took place in Shanti Nagar. Perhaps the lack of prenatal ceremonies in Shanti Nagar indicated a considerable amount of change which may have been related to the change that had occurred 20 or more years earlier regarding the place

of delivery of the first child, that is, a shift from the girl's parents' to the husband's parents' house. However, it is also probable that villagers might not have wanted to assume the financial burden of prenatal ceremonies. The lack of prenatal ceremonies may have fit in with the changes introduced by the Arya Samaj, which were at the same time compatible with the agricultural way of life. In any case, except for a taboo on sexual relationships with her husband, a pregnant woman continued to mingle with members of the village community, to work in house and field, and to be regarded as ordinary or profane. She was not secluded until the time of delivery. The sexual taboo may be construed as the beginning of separation, a protective device for the pregnant woman, and a reinforcement of the general rule against wasting semen.

One elderly Brahman woman gave us some indication of cultural change which may be related to the fact that Shanti Nagar was a Jat village and strongly Arya Samaj. She said that when she was in her parents' home and was pregnant with her first child, they held two ceremonies for her. After the third month of pregnancy, her mother cooked sweet rice for her to eat. This ceremony and the eating of sweet rice was to help her when she felt like vomiting. The woman said, "When a child is in the stomach for two months the woman's mind changes and whenever she eats anything she doesn't like it and starts vomiting!" She vaguely remembered another ceremony for the seventh month for which her parents did little other than to distribute balls of coconut and sugar to relatives and to send some to her conjugal affines. She said, "They just felt happy that I had a child in my womb. At this time the child plays and jumps in the stomach." There was no fire ceremony but mantras were read by a professional Brahman Priest. These events occurred about 49 years before our field trip since the woman, aged 63, bore her first child, a son, at 14. These previously celebrated prenatal rites contributed to a gradual separation of the pregnant female from the larger society before the delivery occurred.

Discussions of sexual relations and pregnancy in Shanti Nagar followed a pattern of sexual segregation. For the most part, women interacted daily with women, not only in public but also in the home, except for the rare times that a man and wife might be by themselves or when they slept together for coitus. Men and women otherwise did not share the same bed. Men primarily interacted socially with men. When discussing pregnancies and sex, women talked with women, and men with men. An outsider might mistakenly infer that these subjects were avoided, but people regularly laughed and talked about them.

One of the older Brahman women who had borne nine living children and was quite companionable with her husband, in discussing the mating of human beings said, "When a man and woman come together to have children, they just say that they sleep together. They don't say anything else. When a woman conceives, the women just say 'She has a child in her stomach.'" This informant said, "One can say anything one likes about sexual relations. There is nothing to stop one." In spite of her statement and the open discussions between older women, younger women and unmarried girls did not speak freely about sexual relations and pregnancy, nor did young males. They were shy about such open discussion, and etiquette seemed to forbid it.

Public announcements of conception did not occur. The husband of a young bride was usually advised of her pregnancy by his mother or a senior woman in the house or through circumlocution by his wife. The mother-in-law, who usually was the first to know even before the pregnant bride, spread the word so that shortly all the women in the lineage and caste knew, and so did the neighbors. If the pregnancy was in a high-caste family, it took a few days through the village grapevine for the high-caste side of the village to be fully informed and a few more for the news to spread to the low-caste side. The timing was similar when the news started on the low-caste side.

Who was pregnant, for how long, and when the child was expected were facts known by all women. For example, in one brief conversation an informant revealed that

an older Brahman's wife was one to two months pregnant, that she had had four children who had died and one living son, that a Jat woman, who so far had borne four girls, would have her child in two months, and that another Brahman woman was expecting her fourth child. In most instances when pregnancies and births were discussed, the number of months pregnant, the number of previous children and their sexes, and the number of miscarriages and deaths were fairly accurately known by mature women.

Discussions of pregnancies and sexual relations differed with males. Although they discussed births and birth ceremonies with us when asked, they were not interested in the details of conception, pregnancy, birth, and child rearing and so they were not well informed about them. They, also, did not consider it part of their masculine role to show interest in these subjects.

The information supplied by the men on births tended to center on the attendant costs, and more often than not sketched a model or ideal pattern of behavior rather than details of delivery and ceremonies. Except for conception, they had little or nothing to do with birth, prenatal care, delivery, and rearing practices for infants and small children. American society where the husband may be the main person to whom a young wife turns at pregnancy and birth, other than trained medical personnel, is different from India where the senior woman in a household, usually the husband's mother, supervises much of what happens to the young bride and prospective mother.

Women did not have a "maternity costume" to indicate their oncoming change in status, for the clothing of the female in India was very adaptable to pregnancy. The pyjama-and-shirt costume with its loose knee length shirt or dresslike garment (*kamiz*) worn over pyjama-like trousers (*silwar*) was as adaptable as the full skirt (*ghaghri* or *lengha*). The waist of both skirts and trousers had a drawstring which could be loosened as the months of pregnancy passed and there was ample material for expansion. Although the villagers were accustomed to discerning pregnancies even with these amorphous costumes, perhaps from gait and everyday acquaintances with the subjects, such discernment was not as simple for a Westerner. Given the rapid dissemination of gossip within Shanti Nagar together with the knowledge shared about each family, new bride, and pregnancy, everyone soon knew who was pregnant.

Prenatal medical care was relatively unheard of in the rural area of Shanti Nagar, although health centers attempted to educate rural families in such matters. A good example of this effort has been described by Gideon (1962) in a Punjabi Sikh village, somewhat more conservative than Shanti Nagar. In this village, a government health visitor asked the mother of a pregnant new bride to send her to a clinic for a monthly check-up. The woman was surprised because she could see nothing wrong with her daughter and because she could not understand how a health visitor could teach her daughter anything about diet and the care of the children that the mother herself did not know. This attitude was similar to that of the women in Shanti Nagar, but some of them were beginning to realize that perhaps there might be something to learn, especially when their infants died at birth or shortly thereafter (Gideon, 1962, p. 1223; Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon, 1965b, p. 737).

Miscarriage was not infrequent (spontaneous abortions of the fetus before term), especially in young brides. This was not surprising in view of their youth, the lack of prenatal medical care, possible nutritional deficiencies, and the fact that they carried out such tasks as weeding, harvesting, cutting fodder, and grinding grain. Although hard work does not necessarily contribute to miscarriages, the combination of factors probably contributed to the incidence of miscarriage in Shanti Nagar. A woman who had nine living children said that she had had three or four miscarriages. This number of miscarriages was not unusual for a woman with nine living children. Most of the women had no physical examinations before their children were born. They continued to work in the house and in the fields although they and their mothers-in-law sometimes said that

they had less work and somewhat better food during pregnancy.

Release from work depended on the number of women in a household. A young husband and wife usually lived with his parents on the occasion of a first birth. If there was only one adult male and one adult female in the household, then the woman and her husband might have so much work to do that it was not possible for her to take it easy. Even in fairly well-off families in Shanti Nagar, the women continued to work both in the fields and household almost until the time of delivery. During the last month of pregnancy, there was some reduction in work and, in some cases, no work was done at all, thus providing the first overt signs of the separation of the mother-to-be from the community.

During the early pregnancy of a young bride, she might be permitted to visit her parents if there were enough women in her husband's household to do all the necessary work. Her parents treated her as well as possible; the oft repeated theme was that a woman worked much less hard and had considerably more freedom at her natal home than at the home of her in-laws. We observed, however, that women sometimes worked quite hard in their parents' homes. In one Jat Farmer family where the mother and two married daughters were pregnant at the same time and where there was no adult male other than the family head, one of the daughters, during her pregnancy, daily went to the threshing floor to drive bullocks as they walked around on the harvested wheat to thresh it. Not many females did this, much less pregnant females, but quite a few of them stood for long periods on a stool winnowing grain. Sweeper women worked for their patrons removing dirt from their houses and helping at the sugarcane crushers during the sugarcane harvest, whether or not they were pregnant.

Once when we were visiting the sanitary inspector for the district in the town of Narela, we met a trained midwife who commented on the hard work village women did when they were pregnant. She claimed that she herself never lifted a finger during this period. She said that village men neglected their wives and would not allow them to come to the health center in Narela for free prenatal and maternity care. The sanitary inspector, himself a village man, hurried us off at this point in her conversation, although his own family at times availed themselves of modern medical techniques.

When the village midwife was queried with regard to prenatal treatment, especially with respect to exercise and medicine, she said that she tried to avoid giving medicine to a pregnant woman because it could harm the child. No exercise was prescribed because women worked hard throughout their pregnancies. As she put it, "They do not sit idle as you do. They work in the fields and house. Is this less an exercise?"

Women whose families arranged medical attention for them in Delhi were apt to supplement their diet during pregnancy. The wife of the village shopkeeper, for example, said that during her nine months of pregnancy she drank milk and ghee every day. Milk and ghee were supposed to make the tubes greasy so that a child would come easily. In her case it worked. Her first child, born when she was 15, came very easily, but, according to her, she had "a womb like a buffalo" which, more than the milk and ghee, was why delivery was easy. "Some women," she said, "have wombs like birds and they have trouble." She also said that when she was pregnant she could eat everything and was not sick.

A Brahman woman told us that although a number of women ate clay when pregnant, she did not. Instead she ate dried coconut, sweets, and oranges. The ideal diet for the pregnant woman was plenty of bread made of whole wheat flour, ghee, milk, coconut, and sweets. Vegetables and various lentils and beans were a part of the village diet; but the amounts that were eaten depended on the circumstances and tastes of the family. A vegetarian diet consisted of bread, butter, ghee, milk, curds, lentils, occasionally rice, vegetables, and fruits when available; but the main item was unleavened bread (*roti*) made usually with whole wheat flour, sometimes mixed with other grains. The pregnant wom-

an was supposed to have all of these and in greater quantity than normally, but the ideal was not always fulfilled.

Unless a family was well-off, the older the wife and the more numerous the children, then the poorer the health of the mother and her diet during pregnancy. Not all women consumed milk and ghee every day, although men in most castes said that they themselves did. From observation of the overt health of males and females and of what and how much they ate, it appeared that males from birth onward had more and better food, especially ghee and milk. Males often boasted of how much milk and ghee they consumed daily, whereas females never did.

Dairy products were important in a diet that lacked protein from meat, eggs, and cheese. Both men and women commented on the craving that pregnant women had for eating clay, dirt, or mud. The men told us that the women ate clay because they believed it would contribute to the fairness of their offsprings, a prenatal influence. One man said, "Probably 99 percent of the pregnant women eat clay." This practice, known as pica, the ingesting of unusual substances, may have existed because fair coloring for boys and girls was desired; however, the craving for clay may also have been due to dietary deficiencies (Hochstein, 1968). Women regarded the practice as a prenatal influence; men deprecated the custom.

In rare cases the village midwife might, if a pregnant woman had some pain in her abdomen, massage it with ghee, butter, or oil. The midwife lubricated her hands with the substances in order to massage the stomach gently. It was believed that the baby's head might have been displaced and that manipulation would put it back in place. Any woman of a pregnant woman's family or lineage might do this for her. In general, however, touching the stomach of a pregnant woman was avoided as much as possible (cf. Gideon, 1962, p. 1223; Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon, 1965b, p. 737).

Some activities were considered taboo during pregnancy, but these may have been changing. For example, an elder Brahman widow said, "If a husband is good, he doesn't speak to his wife during the whole pregnancy. My husband stopped speaking to me from the second month of pregnancy. Husbands should stop at the third month and stay away until the fortieth day after birth." This timing corresponded with the former rite of passage held in the third month of pregnancy. "To stop speaking" was a polite euphemism for not having sexual relations. She further commented that in the present Kali Yug (Dark Age, considered a period of moral decline), husbands no longer paid attention to this precept, but that her husband had been very good. This taboo would be consistent with the Hindu belief that semen should not be wasted. Other interviews indicated that some people adhered to this restriction for varying periods and some did not observe it at all. Swami Dayanand laid down more restrictive rules for sexual relations, stating that "cohabitation" should not recur "till a complete year has elapsed after the conception" (Saraswati, 1956, p. 43). Probably no one in Shanti Nagar followed this rule.

A young, married daughter of the village participated in the oil bath and other marriage ceremonies for her brother. She was not supposed to participate if pregnant so she swore that she was not. Later when her first child was born, it was believed that she had been pregnant at the time of these ceremonies. When her child died immediately after birth, the villagers said it was because she had participated in these ceremonies. The young woman had poor health, the infant may have been born prematurely, and more firstborn children died than later children. Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon (1965b, p. 737, 739, table IV) confirm the greater number of neonatal and perinatal deaths for primiparas, women bearing their first child. What was important to those concerned was that this young woman may have violated a taboo by participating in these marriage rituals. She had failed to segregate herself from social activities considered dangerous to a pregnant woman and her future baby. On the other hand, there was no objection to a pregnant woman fasting during specific religious events because fasting was done as a vow,

to attain merit or a special goal, and was an individual's choice.

If a pregnant woman worked during an eclipse, it was believed to result in deformity to her offspring. A pregnant woman should not grind grain during the eclipse of the sun or the moon and should observe all other taboos required at an eclipse, for otherwise her child would be born clubfooted. An eclipse and clubfootedness were thought to be related because a woman sat cross-legged and bent over while grinding grain. This position during an eclipse was believed to cause the legs of the fetus to be similarly shaped resulting in a clubfooted child. A number of villagers said that the mother of a Gola Potter boy who had two clubfeet had been grinding grain during an eclipse.

In discussing the clubfooted Potter boy, an old Gola Potter woman told us that the boy's mother was grinding during the eclipse. The boy's father told her not to, but she said, "What is there?" implying that she did not believe in the taboo. This same informant said that at the time of an eclipse a pregnant woman should just sit still and do nothing. She also said that if a pregnant woman was digging grass at this time, the child would have a split lip or finger. If she was cutting straw for the animals to eat, there would be birthmarks on the child's body or near the ear. Another woman present at the time of this interview, referring to the Potter woman, said, "God had done this because she was sitting cross-legged when grinding. The child came out head first."

During the period we were in Shanti Nagar, a Jhinvar woman had a long and difficult pregnancy of about 10 months. At the end of her pregnancy before her labor pains she was unwell and confined to her bed. When the child finally came, a girl, she had one clubfoot and a large liver-like mass attached to the lumbar region of her back. Since the family would not take the child to a hospital in Delhi for treatment, the child died within one week of birth. Many villagers attributed the deformity to a solar eclipse that had occurred during the pregnancy. Eclipses were considered dangerous to all.

An old Jat grandmother when asked about eclipses affecting pregnant women and their offspring said, "An eclipse is no good for all the people in the world; it's a burden on the world. The ancestors say so. One shouldn't work during the eclipse. One woman was grinding flour and sitting cross-legged and her son was affected; he walks with two sticks [a reference again to the Gola Potter child]. Another woman got her fingers stuck and when her child was born he had two thumbs."

The villagers believed that several principles governed rebirth. For example, they thought that one was often reborn with the same person for a spouse that one had in previous lives. It was believed that an infant's soul might be the same as that of a recently deceased relative, although this belief sometimes had to be qualified. For example, a young Jat woman's baby daughter was born on the same day on which her mother died. In such a case, the child's soul would not be the same as the soul of the dead grandmother because the soul of a child was believed to be in the fetus when its mother was six months pregnant. From this time on, the mother was supposed to think good thoughts and keep herself clean to influence and shape the child. No doubt, the belief in prenatal influence is very ancient and existed early in India, but Saraswati (1956, p. 42) perpetuated the idea of prenatal influence by stating that "the mother teaches good manners to . . . the children from the very day of conception."

When her child was about to be born, a Chamar Leatherworker woman promised all the deities, "If my child is born well, I will do so and so for you." In making this promise, she took the name of all the deities, thus assuring the aid of an assortment of supernaturals. Women of other castes might make the same pledge or might invoke a deity of their own choosing, especially a benevolent mother goddess.

DELIVERY

Early in our fieldwork, we found that we did not always learn about the occurrence of births, and to some extent about marriages

and deaths, largely because the villagers took such events for granted and did not realize how much we were interested. After a few months, however, information about these events was readily elicited. The data which we missed were later collected during the process of taking a census of the village. During the period from January 1, 1958 to June 1, 1959, 33 births occurred. Of the 33 infants, there were 20 females and 13 males born, of which three males and four females died within 18 months of birth. No birth ceremonies were held for these seven infants, indicating that they had died early or were sickly from birth, and that they had not been incorporated into their families. After the first birth in a family, ceremonies for girls were often omitted or reduced to the bare essentials, even among Brahman families. Ceremonies for boys after the first or second son were celebrated with less fanfare and sometimes omitted.

The village watchman, a non-literate man, was responsible for reporting all births and deaths which took place in the village. He visited the households in which he knew that a birth or death had occurred and had a member of the family record the date of birth or death and the name of the individual involved. Since in some of these households no one could write and dates in the modern Indian calendar were seldom accurately remembered, the records were not always reliable. When a child died immediately or was a girl, the family was not as careful about reporting the birth and having it recorded. For a boy, they would see that the birth was recorded accurately especially if inheritance of land was involved. Since land inheritance laws had been changed so that both sons and daughters might inherit, it is possible that the births of girls were less often reported, as the villagers did not want daughters to inherit. When no one in the family could write, the watchman gathered the information orally and had a literate person make the entry in the village register. He took this register to the police station at Narela every fortnight where the police maintained records of the births and deaths for villages under their jurisdiction. Marriages were not recorded; only births and deaths.

The relationship of pain to childbirth was explained in a story about how the world came to be told by a Brahman woman during an interview on religious beliefs and values: "It was first believed that all women were created out of water. Then God created a small child and put him at a well. Nobody paid any attention to him, but just passed by. So God said that he wouldn't create anybody without pain. Now when men and women get together, children are born with pain. In this way, too, the child is born of one's own blood, and people are more interested in the child and pay attention to him. When a child is born, the midwife places it on the earth because it is the earth that has the burden of supporting the child, and God is all powerful. Then the midwife cleans the new baby and gives it to the mother."

This story is a mythological recapitulation of the birth process and provides a rationale for the seclusion of women at birth as well as the impurity of all women in contrast to caste rules regarding purity and pollution which rank those castes at the top of the hierarchy as most pure and those at the bottom as most polluted. To understand the implications of the story, it is necessary to review Hindu beliefs regarding the human body. Hindus compare the parts of the body to the classes of castes (varnas) so that the highest classes, the twice-born, correspond to the upper portions of the body and the lowest, to the bottom portions. In addition, Hindus classify bodily emissions (spittle, perspiration, menses, and afterbirth because of their bloodiness) as impure, even though all of these are watery substances and water is generally considered pure.

On the one hand, the analogy of the human body to the hierarchical ordering of caste relations together with purity and pollution beliefs provides a rationale for maintaining the social order. On the other, the birth process draws attention to the impurity of all human bodies. The story resolves this contradiction by explaining the process by which the pain of childbirth causes the pollution and places

mother and child in a sacred (liminal and dangerous) state, but through purification incorporates them into society.

First the myth points out that women were created out of water; therefore, they were pure. Then God created a child supposedly also from water, since it was found at a well which is called a "mother" (the water in it symbolizing purity and birth; its shape representing the passage through which birth occurs). The child had no ties to anyone so he was ignored. God, therefore, provided sexual relations between human beings so that the child could be born in pain from the blood of the parents and thus establish ties with the parents. Pain, the process of birth, and its bodily residues were unwanted because they were impure and, therefore, dangerous. But this birth process was necessary in order for the parents to value the child and take care of it. Thus, though it is not said, the body itself is impure or has different aspects of pure to impure depending on the situation. This half of the myth takes care of the physical aspects of birth.

The rest of the myth recapitulates the activities of the midwife vis-à-vis the mother and child after delivery. The midwife, who in the everyday world is considered polluted, is the only person who can contend with the supernatural forces which surround mother and child in the liminal, dangerous, polluted, but sacred world of delivery. Delivery becomes a sacred period because conditions are opposed to those of everyday life. After delivery, the midwife places the baby on the ground, marking the first separation from the mother and incorporation within the lineage (van Gennep, 1961, p. 52). Although she is said to do this because the earth has the burden of supporting the child (an explanation found in agricultural societies), there is additional significance to this action. In Hinduism at birth and just before death, the infant and the dying are placed on the ground. There are two facets to this act: the soul of the infant comes from the land of the dead and the body of the dead person is returned to the earth through the cremation process. Further, earth is a mother goddess, nourishing mother, and a fertility-creation symbol. Although earth because of the contamination of death is polluting, it is also because of birth sacrosanct and like water, purifying. By being both purifying and polluting, earth and water are symbolic of life as well as of death.

The last sentence of the myth symbolizes the stages through which the child must go to become incorporated into the larger community of the everyday world and to shed pollution. The midwife cleans the child and gives it to the mother. These actions provide the basis for the seclusion period of mother and child, during which the mother recovers from the pain of birth and establishes ties with the child of her own blood. During the same period through rituals of lustration and a fire ceremony, both mother and child are able to return to the purity standards of the mundane world and to maintain the differences between castes as they are arranged in the social hierarchy. The myth explains the circumstances of birth so that beliefs about caste may survive to contribute to the maintenance of the social order. The birth rite of passage in Shanti Nagar reified this myth as will be seen in the descriptions of delivery and lying-in.

The village women, hardy as they were, recognized the importance of good care during delivery. They reassured themselves by comparing their lot with less fortunate women. One of them told us, "Women peddlers are so strong that they bear their children right on the road. Then they pick them up and put them in their baskets and go back to their villages." Another woman said she had seen two women peddlers on the road. One bore her child there and then. The other woman picked it up, bathed it, and put it in a basket. Then the two women went on their way. The informant said, "It's like this. There was a king and a queen, and the king ordered that no one water the garden. The garden dried up. The queen asked the king why he had given this order. He answered that the trees in the jungle grow and are green, why not the garden?" The informant was implying that the king did not under-

stand the difference, for she then said, "The lady peddlers can bear without care but we women in the village are accustomed to good care and are just like plants in a garden that need watering." This story illustrates the women's belief that the best way to bear their children was in the seclusion of the home, attended by the midwife and female relatives of the husband. This story reaffirmed their status as being higher than peddler women or those who did not practice seclusion.

While much of the pain incurred in childbirth may be due to anxiety, fear, and tension, the above story recounting how the world came to be encouraged the belief that women had a great deal of pain during delivery. How much pain was due to the process of physical delivery and how much was due to fear causing tension, which may result from cultural conditioning, is little known. There is "a paucity of studies in which both the pain response and cultural factors are directly and experimentally controlled" (Wolff and Langley, 1968, p. 500). In any case, the young bride and new mother-to-be was more afraid and appeared to expect to have more pain than did the experienced mother of many children. This difference in pain expectancy in multiparas may have been due both to a reduction in anxiety and the attendant tension that could contribute to pain and the fact that a woman's body changes through many years of childbearing.

We had expected that a woman would return to her family of orientation for the birth of her child, at least for the firstborn, but such was not the case in Shanti Nagar. All births should and usually did take place in the household of the husband. The custom was said to have changed because the people in the area of Shanti Nagar decided that, if the mother and/or child died at delivery while in the mother's natal home, then her parents would be blamed by the husband's relatives. Since the mother and her offspring were considered the possessions of the husband's family, it was surprising that this change was recent, for it fitted in with the rest of the marriage customs. However, Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon (1965a, p. 159), report for the Ludhiana region of the Punjab that wives at the time of their study (1953–1958) returned to their natal village for the birth of their first child.

Of all the births that involved the women of Shanti Nagar during our stay, only two daughters-in-law gave birth outside of the village and no daughters bore their children in the home of their parents, although one daughter was delivered en route to her parents' house in Shanti Nagar. Of these three cases, one daughter-in-law was a young Brahman woman who had fought with her husband and returned to her parents before telling her conjugal affines that she was pregnant. The child was delivered at her parents' home, which was considered a disgrace. Both families patched up relations and avoided discussing what had happened as much as possible. The second case occurred in a Jat Farmer family in Shanti Nagar. A daughter had been married a few years earlier, became pregnant about a year after the wedding, and was at her husband's house for delivery. The labor pains lasted four days, according to the story told us, so that her conjugal affines became very distressed and hired a horsecart (*tonga*) to take her to her parents. When they were within a mile and a half of the village, the baby was delivered in a ditch by the side of the road by the girl's mother-in-law. The child, a boy, died four hours later. The mother of the primipara stated that had her daughter stayed at the home of her husband, the child would have lived; thus she reiterated the rules and thereby put the blame on her daughter's conjugal affines.

In the account of the death of the infant, the number four was repeated twice: labor pains for four days; the infant dying four hours after delivery. Numbers were often used repetitively to emphasize events. The number four used in this situation emphasized trouble and death. Stevenson (1971, p. 158) described the use of number four when related to death, indicating that the digit 4, which in Sanskrit looks like an 8, still looks like an 8 when written in reverse (fig. 2). When four is written in reverse, it is called Black or Dirty Four, and is related to death. Our villagers never said that they knew

FIG. 2. Sanskrit numeral four.

about "Black Four" but their doubling of four in this context may have implied the reverse of four, usually associated with Vishnu and good fortune.

The third case of a female being delivered outside of her husband's village was that of a Chamar Leatherworker woman who had lost five of her six offspring. The family was nuclear with the husband unemployed for long periods. The woman's natal family lived in Delhi and arranged for her lying-in at a hospital where she received much better treatment than she ever could have received at home. This was the only delivery that took place in a hospital during our residence in Shanti Nagar.

A midwife of the Chuhra Sweeper caste did not always attend the mother during labor. In all cases known to us of delivery performed in the village, it was assisted by midwives of the Chuhra caste; by the trained government midwife from a large nearby village, whom the villagers always referred to as a nurse; by the husband's mother, or by a senior woman in the husband's household or lineage for all castes. These women cut the cord at the time of delivery. When we learned that high-caste women acted as midwives in their family and lineage, we were surprised as we had been led to believe by earlier literature on caste, purity, and pollution that high-caste women could not cut the cord or deliver infants. In the better-off and high-caste families, the husband's father's sister would also be called to help attend the mother and child; these families might or might not use the services of a Chuhra Sweeper midwife at delivery.

Men usually provided a minimal, ideal model of the events of birth. For example, a man might report that a Chuhra midwife had been called for a delivery but be unable to provide other details. The only exceptions to this rule involved husbands of nuclear households who were interviewed shortly after a birth. Because such men helped to take care of the house at the time of a birth, they were better informed. Except for such instances, information obtained from men was inadequate. Such a situation suggests considerable care in interviewing methods to avoid misinterpretation of sparse information. A lack of information may lead to the conclusion that customs formerly practiced have been abandoned, but such a conclusion should result from a survey of actual practices and interviews with a representative sample of the population. One can then identify new data which may require new interpretations. To learn, as we did on the basis of widespread interviewing, that women within the household of birth, regardless of caste, acted as midwives required a fresh approach to the concepts of purity and pollution in terms of caste and the pragmatics of everyday life.

The midwife situation in Shanti Nagar was complicated by the traditional midwife's mental illness at the time of our stay (S. Freed and R. Freed, 1964, p. 164). Another Sweeper woman in the village was called as midwife during the regular midwife's illness, but the villagers did not consider her their regular midwife. One Brahman Priest said he would not call her for his wife's next lying-in because she was quarrelsome, untruthful, and a malicious gossip and might ask for a great deal of money. According to him the fee should be two to four rupees, but he said that this woman might charge 10 rupees. The man pointed out that he had three choices in the area: a village midwife, the trained government nurse-midwife in a nearby village, or the hospital in Delhi. Previously, his wife had her children delivered in the hospital because they then lived with relatives in the city. He was considering the trained government midwife, stating that "she is trained scientifically," but that "the village midwife takes care of the delivery and the care of the woman and child, and carries out the feces and other dirt, whereas the scientifically trained midwife comes only for the delivery and does none of the dirty work so that both

midwives are needed and one must pay both of them." The economics of the situation tilted the scales in almost every case in favor of using the village midwife rather than the scientifically trained government midwife.

Although this man considered taking his wife to the maternity hospital in Delhi for the delivery because he knew a man in the hospital through whom he could obtain admission and because "the woman can go there for four days and get her food and everything," he did not do so when the time came. He was somewhat familiar with hospital procedures, telling us, "When the child is born in the morning, they put two slips on the child, one on the arm and one on the back, to identify it. They bathe the mother and child twice a day, and have good beds with mattresses and clean linens. The nurses also examine the mothers, and if there is any disease they supply the necessary medicines, and as a result she suffers no trouble in childbirth." His problem was that he would have had to plan to take action ahead of time. Since in the village one did not have to plan ahead for childbirth, this man took the easier and less costly way in terms of time and money. Losing time from work to arrange for the accouchement at a maternity hospital would have been too great a financial loss for him because he not only worked in a factory in Delhi but also operated a small cattle business in Shanti Nagar.

When his wife's labor pains started, his own mother, aged 45–50, who had borne nine living children, and the widowed, 50-year-old mother of his next door Jat Farmer neighbor acted as the midwives. As a result, he had no midwife or delivery expenses, a great help for a man with little or no capital. In an earlier interview with the mother of this man some months before the delivery, she told us that her Chuhra Sweeper midwife was now insane. Formerly, if she could be summoned in time, she handled the delivery. Otherwise, the women of the family took care of it and called their Chura Sweeper woman afterward to do the cleaning up. If there was a female in the household to help the husband's mother, the midwife was needed for only one day.

The circumstances that mitigated against the use of government maternity facilities were distance from the village, ignorance of the system, and lack of a contact in the institution. When a person said he had his own man in an organization, he meant that he knew a person who was sufficiently involved in the power structure of the organization to help him obtain the services that he desired. Often, it was not necessary to know anyone at the hospitals in Delhi provided one followed the customery procedures, but in the village people believed that they had to "know someone" or "have access" in order to obtain government services. Medical treatment and medicine were obtainable free in the government hospitals of Delhi, but villagers did not expect anything to be free.

Members of a large prosperous Jat household who sometimes went to Delhi for medical services called the government midwife for difficult births. This woman was similar to a midwife and a practical maternity nurse. According to the senior mother-in-law in the household, she cut the umbilical cord with a sterilized scissors, that is, she immersed the scissors in some kind of solution before using it. She also bandaged the baby around its middle. This family engaged both the government midwife and the village midwife, the latter to clean the room and to bathe the mother and child during the first 10 days after birth. The man in charge of the budget in this large joint household grumbled about paying two midwives.

Other people of importance in delivery and lying-in were any senior women in the husband's household, generally the husband's mother, father's sister, or sister. These women were of great aid during this period. They usually supervised the entire lying-in. In nuclear households, the lying-in might be taken care of to some degree by the husband, but usually he could rely on nearby female relatives from his own family of orientation or lineage.

MODELS FOR DELIVERY

The following is a model of a lying-in based on data both from a number of families

and from the village midwife, a Chuhra Sweeper. When asked if midwives were ever from other castes in the village, she said, "midwives are only from the Valmiki [Chuhra Sweeper] caste. In these days caste does not matter as even Brahmans work as nurses in hospitals."

We consider Gideon's (1962) article to be an excellent report on birth practices for northern India, but she observed practices in a Sikh village where customs differed to some degree from, and were probably more conservative than, those of Shanti Nagar. Nonetheless, we found it useful to compare Gideon's data with ours.

Toward the end of pregnancy, the husband's mother watched her daughter-in-law carefully if she was a new bride and advised her about labor pains so that the midwife could be called as soon as needed. Generally, a bride did not tell her mother-in-law immediately when labor pains began because stoicism was valued and also it was customary to wait until the men left the house before telling the mother-in-law. If labor started at night, it was easier to tell the mother-in-law because of the separate sleeping quarters of males and females. Most older women had considerable experience with deliveries and a good sense of how long to wait before sending a message to the midwife, who was within five minutes' walk at the most from any part of the village, to inform her that delivery would occur within a specific time.

While waiting, women of the household prepared a place in the women's quarters for the delivery if they had not already done so. In large prosperous joint households, a small room away from the cooking and eating facilities and the men's quarters was used for this purpose. In small one- or two-room households, a room was partitioned by hanging sheets or quilts around the space reserved for the lying-in. The customary string cot used for sleeping and sitting was placed in the allotted space for the expectant mother.

By the time these arrangements were ready, the midwife came to see how the labor pains were progressing. She took heated butter, ghee, or oil (depending on what the family had available) and applied it to the birth canal with her fingers. This was more often done with a new mother, especially to get a view of the physical potential of the mother for delivery. If it seemed that labor would take a long time, the midwife left and returned later.

When delivery was imminent, the mother was given a glass of warm milk with ghee in it so that she might feel the warmth and so that the child inside of the womb would be lubricated. Rich people, according to the midwife, sometimes provided almonds which gave the mother strength. All during this time, the mother-in-law made the expectant mother walk around inside the house, the males having absented themselves. Moving around the house was said to help bring the child down and to make the delivery easier. Although the midwife did not say so, it kept both mother-in-law and expectant mother busy during the labor pains. The midwife stressed that a young female in labor should not cry out for fear she would be heard by someone other than the mother-in-law and midwife, for if she was heard, the delivery would become more painful. This advice was a matter of practical psychology. If the expectant mother were told that the delivery would be less painful if she made less noise, she might believe that the pain was indeed less. The behavior was consistent with the stoicism conditioned into villagers.

If the lying-in occurred during the winter months, extra bedclothes, especially quilts, were put on top of the expectant mother to keep her warm; if it was summer, she might want to take off some of her clothing. Since this society was modesty-oriented, the young female did not undress totally. No burning cow dung or fire was put under her bed as described by Gideon (1962, p. 1224), but if it was cold a fire of glowing cowdung was maintained on one side of the room for warmth.

When the time for delivery approached, the expectant mother took off her pajama-like trousers if she was wearing them, or if wearing a skirt, raised it above her hips. The woman lay flat on her back on the bed and spread her legs wide apart. The midwife

stretched the woman's birth canal with both of her hands, using heated oil or ghee, and the mother-in-law and whoever else was attending helped press the womb down. If the pains persisted, the midwife had the woman sit up, and press downward and forward with her body. The midwife used no tools to extract the child. She only stretched the birth canal with her fingers and pressed the womb in order to bring the head of the child downward.

For a more difficult case, the midwife made the expectant mother squat forward on her toes with all of her weight pressing forward. The process brought the child's head down and was usually successful. Then she had the mother lie flat on the bed again. If the birth was even more difficult and the child's head stuck, she had the pregnant woman sit on a large cow dung cake, placed on the floor, while leaning forward against a wall to press downward, a procedure similar to that described by Gideon (1962, p. 1224). In cases of breech delivery, children emerging feet first, the midwife stretched the birth canal to the extent needed with continuous pressing down on the womb. The pressing of the womb consistently and forcefully was the main task of the relatives helping with the delivery. The midwife could not very easily handle all of these tasks herself.

The midwife informant said she had delivered many children who were breech cases. She said that such deliveries were dangerous but that the children and the mothers were still alive. She also said that if she were to have an unusually difficult delivery, she would ask that the expectant mother be taken to a hospital; however, she had never had such a case.

When the baby came out, it usually started crying. If not, it was spanked to make it cry. The umbilical cord was cut after the placenta had been expelled. Formerly, the midwife cut the cord with a sickle, a tool used by both sexes. However, the government midwife instructed local village midwives to request a new knife from each family when she delivered a child because, she said, "The sickle was not safe." Although no one ever mentioned sterilization of such instruments, the substitution of the knife for the sickle was aimed at providing a clean instrument.

If the afterbirth was not expelled, the mother was given *chaini,* an infusion of ghee, brown sugar, and dried ginger in boiling water. This concoction ejected the afterbirth, but the midwife said that the drink was seldom necessary. The cord was never cut until the afterbirth had been expelled. The women believed that the life of the child was in the afterbirth. If the child was not breathing when it came out, or if the infant was blue and lifeless, the midwife warmed the placenta in an iron dish. This process was believed to bring life to the child. If the infant did not respond to this activity, then the child was considered to have been born dead and was immediately buried.

For a living child, the cord and afterbirth were buried together. Formerly, when all the village houses were of mud, they were buried in the same room in which the birth had taken place, but with houses built of brick and floors of cement, the cord and afterbirth were buried in the courtyard.

After cutting the cord, the midwife placed the infant on the ground saying, "It is the earth that will have the burden of taking care of it." Then the midwife passed the baby to the eldest female family member who was present in the delivery room. This person, who might be either the husband's mother or husband's father's sister, covered the child with a cloth brought for the occasion, kissed the baby's forehead, and embraced it. The new baby was given a bath, usually within two hours of its birth, as soon as the midwife finished burying the cord and placenta. In winter, the bath was in warm water; in summer it was not necessary to heat the water. To bathe the baby, a woman of the family held it while the midwife rubbed it with water. There was no immersion while bathing. As soon as the delivery, burial of placenta and cord, and bathing of the infant were completed, the midwife left.

Fire, water, and iron were present in the delivery room. Fire, a sacred purificatory element of Hinduism, was placed at one side of the room, not only to warm the mother but to purify the air in the room. Water, also

a purificatory element, was kept in a bowl over the fire so that it might be given to the mother and child whenever needed for drinking and bathing. Iron was placed under the bed of the mother to protect the child from harm when the mother and child were left alone. Usually an iron sickle or lock was used. One Brahman family possessed an iron chain for tying cattle, which they used to form a magical circle around the bed of the mother. This chain was loaned to high-caste families upon request when they had a lying-in. The explicit purpose was to prevent anything from frightening the child while asleep, but the iron and circle were protection against evil spirits, the evil eye, illness, and other misfortunes. Some families scattered a little grain around the bed which together with the iron chains and locks served as protective devices. From the time of delivery, a lantern was kept burning for nine nights in the room for protection and so that the mother could help herself and the baby if it cried for milk at night. Thus, all of these miscellaneous items were protective and purificatory devices against the weakness and vulnerability of the woman and child at this time of extreme segregation and deepest pollution.

In contrast to the delivery by the village midwife, a Chamar Leatherworker described her delivery and lying-in at the Lady Hardinge Hospital in Delhi as follows. She stayed seven days in the hospital, during which time the hospital fed her and gave her three glasses of milk every day, which she did not have in the village. She and one other woman shared the same room. She did not have to pay the hospital or the physician. She enjoyed the experience because when she was at home she slept on rags, but in the hospital she had a thick mattress, the bedding was changed twice a day, she and her baby were regularly bathed, and their clothing changed and washed. A nurse attended her at the hospital and a "lady doctor" examined her; still another doctor gave her an injection. She was conscious while the baby was born. She said that the doctor was not present at the time of delivery, only the nurse.

The hospital gave her a prescription to be filled regularly, which she lost. She was instructed to come back whenever she or the child had trouble, but she never did as visiting the city depended on her husband's will or ability to take her. One of her worries concerned feeding the baby as she had previously had trouble nursing her infants. However, the physician examined her carefully and told her there was no reason why she could not nurse the child.

TWINS

Two sets of twins, both female, had been born in recent times. Twin daughters, fraternal rather than identical, had been born in a Jat Farmer family. They both survived and were 15 years of age. Jokingly, the mother of the twins told us that when she was pregnant and lying on a cot, she felt the twins kicking and fighting each other in her stomach, and that when they were born, they continued fighting with each other. She said that a woman knows when she has twins because they lie crosswise in the stomach to allow enough room for both of them. Another reason she knew she would have twins was because she could not see her toes when she walked.

A Gola Potter woman had borne twins just prior to our arrival in Shanti Nagar. The infant girls were very small. The woman had to work hard helping her husband to make pottery, and the family had severe economic problems. Despite these problems the twins were alive at the end of our period of fieldwork.

A woman in a well-off Jat family had borne twins, a boy and a girl, about 26 years earlier when she and her husband were living in the Punjab where he was a government official. Due to the difficulty of caring for two infants away from his natal village, the husband wanted to give the girl away to a man who asked for her because he knew it was difficult to raise twins. The mother of the children left for her husband's village a day earlier than she was supposed to, thus forestalling the plan. The twin girl died when she was a little less than three years old. The mother still remembered that when her

daughter was dying the child called out that she was riding with her father. The general feeling was that it was difficult for a woman to nurse two children at once, and that one or both children were more apt to die than single infants. In the case of the first Jat woman whose daughters were still alive, she supplemented the nursing of one infant with buffalo milk; the other drank only her milk.

SUMMARY OF PRENATAL AND DELIVERY RITUALS

Prenatal and delivery rituals had elements of separation, transition, and incorporation although they were dominantly rituals of separation. They were both protective and purificatory. The beginning of separation was marked by the sexual taboo between husband and wife from the third month of pregnancy. This taboo was occasionally fostered by the physical separation of the husband and wife when she visited her parents. The belief that the soul of the child entered the fetus at the sixth month of pregnancy was the first recognition of a potential new member of the family and lineage; this recognition was strengthened by the belief in prenatal influence. In the last month of pregnancy, the mother was slowly cut off from the community by a reduction in workload and completely segregated from the community and all of the male and some of the female members of the household when her labor pains began.

At birth the infant was separated from the mother by the physical act of severing the umbilical cord. The cutting of the cord not only marked the separation of the child and establishment of its individuality, but the immediate tying of the cord, necessary for the life of the child, reaffirmed the need to "tie the threads together," so basic to life and the rites of passage of the life cycle.

By placing the child on the earth or ground, the infant was further separated from the mother. This act symbolized the origin of the infant's soul in the land of the dead, the nourishing and fertile characteristics of the earth, and it also integrated the new infant with its kin group.

Bathing the infant by rubbing it with water was hygienic and purificatory—both of which qualities were believed to contribute to the life of the child. Water is symbolic of birth (Freud, 1962, p. 160), and of separation.

A ritual of incorporation for the infant consisted of the burial of the umbilical cord and afterbirth within the household compound, indicating that the infant was assimilated to membership in the family, including the ancestors. When the baby's father's father's sister or a similar elderly woman provided the infant with its first cloth (symbolic of nakedness), embraced and kissed the child, these rituals were incorporative.

Although the rituals for delivery were essentially those of separation of the mother and of separation and incorporation of the infant, both mother and child as a result of these rituals were placed in limbo from the time of delivery until the end of seclusion, a period ranging from six to 40 days, depending on caste, family's financial condition, and number of female helpers in the household. The rituals of protection and purification during the 40-day lying-in period contributed to the gradual reincorporation of mother and child into their kin group.

Finally, the close interaction of the Chuhra Sweeper midwife with the senior women in all families of birth and with the new mother and child, regardless of caste, was symbolic of the sacred or other than ordinary state of everyone attending the lying-in where everyday rules of behavior were in abeyance. Thus, although birth was considered one of the most polluting states, it was at the same time sacred.

Changes in rituals of the birth rite of passage may be classified as the modernization of tradition due to new concepts introduced from education and the media. The fact that Brahman women acted as midwives and cut the umbilical cord, that one Brahman woman had some of her children delivered in a hospital when she lived in the city, and that a Chamar Leatherworker woman also had delivered a child in a hospital indicated both changes in attitudes toward purity and pollution and also the beginnings of a trend for

the use of Western medicine rather than more traditional medical systems. The use of the government trained midwife was another change. Some families were aware that the life of both mother and child would be safeguarded by the services of the government midwife although they were more costly than those of the village midwife. What probably militated against greater use of the government trained midwife was not only her higher fee and the distance one had to go to fetch her for the delivery, but also the fact that in high-caste families the village midwife performed the delivery, cleaned up after the mother and child, and attended them for 10 days after birth for a lesser fee than that of the government midwife who only delivered the child. Only a few families employed both the village and the government midwives. Although high-caste women occasionally delivered a baby and cleaned up after mother and baby, when they used the village midwife's services, they expected her to perform all of the customary services for the customary fee.

Another change from earlier times was that a daughter-in-law remained in her village of marriage for the birth of her first child rather than returning to her natal village. It was fairly simple for most primiparas to return to their parents for the birth of a child because the mean distance between villages united by affinal ties with Shanti Nagar was 11.02 miles (17.7 km.) (Freed and Freed, 1973, p. 95). Furthermore, travel between villages was easier than it had been 50 years earlier. Whatever the reason for the change in place of first birth, young brides still visited their parents during pregnancy, probably for reasons given formerly, so that they would not have to work as hard, or so that they might be free of the sexual demands of their husbands who might not want to observe the taboo against intercourse during pregnancy. With better transportation it was possible for them to return to their husband's village in time for delivery. To have the child in the husband's village was consistent with the belief that both the mother and offspring were the property of the husband's family, and with the overall pattern of patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence which was closely interwoven with beliefs about blood and the inheritance of land.

POSTNATAL EVENTS AND CARE

There were from seven to 40 days of seclusion for a mother and child, depending on caste membership and family differences. The first seven to nine days of seclusion were restricted to the lying-in room or the partitioned space designated for delivery. After seven to nine days, the new mother might arise, go out to relieve herself, and move about a bit more though still in a state of semi-seclusion, segregated from the male members of the household and from the village community.

Announcement of Birth

To announce a birth, it was customary to beat on a large metal plate for a son or a smaller metal plate for a daughter, an action that served as both an integrative and protective rite. It announced a new member of the community, and the noise was meant to frighten malignant spirits. This practice varied considerably. Among Brahmans, some families followed this custom; some only beat the plate if a son was born; some beat the plate and/or drums for a son; some did nothing. The Mann Jats who were strict followers of the Arya Samaj did not beat anything; the Mehlawit Jats, who had only recently migrated from the city, beat the plate for the birth of a son. Among the high castes, the general tendency was to avoid public display and noise at life cycle rites with the exception of weddings.

Among the Gola and Mahar Potters, Chamars, and Chuhras, practices differed. The Potters beat the plate for a son; the Chamars beat the large plate for a boy, and the small one for a girl; the Chuhras did nothing. Even though beating metal plates and drums at birth was a custom that was dying out, observances for girls were still much less than for boys. Since beating metal plates and drums was so that the child might not be frightened or harmed by ghosts or evil spir-

its, not beating them would appear to be related to the Arya Samaj and a reduction in magical practices.

Shortly after the birth of a son among the Brahman and Jat castes, a message was sent by the Nai Barber serving the family to the new father's sister or sisters announcing the birth with an invitation to come immediately for the ceremony of washing the new mother's nipples. If the husband's father's sister or sisters were living and none of them had arrived before delivery, they too were invited. Another message was sent to the parents of the new mother announcing the birth. The latter did not visit the husband's village but sent gifts (*piliya*) to the new mother and child.

Within a period of one to three days from the birth, the women in the household hung nim and mango leaves above the doorway to announce the happy event. Gideon (1962, p. 1227) quite rightly indicates that it was believed these leaves protected the house from anyone who might bring misfortune. A man in the household consulted a professional Brahman priest with regard to the time the mother should leave the seclusion of the lying-in room, the naming of the child, and the horoscope of a son. Since daughters were expected to bring misfortune, they were not provided with horoscopes. If families in which a birth occurred were members of the Chamar or Chuhra castes, they usually consulted a member of their own caste who could read an almanac and provide the correct dates and names, or they consulted caste priests in nearby villages who performed this function. The name of a child was obtained at this time by the Chamar and Chuhra castes, as naming was not part of any later ceremony. The high castes did not obtain the child's name until later.

Care of Mother and Child During Lying-in

For seven days after birth, the midwife or whoever attended the mother daily pressed her hands and feet to aid her circulation. She also pressed the mother's stomach sideways without lubricating her hands in order to put the womb in place, which had come down with the delivery of the child. For the latter purpose, she also used her feet, especially her heels as they had more strength. She placed them, one each, on both sides of the birth canal and pressed the birth canal. She removed the feces from the lying-in room, cleaned the room, bathed the mother and child daily, and washed their dirty clothing.

At the end of her period of service the midwife received about five seers of wheat, a little brown sugar (gur), and one rupee. According to her, rich families gave her five rupees, grain, and gur. She never received more than five rupees (cf. Freed and Freed, 1976, p. 123). However, once when she served a wealthy family, who also employed the government midwife, she received only one rupee, five seers of wheat, and a small piece of gur. She was much annoyed because the government midwife had received 10 rupees just for helping with the delivery, whereas she, as traditional midwife, had to give the mother and child their baths, wash their clothes, and clean the room. When asked why she had not asked for more, she said, "Had I asked for it, the government midwife would have fought with me. It was for the mother-in-law to settle it. She should have given us five rupees each, but I am a simple woman and don't like to start quarrels. I accept what is given me happily." When the midwife completed her services for those high-caste families who could afford them, the Nai Barber woman then came in regularly until the fortieth day to bathe the woman and child. She, too, was paid for her services (Freed and Freed, 1976, p. 126).

In addition to the midwife and Nai Barber woman, a senior woman of the household generally attended the mother and child during the early days after birth. She was always past the menopause. For the first three to six days, she took care of the infant and was regarded as the guardian of mother and child, warding off any dangers, natural or supernatural, which might threaten. There was a belief that during the lying-in the new mother was unclean because the bleeding continued for some time. For this reason, the fire was kept burning in the room to protect her, along with the iron and grain scattered

around the bed. Moreover, during the first ten days of the lying-in, no one could borrow fire from the mother's room. Not all families followed these procedures.

Story of Jaswant Singh

There was a strong belief about nursing a newborn baby with mother's milk. The story of King Jaswant Singh illustrates this ideology, as told by a male Jat Farmer:

> In olden times, this king was fighting a war and he ran away and went home. His wife wouldn't let him in because he had run away and was a coward. However, his mother opened the door and let him in. The wife was cooking halva. She struck him with the frying pan of halva and an iron spoon. The king's mother asked why she did this. Then she told her daughter-in-law that her son had run away from the war because he was afraid of iron. King Jaswant Singh heard her, was shamed by it, and said he would go back to the war. His mother told him that his cowardice was due to her past. During the period of his infancy when she was nursing him, she was cooking bread for his father. The child was weeping, but she thought it improper for the child to be there when she was taking care of her husband so she sent him to the nurse, a Sweeper woman, who nursed him, which she shouldn't have done. When the mother found out that the nurse had given him her milk, she made him vomit because she did not want him to have the Sweeper woman's milk in his blood. To no avail, however. This is why Jaswant Singh had this weakness. If he had not been nursed by the Sweeper woman, he would have been a brave person because his mother was a brave woman.

This story exemplified a number of village beliefs, the most important of which was that blood determined behavior. Blood could be contaminated by improper behavior, in this case the nursing of the child by the Sweeper woman because milk formed from her blood passed on cowardly traits to Jaswant Singh. The contamination was clearly due to the caste of the Sweeper woman. Only a low-caste person could transmit cowardly traits, while a high-caste queen passed on traits of bravery. But the queen mother accepted her son's cowardice because it was her fault. From the context, she appears to have been guilty because she paid more attention to her husband than to her child. The idea of having a wet nurse for one's child was disturbing to the villagers. Their great concern over wet nurses may have derived from the well-known story of Jaswant Singh.

Although the overt content of the story of Jaswant Singh reinforced belief that caste was inherent and helped to maintain the social order, symbolic analysis of the story reveals concern with identity and the change from mother to wife as love object. The story, moreover, indicates a great concern with pregnancy and offspring. The clue to the meaning behind the symbols starts with Jaswant Singh's name. It translates as a famous lion. Singh stands for a lion, but a lion is courageous and lustful in the sexual sense (Freud, 1967, pp. 445, 499–500), the opposite of the overt story. The terms king and queen not only refer to Jaswant Singh's father and mother but also to Jaswant Singh and his wife so that the little story about Jaswant Singh's mother cooking bread for the father, taking care of him, and neglecting her son refers tangentially to the Oedipus complex of the son needing or wanting attention from the mother but being shunted off to the nurse while the mother and father have sexual relations. Cooking bread usually in an oven refers to the uterus or the female genitalia (Freud, 1967, p. 389), again denoting sexual activity.

The wet nurse is a substitute mother so that the son has the problem of identifying his real mother and also of identifying himself with his real mother and father and acquiring their qualities, problems that vex all young children. Milk from the wet nurse's breast is categorized in the overt story as causing bad qualities in Jaswant Singh, in particular a lack of courage, which the queen mother shoulders as her fault. Symbolically, milk from a mother's breast represents a period in a child's life when the attachment to the mother was fully satisfied (Freud, 1962, p. 375; 1967, p. 609). Therefore, giving the child to the wet nurse for suckling implies a severance from the mother, in this case due to the mother's interest in the father. The

tabooing of the breast, which also occurs as a result of weaning, is one of a number of steps that occurs in the process of growing up.

Since Jaswant Singh's name is a play on masculine identity, courage, and sexual lust, we look to reversals in the story for a final interpretation. Vomiting in the story is a reversal or opposite because it indicates a desire to be pregnant and to have many children (Freud, 1967, p. 609). But vomiting and becoming pregnant is what a female does; and it is this aspect that furthers the interpretation that there is role reversal between males and females, and that it is pertinent to the identity of Jaswant Singh. The weeping of the infant before the mother sends him to the nurse is a redundant birth symbol, since tears or water refer to birth and the individual is an infant (Daniélou, 1964, p. 238; Freud, 1967, pp. 435–437).

What is further implied in this very short story is the development of the child from the womb to adulthood. The opening part of the story combines an ambiguity regarding the mother's role and the wife's, for the wife bars the door to her husband because he is a coward and in addition strikes him with a pan and an iron spoon. The pan is representative of the female genitalia and the spoon (an elongated object with a rounded tip) the penis (Freud, 1967, pp. 389, 391, 394, 413, 414–416, 419). On the other hand, the house and a room in it, especially a kitchen, represent a woman; the door, the point of entrance to the female for sexual relationships (Freud, 1962, p. 165; 1967, pp. 258–259, 433), and the process of cooking is an indirect reference to coitus (Freud, 1967, p. 389). Halva is a sweetmeat and further reinforces the idea of coitus since it translates as sexual pleasure (Freud, 1962, p. 164). Yet the overt story is one of rejection by the wife and acceptance by the queen mother.

If we take the story to mean just the opposite because the king is called Jaswant Singh, then we translate the story as a whole to indicate that Jaswant Singh, a lustful man, returned to his wife for coitus (fighting a war = experiencing violence = coitus; Freud, 1962, p. 164). He had resolved his infantile desire for his mother as a sexual subject and wanted to mate with his wife and have children. The wife's role behavior was symbolic of the sexual act and of the husband's sexual role. Thus, the telling of this story at the time of birth not only reinforced the ideas pertaining to caste inheritance through the blood, but also the values placed on marriage and on having children even though the story is overtly pertinent to the problems of nursing a newborn child with mother's milk.

Nursing

When a mother could not nurse a newborn baby, the villagers expected it to die. Exceptions occurred when another woman in the same family was able to nurse the child. As for wet nurses, none of the villagers followed Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1956, p. 43), who stated, "The mother should give suck to the child for six days, then, the nurse." The practical villagers disregarded this precept, perhaps thinking that celibate swamis knew little about raising babies, or more probably they preferred to retain their older customs. In any case, no village women hired out as wet nurses.

The newborn infant was not nursed by the mother until the third day after birth. Until that time, the infant was fed *guti,* a mixture of water and sugar. In one Jat household, the grandmother took the newborn baby in her arms and dropped this mixture slowly into the child's lips saying, "If the child takes the mother's milk first, then it will never drink cow's milk." The father of the baby also said, "The mother always has milk in her breast by the third day. The baby takes *guti* for the first two days. By the third day the mother has milk in her breast and nurses." The old grandmother complained of being tired and having a headache because she had been up every night from the time the child had been delivered in order to feed it *guti.* All informants concurred that newborn infants were first fed a solution of sugar and water for two days. Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon (1965a, p. 166) noted that in the Punjab the infant is fed sweetened water the first two days after birth.

Nipple Washing (*Chuchi Dhona*)

At the time a son was first nursed, all castes had a ceremony called Nipple Washing (*Chuchi Dhona*). Carrying out this ceremony was the privilege of the baby's father's sister, for which she received a gift of money or jewelry, sometimes both. One Jat Farmer reported that he had to pay twice because his father's brother's son's daughter first performed the service and received two rupees. Then his sister came to help with the lying-in and he paid her Rs. 50 for Nipple Washing. In another Jat household the husband's sister was said to be able to ask for anything she wanted for coming for the lying-in and Nipple Washing. The Nipple Washing ceremony and gifts were for the birth of a son. If a daughter was born, the father's sister was not invited for this ceremony. Only the Gola Potters reported that Nipple Washing was performed on Friday and Saturday, which were auspicious days for this ceremony, and was not correlated with first nursing by the mother unless the third day fell on either Friday or Saturday. Payments and gifts were not given the baby's father's sister for Nipple Washing by the Potter, Chamar, and Chuhra castes. In families that could not afford the expense of the father's sister's visit or the gifts, ceremonial Nipple Washing was dispensed with.

The ceremony of Nipple Washing may be interpreted in a number of ways. It was an integrative rite between the baby's mother and its father's sister. These two women had an uneasy relationship because a brother looked after the welfare of his sister and sent gifts to her and her offspring. In a sense, sister and wife competed for the same resources. A sister belonged to the same lineage and clan as her brother, but his wife did not. The washing of the new mother's nipples before she first nursed the infant was a matter of patting water on them. The idea was to purify the nipples from which the baby sucked, for during this period of lying-in the mother was not only polluted because of childbirth but also because she was daily bathed by the midwife, a Chuhra Sweeper woman. Nipple Washing was a protective rite for the offspring, and an assimilative rite for the mother and the baby. In the mother's case it brought her another step closer to being a member of her husband's family and lineage. It may have been intended to provide a bond between the wife and the husband's sister, but their conflicting interests in the husband's property sometimes jeopardized this intent. Washing or, more accurately, water invariably symbolizes birth, a relationship between mother and child (Freud, 1962, p. 160). The washing of the nipples restated the importance of the birth of a son, the improved status of the mother, and the relationship of the child to the lineage of his father.

The giving of money and jewelry or whatever gifts the husband's sister demanded served a number of purposes. It provided for part of the yearly gifts a brother must send to his married sister; it paid her for a service to a low-status affine, i.e., her brother's wife who usually would perform services for her since as her brother's sister she ranked higher than his wife; and it bridged the gap between the two women. The rite, also, allowed the sister to visit her natal family, reinforcing the ties of family and lineage.

Nhanbar

On the third day after birth, the same day as Nipple Washing, the husband's sister who had washed the nipples went to each house in the lineage with a basin of henna paste mixed in water and applied hand prints (*thapa*s) on both sides of the doorway. These prints indicated the perpetuation of the lineage by the birth of a son, and were an incorporating ritual. After finishing these tasks, she proceeded to the Bhumiya shrine with offerings. Offerings were always made at this shrine after the birth of a child or calf. The ritual was both incorporating and protective because the offerings to the founding village ancestor (Bhumiya) were for the health of the child as a member of the community.

Diet of Mother

During the lying-in the mother's diet was circumscribed. For 40 days, she could not

eat any kind of bread because it contained grain, which was believed to hurt the tubes and intestines of a new mother; nor could she have buttermilk, oranges, or sour foods because they were thought to stop the after-bleeding. It was believed that the bleeding should continue throughout so that the mother would be ceremonially cleansed. From three to four days after delivery, a mother was fed *chhuwani,* a cooked mixture of sugar, ghee, and ground cumin seeds. The last item was believed to aid digestion and ward off evil. Thereafter, she ate *moiya,* halva, and other sweet foods, all having somewhat similar contents. *Moiya* consisted of ground coconut, sugar, and ghee mixed together and fried. Halva can be based on carrots, dal, or suji. Suji halva was not used at this time because its thickening base consists of coarsely ground wheat (suji).

By the third or fourth day, the gifts from the mother's parents arrived. The gifts included *gond* which was placed in a basket within reach of the mother so that she could eat it whenever she wanted. *Gond* consisted of ground gum from the kikar tree (*Acacia arabica*) heated in ghee so that the gum swelled. After the gum and ghee were cooked, the mixture was placed in a bowl of sugar, and to it were added ground coconut, raisins, and other dried fruits. This delicacy was eaten for the remainder of the 40 days until the end of seclusion.

The mother's family sent the ingredients for *gond* and rice in sufficient quantity for the mother during her lying-in, but the husband's family also supplied these substances, especially after the first and second births. Generally, about 7 seers of rice, 1 seer of coconut, 20 seers of sugar, 1 seer of gum, and 5 seers of ghee would be sent by the mother's parents if they could afford it. The women in the household of the husband's family prepared halva as an additional delicacy. Some families purchased balls of sugar and coconut for the new mother.

There was a difference of opinion about drinking milk. Some informants stated that the mother was given three to four glasses of milk a day for the entire 40 days; others said she could not have milk until the tenth day, and thereafter had three to four glasses a day until the fortieth day. Not all families, in fact, could afford to provide her with this much milk regularly.

On the tenth day and thereafter the mother could be fed *kicheri* and *khir. Khir* is rice pudding, a favorite festal food; *kicheri* is a cooked dish of rice and a lentil, sometimes mixed with a vegetable, such as potato. This dish served as a substitute for bread, the staple food. Although the mother might have salt in her food from the tenth day onward, she could not have spices, such as red and black peppers.

The main purpose of the postnatal diet was to provide strength for the new mother who was considered weakened by the delivery. The foods which the villagers believed provided the greatest strength were ghee, milk, and unleavened whole wheat bread. However, during the lying-in, wheat was taboo because it was a grain. Rice, although a grain, was not in the same category because it was never made into bread and because it was primarily eaten in rice pudding or in *kicheri.* At other occasions when diet was circumscribed for supernatural reasons, the food tabooed was always bread. This rule applied whenever individuals were in a sacred state, in danger, or both. Thus, precluding wheat and bread from the mother's diet emphasized her liminal, sacred, and dangerous condition. In addition, since grain was a fertility and life-giving symbol, it might be equated to semen. Eating wheat at this time would be dangerous and wasteful, for it could clog the tubes. Sexual relations would have the same effect.

Sweets were believed to give the new mother strength; they compensated for her reduced intake of carbohydrates due to the taboo on wheat. Additional milk offset the loss of protein owing to the taboo on bread which was made from whole wheat flour and also provided extra protein. The provision of these extra foods to the mother, luxuries in the sense that she did not customarily eat them, marked both her transitional state as well as her new status as a mother. With the bearing of her first child, especially a son, the prestige of the mother increased in the

family and lineage. Black items, such as cumin seeds, were believed to repel evil spirits. Other black items which served this protective function were kohl and iron.

Sleeping Arrangements

During the lying-in period, the infant slept with its mother on her bed in a position near the head of her cot so that she could take care of the child when she was alone. Although all families had a cradle made of a round basket which hung suspended from the ceiling in which a baby might rest during the day when a woman was working, it was not used until after the fortieth day. Thereafter, the cradle was used during the day, but the baby slept in the same bed with the mother at night. The cradle for a new baby was usually made by the Jhinvar Waterman, whose wife brought it to the family of the new baby. For this she received a woman's costume (consisting of a headcloth, shirt, and skirt) and sweets. The practical features of the cradle were that it could hang suspended from the ceiling where a gentle breeze might sway it and keep the child from being too hot. Best of all, the cradle was above the ground so that rats could not reach the baby easily and it would be safe from other harm. In a few wealthy families when a son was born, they purchased a small cot from a carpenter.

Shortened Lying-in and Other Variations

A number of women reported a shortened lying-in for reasons of belief or expediency. A woman in her forties in a strongly Arya Samaj family arose before the sixth day and started working in the house. The head of the household, her husband, was a strict follower of Arya Samaj practices and did not believe in ceremonies. His wife had five children at home, none of whom were old enough to help in the house or field. Two months later she was ill with a serious circulatory difficulty and died. The baby girl also died because there was no one in the household to nurse or care for her.

The wife of one of the village Barbers arose from childbirth a few days after delivery because the family was poor and the husband worked and lived in a barber shop in Delhi. The wife of a related Nai Barber family acted at the delivery and took care of her until her husband could come from Delhi. Her husband could take leave for only a few days so she had to be up and about to take care of her four sons, her cow, and to fulfill the duties of a Nai Barber woman to the families she traditionally served. She complained that her eyesight was damaged because she cooked shortly after the delivery. Most women refrained from cooking and drawing water from the well until after the fortieth day from delivery. They believed that illness or disability resulted from breaking seclusion taboos, not because the specific activities were physically dangerous so soon after childbirth but because of the supernatural danger from violating a sacred injunction.

A story was told in the Lohar Blacksmith family about a young mother who died seven days after birth because she went to the fields by herself to defecate and was possessed by a ghost. The infant also died. The belief that a new mother was particularly subject to being taken by a ghost strongly reinforced the lying-in customs.

Other families who did not use the services of a midwife and a Nai Barber woman relied upon relatives within the family or lineage to perform these services. In the nuclear Brahman family mentioned previously where the husband worked in the city and his mother acted as a midwife for the birth of his third daughter, he took care of his wife and child in the evening. During the day, his unmarried younger sisters, living in a different household, took care of his wife, infant, and small children. He did the cooking. The family had only recently established itself in a cattle shed that they were remodeling as a dwelling. The shed had an open side through which the mother and infant could be seen. Thus, it was possible to wave to his wife in the room in which she was lying with the baby, both of them well covered by a warm quilt. She would look out at her husband in the yard where he was cooking and talk with

him from time to time so there was little or no seclusion. This family was urbanized. The wife came from a city family; the couple had lived together in Delhi for a while; their first two children had been born in a hospital. Both because of expediency and economics, but also because of a less conservative viewpoint, this young couple apparently worried little about birth seclusion and pollution. They were warm, companionable, and liked company.

In an urban-oriented Jat Farmer, Arya Samaj family, a young 15-year-old mother was delivered of her first child by her husband's father's mother, a woman of 70. Her husband's mother helped with the delivery and bathed and tended her and the child for the first seven days, but thereafter the young woman started bathing herself and the child. The husband's mother heated the water and prepared the food for both of them. This young mother went to the fields to excrete seven days after birth, but she was confined to the house for the full 40 days.

Her mother-in-law stated, "If the new mother moves out of bed too soon, the winds will take her, then she will have a swelling and her system will go bad. A new mother should not climb stairs; climbing is bad for the stomach and the tubes." In reply to a question about the deceased Jat woman who started working before the six days after birth had elapsed, our informant said, "We don't do that in this house. Some people may get up when the child is from five to ten days old. If they start working soon after birth, then the smoke from the cooking fire gets in their eyes and their eyes will go bad. Women are especially susceptible to this immediately after delivery. The new mother is weak for a month. During this time, they should put warmed metal on the mother's and infant's eyes. Then the eyes keep well. We do this every day."

SIXTH (*CHHATHI*)

On the sixth day after birth, all families except those who followed the Arya Samaj worshiped Bemata (fig. 3), a goddess who protected children. This ceremony marked the end of the time thought to be the most dangerous for mother and child. In high-caste households, a senior woman drew a figure of Bemata (literally, "not mother") on the wall of the lying-in chamber; among the Chamar Leatherworkers, Bemata was drawn by the midwife, for which service she was paid. The depictions of Bemata varied, but all were made with charcoal and dung, sometimes with shells for eyes. The mother then sat on a stool holding her infant in her arms and faced the drawing. She bowed her head briefly and worshiped the goddess. Thereafter, she lit a lamp of burning ghee, took some soot on her fingertip from the lamp, and drew the soot around the infant's eyes. Soot drawn around the eyes of infants and small children was said to protect them from illnesses caused by spirits, from other kinds of evil, and from smoke. (Gordon, Gideon, and Wyon, 1965b, p. 737, stated that black antimony powder was applied to the eyes of the baby.) For this ceremony, the child was dressed for the first time; hitherto, the infant was placed on the cloth brought by the senior woman at birth, or any similar cloth, and simply wrapped in a warm shawl. For Bemata worship, however, the child wore a little shirt brought by the senior woman of the lineage. Diapers were not worn by infants.

In some families, a senior woman tied a dark blue string around the child's waist, wrist, and ankles. One woman said that this string was tied around a boy's waist in olden times because it was believed to make his genitals strong. However, the dark blue color is symbolic of Vishnu and is auspicious. Vishnu is always represented as black or dark blue in color; his incarnations in different ages are represented by other colors, except for Krishna, who among all of Vishnu's avatars is considered a total incarnation so he, too, is represented by black or dark blue, correlated with the fourth or dark age on earth during which time he lived (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 159, 165). The threads tied around the child at birth represent protection by Vishnu, in the guise of Krishna, from misfortune in the form of the evil eye, malevolent spirits, and illness. The threads are the first threads, after the tying of the umbilical cord, to be tied around the individual in a life cycle of threads. These threads represent life

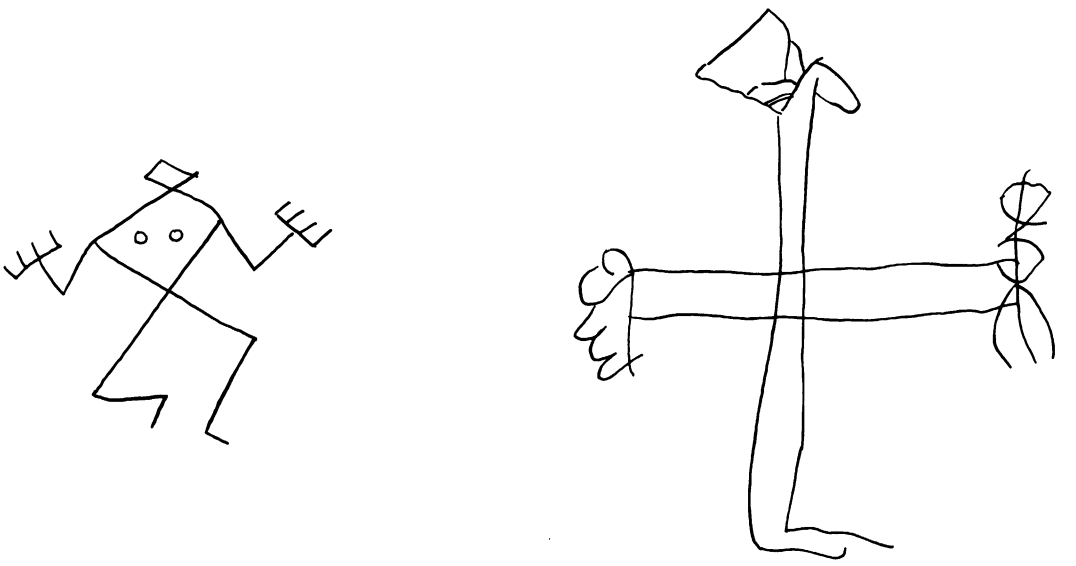

FIG. 3. Two versions of Bemata.

itself for when the threads are broken, the action symbolizes separation and death.

Stevenson (1971, pp. 9–11) has provided an earlier description of the celebration of this birth ceremony, describing the day as Mother Sixth and referring to it as "Sixth," and "Mother Sixth." She states that a low stool, called "*Chathi,*" on which various items were placed, was worshiped. This event occurred on the sixth day after the birth. The prime actors in this ceremony were the child's paternal aunt and the baby. The baby was placed on the floor to roll about like the infant Krishna and the aunt or grand aunt cracked her own knuckles against her temples in a circular motion to transfer all the child's troubles on her own head. The lamp with ghee was also present, "and, as a protection against evil, some of the black pigment is taken from the lamp of clarified butter and put on the edges of the child's eyelids" (Stevenson, 1971, p. 11). Thus, the rite was protective for the health and welfare of the child. Quite rightly Stevenson noted that this worship coincided with the time which was of special danger to the mother.

Mother Sixth in other parts of India is associated with the goddess Shashthi, a variant form of Sixth who is considered to be the protector of children. She is a deity of classical derivation, the wife of Karttikeya, the god of war or Mars (Morgan, 1953, pp. 69, 200). Shashthi is also associated with Shiva worship and appears to be both a malevolent as well as a benevolent deity who can injure or aid newborn infants and their mothers. The number six in this context is both auspicious and inauspicious, just as the goddess is benevolent and malevolent. Tetanus and puerperal fever, both diseases related to childbirth and common in India, occur during the first six days after birth and are blamed on the will of this mother goddess. However, in Shanti Nagar, Bemata, Krishna's midwife, was the goddess worshiped on the sixth, and not the goddess called Shashthi. This example of a similar rite celebrated by Shiva or Krishna worshipers illustrates the similarity of principles behind thought-forms and how they may have unity despite the differences in the chosen deity.

The explanation for the ceremony on the sixth derives from a myth told by an old Brahman grandmother, who had celebrated Bemata worship for her children and grandchildren, and who said that the following story was the basis for observing *Chhathi*:

> Chhatulani took Krishna from his mother's lap when he was six days old. She prepared a green

> cloth for him and worshiped the Mother Goddess. She put the cloth on the child. Chhatulani was a female, the midwife at Krishna's birth. As such she was a member of the Sweeper caste. This is so even though it is written in the Shastras [divine law books] that Krishna was born by himself so we don't know. When Krishna was born, the midwife was with Devaki, Krishna's mother. Like any child worships his mother, similarly we worship Chhatulani.

The same informant provided us with a brief sketch of the Krishna legend at the time that Janamashtami (Krishna's birthday) was celebrated in Shanti Nagar with a play concerning his birth enacted by villagers. Her account was fairly close to the dramatic presentation. Both follow. The grandmother's version is given first:

> Before Krishna was born his mother had six daughters. His mother's brother, Kansa, killed them all. Vasudeva was Krishna's father. Kansa wouldn't let the children live and arranged it so that Krishna couldn't escape either, but when Krishna was born, Kansa fell asleep and Vasudeva put a girl in Krishna's place and whisked Krishna away to Gokul. Kansa threw the girl up in the air to kill her, but she escaped into the sky and said, "You can't kill me. Your killer has been born and is at Gokul."

The story presented in the play was longer and more detailed but similar to the above version:

> King Kansa had a sister by the name of Devaki who was married to Vasudeva. The couple had children, but each time a child was born Kansa killed the child because he had heard that one of Devaki's children would kill him. After the seventh child had been so seized and killed, and the eighth was about to be born, Kansa threw Devaki and Vasudeva into prison. By a miracle, as the boy was being delivered, they had a vision of God [Vishnu] who instructed them to take the child [his own incarnation] across the Jumna River to King Nanda in Gokul, whose wife was at the same time giving birth to a daughter. Vasudeva then in the dark of night took Krishna and exchanged him for the daughter of Nanda. He brought the girl back to the dungeon and placed her by Devaki's side as though the child had been born to her. In the morning, Kansa learned of the birth of the infant girl and came to see the baby. He started to kill the child, but she flew up into the air saying, "Your killer has been born and is at Gokul, and you can't kill me." Thereupon the whole world celebrated the birth of Lord Krishna.

The story of the birth of Krishna and his many exploits as an infant, child, and adult are famous throughout India, but it is his birth that is related to the celebration of the Sixth in Shanti Nagar. The three versions of the myth display a number of similarities to the story from the Bhagavata Purana, but there are some omissions and explanations implicit in the brief versions. The main outlines of the story from this Purana are that Devaki had been prophesied to bear a child who would kill King Kansa, Devaki's father's brother's son (whom Devaki would call by the Hindi term for "brother"). The implication was that by so doing, the child would inherit Kansa's throne. When Kansa learned of the prophecy, he ordered all the children of Devaki and Vasudeva killed at birth. The first six were so killed. When the seventh child was conceived, he was miraculously transferred from Devaki's to Rohini's womb, i.e., to the second wife of Vasudeva. This child was Bala-rama, also an avatar of Vishnu. Vishnu is supposed to have taken two of his hairs, one white and one black; the white hair became Bala-rama, and the black, Krishna (Daniélou, 1964, p. 179). Thus Bala-rama escaped Kansa, was a brother of Krishna, and later became his playmate. That Bala-rama and Krishna were both incarnations of Vishnu and played together may contribute to the problems of the Western reader but not to the Hindu who early learns that deities may be present in various and multiple forms, as well as being one.

When Devaki conceived for the eighth time, the child was born at midnight on the eighth day of the dark fortnight and had very dark skin, together with a peculiar curl of hair on his chest (one of the symbols of Vishnu). Because he was divine, and the total incarnation of Vishnu, the deities intervened to save his life; they put all the palace guards to sleep and opened the locks to the doors.

Vasudeva, the earthly father of the divine child, then took the child and crossed the river Jumna by boat to the land of Gokul (Braj) where dwelt a cowherd, Nanda, whose wife, Yasoda, had borne a daughter. Vasudeva secretly exchanged the girl for the boy and carried the infant girl back to Mathura. Thus, Krishna was able to be born alive and live on earth as well as being saved from Kansa's hands. He was also given a very earthly and simple pair of foster parents. Through supernatural intervention and crafty competence on the part of Vasudeva, which often is necessary in a myth (Bruner, 1968, p. 282), the infant god was raised to adulthood and was able to follow his destiny, the killing of King Kansa. One of the themes in the myth is that Krishna, the dark one, represented goodness or innocence; whereas, Kansa, the king, represented evil. The myth relates the triumph of good over evil (Dowson, 1950, pp. 164–165; Morgan, 1953, pp. 366–371).

How this story of Krishna's birth is related to Bemata worship requires the analysis of the symbols in the myth and of the recurrent processes in mythmaking in the context of cultural change, together with the symbolic activities in the celebration of the ceremony of Mother Sixth or Bemata worship. The point of departure is that the versions of the Krishna myth and the ceremony are concerned with creation and birth. The source of the Krishna myth is the Bhagavata Purana, which like all the Puranas recounts tales about creation; as such it concerns deities, so birth concerns the gods.

The myth of birth related earlier (p. 356) recapitulated the birth process, indicated that humans were born as a result of sexual relations between parents and in pain, and provided a rationale for seclusion and beliefs in purity and pollution. The story of Krishna similarly is a recapitulation of the birth process, the dangers attendant immediately after birth, and the means by which they are held in abeyance. Although Krishna is an incarnation of a deity, in order to live on earth he, too, is conceived and born in pain. Six of Devaki's children die as a result of King Kansa, evil; the Sixth is observed as the time after which the danger of infant death has passed. Thus, six although a symbol of union (three plus three) and birth is a dangerous and inauspicious number when linked with sickness or death (Stevenson, 1971, pp. 25, 159). The six dead infants symbolize the dangers from childbirth for which Bemata worship is observed. The ambiguity about the parents of Krishna is necessary for the birth of a god but is also a part of the human wish for immortality taken care of in Hinduism by the doctrine of successive rebirths and release from the round of rebirths. Krishna has two sets of parents on earth, Vasudeva and Devaki first, then Nanda and Yasoda; but he also had Vishnu, himself, as his protector, as well as Chhatulani (Bemata) not real or blood mother, but a goddess. Chhatulani not only is not a real mother, she is not a real midwife because Krishna was born by himself; but she is a protector of Krishna and of children, similar to Shashthi, who is not always benevolent, who may well cause death by the sixth day, and who is a member of Shiva's pantheon of deities, rather than Vishnu's.

When Vasudeva carried the infant Krishna across the Jumna River, not only a body of water but also a female deity, he again enacted the process of birth which is always related to water; he secretly exchanged Krishna for Yasoda's daughter so that Yasoda, who had just gone through her birth pangs, could have ties of blood with the infant Krishna. This tie to Krishna made it possible for Yasoda and Nanda to be described as the prototype of true and selfless parental love (Pandey and Zide, 1966, pp. 179–181).

Krishna was a god born on earth who had to live in the world and therefore required normal parents. His first parents were not suitable; they were too close to divinity and, therefore, dangerous. Although parents are exalted personages to a child (Freud, 1962, pp. 160, 167), Krishna, a deity, required less exalted foster parents, a cowherd and his wife, who were examples of devoted parental love, thus idealizing its importance. Just as the legend provided everyday parents for Krishna, it also produced a fictitious midwife-mother who during the birth process

rescued him from water and gave him life on earth (Freud, 1962, p. 168). The legend, by providing an everyday setting for the birth and life of Krishna, in turn supplied a supernatural basis for the mystery of every birth. Krishna was an incarnation of the god, Vishnu, so every human being born in similar commonplace circumstances may possess something of the deity. The Krishna legend raises the question of the identity of the parents and emphasizes that those who bring life and love to a child are true parents. The story sets the stage for the child's reciprocal lifelong devotion to the parents. Stories such as this, and rituals that derive partly from them, condition a child to past traditions, which Jung called the "collective unconscious" and attributed to racial memory as a part of one's heritage, but which consist of repetitive cultural symbols as told in myths and acted out in rituals as a part of a long stream of linguistic and other traditional thought-forms (Jung et al., 1964, pp. 106–107; Thompson, 1950, pp. 165–166).

The use of numbers as symbols is extensive in the Krishna myth: six (three plus three) for union, birth, and death; four and its double, eight, for Vishnu and Krishna; seven for Bala-rama, Krishna's brother and the first of the children of Devaki and Vasudeva to survive. In addition there is a doubling of the earthly parents of Krishna, emphasizing the number four, and with his supernatural parents, Vishnu and Chhatulani, a tripling resulting in six.

At the most general level of analysis, the Krishna story is but one of a number of hero myths known throughout the world in which the hero has some sort of rescue at birth through water, thus representing birth, and the person who then takes care of him is his mother. This hero-water-birth myth provides a means by which children and adults may resolve the ambiguities of birth (Freud, 1962, pp. 168–169).

Finally, the processes of culture change may have resulted in Shanti Nagar in a shifting of the names of the various deities and actors in the birth myths of which there are many. For example, it is possible that the goddess Shashthi was once worshiped on the Sixth. She may have been replaced by stories derived from the blind poet, Surdas, who was born near Delhi and whose sixteenth-century poems described Krishna's samskaras, especially those pertaining to birth. Pandey and Zide (1966, p. 178) said that these stories still survive in north India.

More recently, the celebration of the Sixth in Shanti Nagar has been influenced by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who condemned the Bhagavata Purana and its depiction of Krishna's life, although he accepted Krishna as a heroic man as described in the Mahabharata. Saraswati's condemnation of the birth and life of Krishna as told in the Bhagavata Purana is due to two basic Arya Samaj tenets; the belief that there is only one God, and the teaching that there are no incarnations of Vishnu or of any deities (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 481, 487, 489, 857). Despite Saraswati's teaching, many of the villagers accepted Krishna either as a deity or as a representation of God, but the Arya Samajis did not worship Bemata on the Sixth. To some degree, Arya Samaj teachings have repressed elements of the Krishna myth, but the obfuscation of details about one deity or another or about a myth has contributed to a simplification of the myth which perpetuates it in a form embodying elements which were found in the analysis of the myth about the baby at the well, and the relationship of birth to pain and blood. More simply, births arouse anxiety about death.

Despite the differences between the Arya Samajis and the other villagers, on the sixth day after birth there were other celebrations which almost all villagers observed. If a son was born, women in the household again went around to all the houses in the lineage and placed handmarks, protective and beneficent symbols, and a choice of any of the following drawings on the outside doorway lintels of each house: swastikas (meaning "it is well" [Buck, 1917, p. 75]); creepers (fig. 4), symbolizing the growth of the lineage; peacocks (symbol of Krishna); and flowers, all symbolizing the perpetuation of fertility. These marks were remade on the twelfth (double six). They were usually made in henna and black, and the women of the

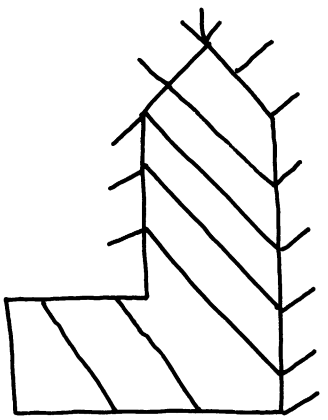

FIG. 4. Creeper.

household at the same time spread henna coloring on their palms, all of which were auspicious. The fact that the marks were made on the Sixth announced that all was well and that the anxiety about the mother and birth of the child had been reduced; on the twelfth, a doubling of six, anxiety was virtually eliminated.

These symbols publically announced the extension of the lineage, a highly desirable event. To announce this event before the passing of danger would be inviting disaster. The mother was also being incorporated into the lineage along with the child. There was a feeling, never overtly stated, that the mother, who by birth was a member of a different lineage, clan, and village, gradually became a member of her husband's family and lineage over the years through bearing children and living in her husband's village. It was possible to mark the steps by which a woman became incorporated in the family of her husband, beginning with engagement and marriage, progressing through the stage of a new bride still on trial, then when she became a new mother and bore her first son, and finally when she became a grandmother with many children and grandchildren, especially males. At this time, she fully belonged to the lineage by ties of blood through her offspring.

At the time of celebrating the Sixth, one of two items or both might be placed on the infant's neck as a protective device since the baby would soon emerge from the lying-in chamber. The first of these items was a locket prepared by a professional Brahman priest. He wrote a protective message saying that the child should not catch the evil eye, should stay well, live long, and have no fever. This piece of paper was inserted in the locket which hung from blue kachcha threads. Kachcha used in this sense meant that the threads were simply the usual spun threads but they had not been twisted together (pukka) as would be the case for the thread used in the initiation of twice-born castes. However, the priest tied a series of knots in the threads before tying it around the child's neck so that the child would have no bad dreams, the knots providing additional protection for the child. This locket with threads was not worn by children of Arya Samajis.

The second protective device was a necklace (fig. 5) principally of gold and silver objects. The objects were two silver moons, a gold sun, a gold strip, and a piece of ivory shaped like a tooth and mounted in copper. All of these little amulets could be obtained from a goldsmith in a nearby village, but more usually the parents of the mother sent this charm necklace with the other gifts in *piliya*. One informant, about 40 years of age, said that at one time the goldsmith sent these charms at the birth of a child, and then on Hoi (a festival celebrated for the long life of children) the goldsmith's wife would visit the family and be given a suit of clothing. Since this custom no longer existed, its disappearance may be related to the change in custom whereby the wife had all of her children delivered in her husband's house.

In addition to the gold and silver charms and the ivory tooth, the mother of the infant sewed a doll-sized bag and placed salt and grain in it. All of these items were strung on a black or dark blue thread and tied around the neck of the child. Some wealthy Arya Samaj families bought a gold chain for this purpose. Each silver piece cost 8 annas to 1 rupee; the gold pieces ran as high as 10 rupees apiece. Although the necklace as a whole was a protective device, the women

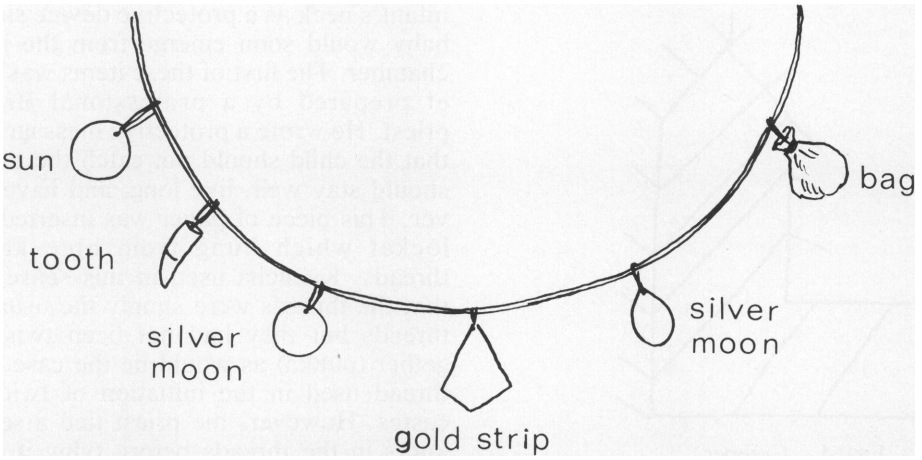

FIG. 5. Necklace for infant.

ascribed particular powers to each item. The silver moons, gold strip, and the sun protected the child if he was sleeping alone in the moonlight. The ivory tooth warded off toothache, earache, and the evil eye. The necklace as a whole prevented unfriendly winds from causing illness. The projection of unfriendliness on winds refers to the belief that winds bring diseases and may be evil spirits or ghosts. The majority of mothers who placed these necklaces around the necks of their infants said they did so to protect them, but some women said they did so because they liked them or because it was the custom. Women who followed the Arya Samaj usually gave the latter answer.

For both boys and girls on the sixth day, a family distributed cooked food or sweets, usually halva and *puri*s (wheat bread fried in ghee so that it puffs), to members of its lineage. The extent to which these foods were distributed depended on how many children had already been born in the family and how friendly all members of the lineage were. In addition, if a daughter was born into a Brahman family, they would cook sweet food (usually rice pudding), distribute it to members of the lineage, and serve a meal to a few close relatives.

SONG SESSION

An event celebrated by all castes was a song session (*Git*) on the night of the Sixth. This gathering was held for the birth of a son, except that the Mali Gardener and Gola Potter castes held it for both the birth of a son and a daughter. In Jat families, the session might be held two nights in a row, on the fifth and sixth, if relatives came from outside the village. The song session was attended by women, some of whom brought small children, after the evening meal when they had finished their household chores. The new mother and child were not present at the Sing, although they might be in a secluded room or corner listening. But the Sing was usually held in another household belonging to the same lineage.

Invitations to the Sing were extended by the Nai Barber woman who served the family, or by family members themselves. The Sing was often timed for the presence of the husband's father's sisters or husband's sisters, or both. Invitations among high-caste villagers went to members of one's own caste and members of the castes with whom one was friendly, or with whom one might have employer-employee relationships. Gola Potter women might be invited but Chamar Leatherworker and Chuhra Sweeper women were not. Not all castes and families were present at Sings nor did all the people who were invited attend. It depended on whether the women could get away from their household chores on time. Children up to 10 years of age ran in and out of these Sings. Adult

males and teenaged boys were barred. High-caste song sessions were dominated by Brahman and Jat families because of their greater numbers and prestige. Women in powerful Jat families were always invited to these events.

Guests brought grain, usually whatever had been most recently harvested or what they had in abundance, and the hostess in turn distributed parched gram, brown sugar mixed with flour, or parched rice. This ceremonial exchange indicated a friendly tie between the hostess and her guests. On the rare occasions when a Potter woman attended a song session of one of the higher castes, her grain would later be fed to the cattle. The Gola Potter, Chamar Leatherworker, and Chuhra Sweeper women participated in their own caste Sings. The Potters kept much to themselves in all of their celebrations. The female Leatherworkers held their song sessions separately. The Sweepers held their Sings alone with an occasional friendly Leatherworker who attended.

The extent of celebrations at birth was limited by the financial status of a family. For example, a poor, nuclear Brahman family held no Sing for the birth of a third son, the fourth child in the family. They held no birth ceremonies except the fire purification ceremony which was carried out by a male relative. If a member of the lineage or of the same caste, a friend or neighbor in another caste, or a person of high prestige had recently died, then a Sing might not be held since this joyous occasion would be inappropriate at a time of mourning.

In the fortnight before Holi, a period of gaiety in anticipation of this spring festival, one of the largest song sessions that occurred during our residence in Shanti Nagar was held for the birth of a male infant in a Brahman family. Thirty or more women attended, most of them Brahmans and Jats with a woman apiece from the Bairagi Beggar and Lohar Blacksmith families, as well as the Nai Barber woman who served the family. The women sat cross-legged on the ground grouped by age. The oldest women included grandmothers of the village and visiting elder relatives present to attend the lying-in; the next age group consisted of married women with their young children; the youngest women were the unmarried daughters of the village together with the young brides who had not yet had their first child. These three groups were typical of the female groupings at social activities in general.

The older women occasionally joined in the songs, but for the most part they simply exchanged information, generally about their sons, especially those who were living away from the village. Each group sang when and what they liked, sometimes together, sometimes in conflict with another group's song. The younger mothers talked about their small children. The women of this group were usually the most overworked and tired so that their conversations and singing were relatively rare. The youngest group of females, who had no children, were the most interested in the singing, led it, and kept it up fairly persistently.

The following song was sung only on the occasion of the birth of a son.

How can I take care of this fellow?
My son is always playing.
At midnight the child asks for milk.
And early in the morning the child asks for milk.
I free the calf, take the buffalo, and then have milk for my son.
Oh, child, let your mother go to her parents' house for at least 10 days.
If I knew [he would be like] this, I would have made him sit in my lap and fed him with chapatis.

In this song the mother realizes that her hands are full just taking care of the child. To keep him satisfied, she milks the buffalo. Caring for her son does not leave her enough time for even a 10-day visit to her parents' house. The last line in which the mother complains that had she known the infant would require so much attention, she would have fed him bread to keep him quiet closes the song in the same humorous view in which it is sung.

The relationship between in-laws, especially a wife and her husband's sister, was often expressed in songs at Sings, when both might be present. The following song pokes fun at this relationship:

The co-wife is going towards her house, but she comes to our house saying,
Oh, my husband's sister, will you be angry with me?
She says, Oh my husband's sister, please give me a *murha* (stool) to sit on.
And I give her a *pirha* (stool) to sit on.
Now she says, once again I will have to press your feet.
Oh my husband's sister, I fall at your feet.

Now the husband's sister says,
My brother's wife should live with ease, bear sons, and may your husband live long.
Oh God, may this couple live long.

Oh my husband's sister, you plaster the fireplace for me,
Then I will go into the kitchen and cook 36 things for my husband's sister.
You then should eat them.

Oh my brother's wife, I will not eat food, drink water,
But instead will have a dispute with you outside of the house.
I do not know what kind of a Ravan has come here.
I didn't see Ravan coming or going.
I only saw his shadow in the water.
His appearance is like this.

Oh my husband's sister,
Bring in the flat stone, and a stone to pound with and one bundle of turmeric.

(Husband's sister replies:)
Now I will write on the stone what kind of appearance Ravan will have.
You will be a bird in your next life and will fly in the sky.
I am cursing you thus because you have come here to give me a big stone to work with.
You will lay four eggs daily in the mud.
I will break all of the plows if you once again ask me to work.

This song illustrates the jealousy and ill-will which frequently flared between a wife and her husband's sister. In the Ramayana, Ravan was a demon king who ruled Sri Lanka. Making use of magic, he carried off Sita, Ram Chandra's wife, to his country. Ravan was the epitome of evil and was able to assume any form he chose (Dowson, 1950, p. 265). However, here, Ravan is a term of abuse, extended to the brother's wife. In this respect the husband's sister's role is similar to the mother-in-law's. She is jealous of her brother's wife. Since brother and sister have an institutionalized strong relationship and since the sister depends on her brother for the continuous flow of gifts to her, she is afraid that her brother's wife may have too strong a hold on his affections. These roles have been aptly defined by Mandelbaum (1970, v. 1, pp. 67–71, 86–88) and Freed and Freed (1976, pp. 70, 75–76).

The dispute starts with the *murha* and *pirha* (different sized stools to sit on). The husband's sister should be given a better stool than the wife; however, attempting to reverse roles, the wife asks for a larger stool (*murha*). The husband's sister gives her an inferior or smaller stool (*pirha*). Then the wife taunts her with the correct behavior of a young wife pressing her feet, which in fact is correct behavior of a wife to female conjugal affines, especially if they are older than the wife. A wife and her relatives rank lower than her husband and his consanguines. Even though the wife has taunted her about pressing her feet, the husband's sister responds properly by blessing her husband, and wishing that she bear many sons.

When the wife asks the husband's sister to work while she cooks, she is again attempting to reverse the social order. It is the husband's sister who tells the wife what to do and the tasks assigned are the most onerous. Customarily, the husband's mother or daughters of the household do most of the cooking; the husband's wife performs heavier chores, such as grinding grain and plastering the fireplace with dung. When the wife says she will go into the kitchen to cook 36 things (an expression used to indicate a fine assortment of foods) for the husband's sister, she is again reversing roles, for a wife does not cook when a husband's sister is present in the household. Since there is an underlying feeling that cooking provides a strong tie that binds husband and wife, jealous mothers and sisters do not want their sons' and brothers' wives to do much of the cooking.

The husband's sister retaliates by saying that she will not take food or water from her

brother's wife (implying that the wife is of low status), but that she will have a dispute with her outside the house. She uses Ravan as a term of abuse, thereby implying that her brother's wife is a demon in disguise, not to be trusted, and evil. In response to this abuse, the wife orders her husband's sister to do some work.

The song continues with the husband's sister cursing the wife by wishing her to be a bird in her next life, a bird who lays four eggs a day in the mud, thus a thoroughly inferior being who is born in this form because of her actions in her past life. By threatening to break all the plows, the wife shows her hostility to her family of marriage and its welfare. The song indicates what would happen if the roles of wife and husband's sister were reversed, and also the hostility that is engendered between the two women. It is especially interesting since the husband's sister is the woman who attends the wife at the birth of her son, washes her nipples, and is given ornaments and money for so doing. The hostility can be vented when the husband's sister is present and this song is sung at the Sixth Day Sing.

The general functions of the song session are to celebrate the health of mother and child, to assemble those members of the lineage and community with whom the mother and child will soon be incorporated, and to emphasize the separateness of female social activities and the social order characteristic of village life. The songs themselves are a psychological and social defense against the problems of everyday life, providing catharsis through a mocking sense of humor depicted by role reversals or oppositions for the consanguines and affines who have different hierarchical statuses and roles.

Visits to Mother and Child

The range of variability with regard to the time that the mother and child might be visited provides one of the best indices to the differences of opinion concerning the seclusion of females at birth. The ideal pattern, according to Brahman informants, was that only immediate female family members might see the mother and child during the first six days after delivery. Included among these visitors were the married sisters of the husband and of the husband's father who had been invited to attend the lying-in. The married sisters who did not attend the mother and child in the lying-in chamber usually came about the sixth day. After the sixth day, female relatives in the lineage might visit; female friends and neighbors were allowed to see the mother and child only at the end of the 40-day seclusion period. Despite this ideal pattern, there were caste and individual differences, with the Jat Farmers allowing the most deviance. The following examples suggest the range of variability and the correct behavior regarding visiting.

In a Sanatan Dharma Brahman family, the oldest sister of the baby's father's father was invited to attend the mother for all lying-ins of his sons' wives. She supervised the 40-day seclusion periods. Females in the immediate family, but no men, were allowed to visit the mother. The first day after birth, the husband's father's sisters and the husband's sisters were invited into the chamber. There was a fire burning in the room so that women who entered could spread their skirts in front of the fire to purify themselves.

The husband's father's sister, a martinet about the rules of visiting, would not allow any woman from outside the family to enter the lying-in chamber. According to her, this prohibition was intended to exclude menstruating women who were believed to give the evil eye to the baby. If this happened, the child would be covered with blisters. The strict adherents of the rules of seclusion saw this period as one when the mother and child had to be protected against any dangers which might bring illness. Menstruating women were believed to bring such diseases as typhoid and various poxes among the symptoms of which were blisters, and especially fever as a result of childbirth. Although old women who were definitely past their childbearing years might be admitted, the husband's father's sister said that visiting women inquired about the mother and child

but stood at the threshold of the domicile and did not enter. No problems arose from the men in the family because they were in a separate building and understood the rules of seclusion.

Although the mother and child were secluded because of their polluted condition brought on by childbearing, still whenever another woman came into the room, she had to spread her skirts in front of the fire and purify herself. The exclusion of men and of women outside of the family and lineage protected the mother, not the visitors, from pollution. This rarefied world was created for the mother while she gradually shed her pollution and regained her strength. No other pollution from the profane world could be allowed in this secluded atmosphere because it would have been too heavy a load of pollution for the mother and child to ward off. Since fire was believed to be one of the most purifying elements, the fire in the room could not be borrowed to light another fire. Such borrowing would reduce the potency of the fire, which was part of the rarefied atmosphere.

Among the Chamars, the women might arise from lying-in any time from seven to 40 days but most of them tried to remain secluded for 21 days. They refrained from cooking and going to the well for 40 days, as was customary for almost everyone.

In one Chamar Leatherworker family, where there were two co-wives, the senior co-wife took care of her co-wife during lying-in. When a female visitor came to the household, she asked if she was menstruating, but said, "Among the Chamars, we know who is clean and who is not and don't have to ask." When the reply was negative, she allowed the female to enter after waiting a while, but only after the sixth day. She said that if a visitor went right in, trouble would come to the mother and child. While waiting, the visistor was expected to discard all that she had been thinking and cleanse her mind. This informant said that when she herself had had a son, on the sixth day some Jat woman leaned over her roof from the higher roof of an adjoining house. The same day her son died. After that they were careful not to allow anyone to climb up on the roof over them. She said that it had always been their custom that no one should climb over the roofs before the sixth day. (People going from the high-caste to the low-caste side of the village where there were no connecting lanes sometimes climbed over the roofs as a short cut.)

When questioned about visiting a mother and child, the midwife could not formulate a definite rule due to her experiences with a number of castes. She said that immediately following childbirth only the close female relatives attending the mother were allowed in the room. A woman who was pregnant or recently had had a miscarriage or stillbirth could not enter the house. Females within the household who were menstruating just kept moving around. They could not be turned out of the house. Regarding the taboos on menstruating women, the midwife was unclear and said, "Nowadays nobody minds if they enter," but added, "these women are not allowed to enter because the newly born child may be put under an evil shadow with their coming." This comment would seem to reflect present day ambivalence stemming from changes in customs regarding menstruating women. Some people followed the older customs and some did not. In addition, the midwife said that women in a family in mourning might come to visit, but generally did not as "they are full of sorrow and would not want to enter a house full of joy."

Two Jat Farmer families represented the Arya Samaj point of view, which differed in many ways from the Sanatan Dharma pattern. In one family, that of the unfortunate young mother whose infant was delivered in a ditch and then died, the girl's mother was happy to welcome visitors to provide her daughter with some relief from her sorrow. Although she was secluded behind a sheet when we visited her about the third or fourth day, we could catch a glimpse of her; and although she was weak, she talked with us a little. In the second family, which was progressive and wealthy, we were allowed to see a new mother the first day after birth. She was secluded in a separate room which

this large joint family kept for deliveries. This family was strictly Arya Samaj and used the best medical services available in the area. The members of the family were particularly interested in shedding rituals which cost them money and which, according to Arya Samaj tenets, were considered superstitions.

The rules regarding male visitors varied. Ideally men could not enter the lying-in room for 40 days. This prohibition included the father of the infant. The midwife noted, "These days the father sees the child after 10 days have elapsed, but the wife must cover her face from her husband for the 40-day period," which implied that husband and wife should have no intimate relationships or be alone by themselves during this period. The rules were not strictly followed except for the prohibition against sexual intercourse.

When we were visiting an urban-oriented, Arya Samaj household on the seventh day after the birth of a daughter to a 15-year-old mother, she was sitting up in her bed with the baby in her arms. The sheet partitioning her from the rest of the room was drawn back. When the father of the child came into the house, the young parents greeted each other warmly and joked about the baby. The mother said gaily and happily, "He says we should throw her out." This was an unusually warm and relaxed exchange between a young husband and wife when the mother of the young man was present. No attempt was made to shield the new mother from visitors, although she remained in her partitioned section of the room. It was apparent that both parents and the husband's mother were pleased with the baby girl. The husband was on leave from military service for the lying-in.

Lifting Pollution

There was a series of related ceremonies held between the sixth and the twelfth days after birth, which removed the most serious aspects of birth pollution from the household. These ceremonies were Bathing of Mother and Child, Cot Changing, *Havan* or *Homa* (a fire ceremony and samskara), *Namkaran* (naming the child), Purification of Household, Feast on the Tenth Day, and *Dogarh* (two pitchers). As a rule these ceremonies were performed by the tenth day, and the rituals of Bathing, Cot Changing, *Havan, Namkaran,* Purification of the Household, and *Dogarh,* were sometimes referred to as *Dasuthan* (the tenth for getting up). However, this term was a misnomer, for the professional Brahman priests said that the high castes, including the Brahman Priests, usually celebrated the ceremonies on the ninth day although they sometimes believed that the ceremonies were observed on the tenth. Different castes had specific days for these rites but occasionally they might vary the time of celebration in order to avoid an inauspicious day, or even for convenience. The Brahman Priests avoided Sunday, and the Chamar Leatherworkers observed the rituals only on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, or Friday. After the twelfth day, the rules of seclusion were lessened and there were no further ceremonies until the fortieth day when the well was worshiped.

Bathing Mother and Child

The first of these ceremonies to lift pollution was the ceremonial bathing of mother and child on the seventh or ninth day after birth, depending on the caste. All castes except the Gola Potter, Chamar Leatherworker, and Chuhra Sweeper held the purification of mother and child on the ninth day. The Potters held the event on the seventh day if a daughter was born, on the ninth if a son. The Chamar community varied; the purification might occur from the seventh to ninth day for either a son or daughter, or earlier. In one case, it occurred on the sixth when all the ceremonies were celebrated together. The Chuhra Sweepers emphasized the tenth as the main day but in practice varied from the fifth day from birth to the tenth.

Until the ceremonial bathing, the mother and child were bathed by the Chuhra Sweeper midwife who washed their clothes and cleaned their room. The Nai Barber woman who served the high-caste families thereafter

bathed them until the end of all seclusion 40 days after childbirth.

For the high-caste families who had a Brahman Priest perform a fire ceremony for the infant and mother, it was essential that the Nai Barber woman replace the Sweeper woman for ritual purity. From the time of ceremonial bathing, a woman could go to the fields to relieve herself. Since from this day the new mother could move around and might have a wider circle of visitors, it marked the beginning of a considerable lessening of seclusion. In some cases the sixth, seventh or ninth day marked the end of seclusion. Thus, the rituals at this time were incorporative.

In addition to her other services at this time, the Nai Barber woman washed and set the mother's hair, plastered the chamber with cow dung, and cleansed the room generally. Those families which dispensed with the services of the midwife usually did not employ the Barber woman. Such families might be members of any of the high castes. In high-caste families when neither midwife nor Barber woman was used, the women in the households carried out the customary tasks of midwife and Barber woman which included washing the clothes of mother and child. The Gola Potter families did not use the services of the Nai Barber woman, probably due to financial necessity, but might employ the Chuhra Sweeper midwife. The Chamar Leatherworker and Chuhra Sweeper castes also did not employ the Barber woman, but in their case members of the Nai Barber caste would not serve them (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 98, 125).

Cot Changing

At the time that the ritual bathing, grooming, and donning of fresh clothes occurred, the cot of the new mother was changed. In some cases she was given a new cot, but usually she was provided with another cot already in the possession of the household. The position of the cot was also changed; it could not be placed on the same spot as the lying-in cot. Obviously, these two changes were related to defilement but the change of place implied the belief that changing the position removed the mother and child from the inherent dangers of the days immediately following delivery. Among the Chuhras, the cot and its position were changed only for one night. Thereafter, the new mother and child might sleep on the old cot agin. Changing the cot and shifting its position implied the end of strict seclusion during the liminal period and marked the incorporation of the mother at least into the family group.

At the time of ceremonial bathing, the entire house was supposed to be cleaned and the kitchen floor plastered with cow dung. Some families did so, others did not. In high-caste families, if nothing else, the house was swept and the kitchen floor and cookstove were freshly plastered. High-caste families also replaced their earthen pots and scoured their metal pots with ashes.

The bathing and cleaning of the house were not just for physical cleanliness but rather, after termination of services by the midwife, to establish ritual purity for the mother and child so they could participate in a purificatory fire ceremony on the same day. As Mathur has indicated (1964, pp. 97–105), bodily emissions such as those from menses and childbirth caused ritual impurity.

Fire Ceremony

For a fire ceremony, the participants were expected to bathe, wear clean clothing, and be in a state of ritual purity. At the same time, the fire ceremony further purified the mother and child, who had been the most impure members of the household. The elements of purification found in all samskaras are a fire that represents the god Agni, water, sandalwood paste, clarified butter, and incense. The professional Brahman priest used these substances while he recited hymns (mantras) and performed the rituals for the ceremony.

Followers of Arya Samaj teachings considered the fire ceremony, called *Homa,* a rite of fumigation and believed it to be beneficial to the health of the individuals of the household in which it was enacted (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 64, 66). Although fire worship

might be performed by an Arya Samaj householder and both males and females might participate and recite mantras (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 61–67), in Shanti Nagar, no women in Arya Samaj households performed fire ceremonies. The high-caste villagers considered the fire ceremony at birth to be propitious to the health of the mother and child.

After the ceremony was completed, the members of the family might again participate in fasts. A Brahman widow who regularly fasted on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight, as was customary among followers of Sanatan Dharma, once said that she could not do so because of a birth in the joint family in which she lived. As soon as the fire ceremony had been performed, she was free to fast again. The idea was that a person in the household of a recent birth was in a polluted state and, therefore, could achieve nothing by fasting. Arya Samajis were not affected by this belief as they opposed fasting (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 503–506).

In all fire ceremonies, the household for which the ceremony was performed provided the professional Brahman priest with the necessary supplies for the worship. For the birth ceremony, they were Ganges water, clarified butter, whole wheat flour, uncooked rice, sugar, incense, turmeric, cotton wrapped around a mango stick, matches, a burning dung cake, and sandalwood paste. Usually someone in the household assisted the priest by seeing that he had the necessary supplies. For the birth samskara, a senior woman helped him. When insufficient amounts of the holy ingredients were provided, the professional priest asked the senior woman to bring more. Priests could be rather impatient with householders who skimped the supplies for a fire ceremony. As payment at the end of a ceremony, the priest was given a tray of raw foodstuffs (*seedha*) containing brown sugar, rice, clarified butter, and wheat flour, together with a monetary fee, usually Rs. 1.25. Prior to the ceremony the priest prepared twisted red threads to be used in the ceremony, some of which he tied around the pitcher of Ganges water and other vessels, as well as on the wrists of mother and child, since red threads were auspicious. They were representative of the samskaras and symbolized tying the threads of life together. They were incorporative symbols, indicating the progress of the mother and child toward the profane world through purification by the fire ceremony.

The main actors in the purification cermony were the professional Brahman priest and the mother and child. During the ceremony, the mother's face was veiled and she was seated cross-legged on the ground opposite the priest. When the baby was occasionally restless during the ceremony, the mother jiggled it. However, the baby rarely cried. The child was dressed in a little shirt and was held in the mother's arms or lap during the ceremony. While everyone in the household was preparing for the ceremony, the priest had drawn two squares (fig. 6) on the ground that were necessary for the fire ceremony. Then he seated himself, centered behind the two squares, a larger square divided into nine small squares to his right, and a smaller one to his left. The fire was prepared on the square to the left where also reposed a stone tied crosswise with red string, representing Ganesh, the god of fertility and fortune who was always present in this form at orthodox fire ceremonies for birth and marriage. Within reach of the priest, the supplies which he needed were arranged in a number of containers. By the time the mother and child entered the room, the priest had completed drawing the nine *grahas*, the sun, moon, five planets (Jupiter, Venus, Mars, Mercury, Saturn) and ascending and descending nodes of the moon, called Rahu and Ketu, in the respective nine squares with five colors that were necessary for preparing a place of worship (Daniélou, 1964, p. 377). For birth ceremonies, priests did not take as much trouble as they did for initiation or marriage and sometimes simply had a square with a star drawn within it. Jats used only a square within which was a five-pointed star for the fire. The heavenly bodies (*grahas*) represent supernatural beings not recognized by the Arya Samaj. The villagers referred to the square for a fire ceremony as *chauk* (square), but the more Sanskritic terms for flat geometrical diagrams drawn on

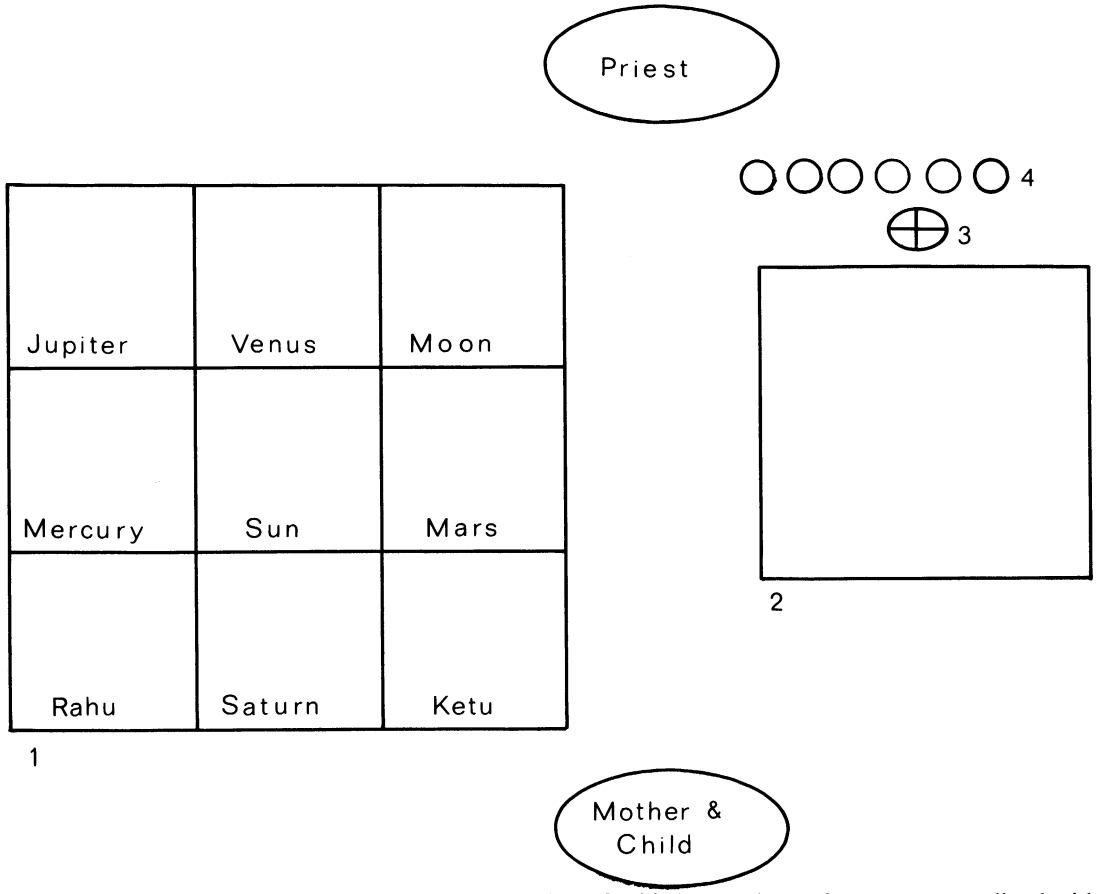

FIG. 6. Diagram of two squares used for a samskara for birth. (1) These nine squares, outlined with whole wheat flour, contained symbols representing each of the *graha*s. In this figure, we have identified the position of each *graha* with its name rather than its symbol. The symbols were drawn with representative colors: the Sun and Mars were red; Rahu and Ketu, green; Mercury and Jupiter, yellow; Venus and the Moon, white; and Saturn, black. (2) Square on which the fire was lit. Such a square had a circle drawn within it and a five- or seven-pointed star inside the circle. (3) Stone tied with red string that represented Ganesh. (4) Containers with ceremonial ingredients, such as ghee, turmeric, and sandlewood. (Compare with figs. 11 and 19 for initiation and wedding samskaras.)

the ground are yantra or *mandala* (Daniélou, 1964, p. 4; Morgan, 1953, pp. 161–162, 411–418).

The priest used his right hand to touch the mother's head and to dip water or sprinkle it occasionally on mother and child. From time to time he placed rice grains and sometimes sugar in the mother's hand. They then both dropped the grains or sugar on the squares. The priest placed turmeric (a blessing) on both hands of the mother and positioned her two hands, palms together, with his right hand. He put his own hands in the same position and together they worshiped the deities represented by the heavenly bodies. Next he tipped his fingers with turmeric which was then put with a grain of rice on each square representing the heavenly bodies. This act was similar to putting a tilak (mark on forehead as a blessing) on the forehead of the supernatural being. The priest then placed turmeric on the mother's

forehead and she reciprocated. A tilak on the forehead of an individual usually consisted of turmeric, though occasionally rice too was used. The infant also received a tilak. (Some priests put one on all children present.) With these actions everyone participated in the blessing to and from the deities. Then the priest tied red threads on the right wrists of both mother and child, and around the waist of the infant. The mother tied a similar string on the priest's right wrist, indicating auspiciousness and the ritual purity of all three. The reciprocal exchanges of tilaks or blessings as well as the tying of the red strings imparted a bond between mother, child, priest, and the *grahas*. It was as though the offerings to the *grahas* as well as the ritual activities of the three participants in the fire ceremony gave the three participants supernatural strength which they shared equally.

Next the priest gave the mother Ganges water which she first sipped and then used to wash her hands. He again sprinkled mother and child with Ganges water and dabbed turmeric on the mother's hands and on each of the nine images. By rotation he placed first turmeric, wheat, then rice on each of the images in the nine squares. He rotated his fingers, ritually using the little finger first, then the next, and so on, for each substance that he dropped on each image. Then the two palms of the woman's hands were again placed together by the priest, and he indicated that the substances placed on each of the nine squares were offerings to the gods.

Finally, the fire was lit. The senior woman in the household gave the priest a smoldering piece of cow dung which he laid on top of sandalwood and incense; he lighted a match to cotton which had been immersed in ghee and added it to the sandalwood, incense, and dung. The priest chanted mantras again. After every stanza, he added ghee to the fire. Finally, he lifted the bowl of ghee up high and emptied it on the fire. Then he pronounced the sacred syllable, AUM, after which he arose and pressed the forehead and chest of the mother in three places. He repeated these acts with the infant, all the while saying "AUM" and chanting mantras. Then he sat down and sang another mantra. At this point the ceremony was almost complete so the mother nursed her baby. While so doing she covered her infant and breast with part of her headcloth. The final stage in the ceremony took place when the priest took grains of rice, threw them over the mother and child, and again sprinkled them with Ganges water. Then the priest simply arose and walked out of the room.

Because of strong Arya Samaj influence, many families did not have a priest for the fire ceremony at birth; they performed the rites themselves, if they were Jat Farmers, or did nothing. At the birth of a son, a Jat Farmer family might call their own Arya Samaj professional Brahman priest to perform a fire ceremony. A woman in one of the wealthy Jat households said that the fire purification ceremony was performed by a priest for boys. For girls, they only cleaned the house, bathed, and put on clean clothes. However, a few urban-oriented Arya Samaj Jats performed their own fire ceremonies for the birth of a girl.

For many families from the middle range of the caste hierarchy the old professional priest in Shanti Nagar performed fire ceremonies, cast horoscopes, and gave names. The Mali Gardener and Gola Potter castes specifically went to him for these services. Both castes had a fire ceremony for boys and girls, the Malis on the ninth; the Gola Potters for girls on the seventh, for boys on the ninth. For some families from middle ranked castes birth ceremonies had less qualified priests and were less elaborate than those of the higher castes. For example, in the family of the Lohar Blacksmith caste, a first son was born to the youngest couple in the household. They held a fire ceremony, which was enacted by a Brahman who was not a fully qualified professional priest but who helped his grandfather, the old professional priest, when he performed ceremonies.

The Chamar Leatherworkers held their purification ceremony from the fifth through the seventh day and called a priest of their own caste from a nearby village, or else some elderly man in the lineage carried out

the purification fire ceremony. The Chuhra Sweepers held their ceremony on the tenth day and some elderly person in the caste performed it. Not all families in the foregoing castes observed a fire ceremony at birth.

Due to literacy and the Arya Samaj, Brahman priests and other individuals carried out fire ceremonies by reading directions from books. This procedure was in keeping with Arya Samaj precepts so that any father or grandfather would perform a birth ceremony or any other fire ceremony except those for initiation, marriage, and death.

Purification of Household and Incorporation into Community

The professional Brahman priest who performed a fire ceremony for a birth sprinkled Ganges water around the household before and after the ceremony. He then poured Ganges water into a pitcher and gave it to the senior lady of the household to pour on the ground in front of the house and on the doorposts of the house. These actions were not only auspicious but also they purified the house and the family members so that they were again a part of the profane world.

The contrasting terms, sacred and profane (or secular), are not equivalent to the contrasting terms, pure and impure (or polluted). The first pair refers to the status of an individual with respect to society. The profane state is the ordinary one; the sacred state is extraordinary. Purity and pollution refer to status in the context of Hindu belief. The normal status of all castes placed one in the profane world, and impurity, such as birth, placed one in a transitional state which van Gennep called sacred; at the same time ritual purity, the highest order of purity in Hinduism, placed one in a sacred state according to Hinduism but the purification ceremony for pollution resulted in one's passing from a sacred state of limbo and pollution to the profane world. On the other hand when an individual was in a normal or profane state, a purification ceremony resulted in passing from an other-than-profane state to a sacred state. Purity and pollution in Hinduism consist of three stages rather than two: there is the impure state; the state of ordinary purity that characterizes the profane world; and the state of ritual purity, the highest order of purity in Hinduism, that, for example, a Brahman Priest assumes to perform a ceremony.

Feast on Tenth Day

Although it was customary to give a feast for the birth of a son, this was done on a large scale only for a first son. A family with a sufficient number of male offspring usually cooked some festal foods for distribution in the lineage to celebrate the birth of another son. Sometimes special friends, occasionally from a different caste, were invited to eat in the household. For a large feast, the head of the family might invite members from all families in the village and also people from neighboring villages. A number of individuals recalled such events over a period of 10 to 15 years in Shanti Nagar. None occurred in the village during our stay, but in a village about a mile away, a very wealthy Jat's wife bore his first son. He gave a large feast for several villages, hired a band, and served seven different sweets to his guests. As was customary, this feast was given on the tenth, the day after the ceremony of purification. People from Shanti Nagar who attended the feast gave the traditional present of a towel and a rupee that was provided from village funds. Some of the men gave additional personal gifts. In all of these festivals, there was always a bond of reciprocity.

Feast to Ward off Danger

Informants who believed in horoscopes mentioned that if a boy was born under an inauspicious astrological sign, then the father or grandfather of the child should give a feast to forestall the danger. As the moon revolves through the heavens, it passes near 27 conspicuous stars or groups of stars that were recognized and named in ancient times (R. Freed and S. Freed, 1964, p. 68). Of these 27 lunar mansions (nakshatras), some were believed to be auspicious and some inauspicious. The Mula Nakshatra was believed to have the most evil influence. A male infant

born under this sign, who was called *muliya,* was said either to be destined for an early death or, if he lived, to ruin the property of his family. A Brahman's son was born under the Mula Nakshatra and, as a result, the boy's grandfather went to 27 wells (since there are 27 lunar mansions) to draw water and bathe the child in this holy water. He also gave a feast costing Rs. 550 for the whole village, including the low castes, and people from surrounding villages. The purpose of these activities was to make peace with the evil sign and to counteract it.

The Brahman who told us about this sign and the ceremony that had been performed for his son said, "We don't find out the sign for a girl; a girl is a burden." Despite the ceremony, his son died in his fourteenth year, then another of his sons died, and he was left with one son and five daughters. Although this man once firmly believed in these signs, he said, "Nowadays all of these beliefs in horoscopes and holding feasts to avert evil are going out of style."

Worship at Well on Fortieth Day

The final ceremony connected with birth was the worship at the main well, observed by high castes on approximately the fortieth day after birth. Sometimes it was held a few days earlier, depending on how accurately people kept track of the days, or to accommodate the schedule of a female relative who was visiting and wanted to participate. Held only for the birth of a son, its purpose was not only to worship at the well but to indicate that the mother was cleansed of birth pollution and once again a member of the profane society, ritually and physically able to draw water from the well.

Village wives customarily drew water daily from the well although sometimes teenage daughters did so if there was a shortage of women in the family. When young wives went to the well to draw water, they usually dressed attractively and, of course, covered their faces. Daughters of the village wore their old clothes. Thus, going to the well after the lying-in indicated another stage in a woman's resumption of the role of a wife. The woman was then fully reintegrated into the village community. The worship of the well was not a samskara in that there were no fire ceremonies or mantras, and no priest presided. It was an all-female event. Even the infant boy did not participate in this worship.

Well Worship was a form of thanksgiving for the birth of a son. The Mother Goddess of the Well is similar to Mother Ganges. Stevenson (1971, p. 18) indicates some similarities between Well Worship in Shanti Nagar and worshiping at a river in Kathiawar at the termination of the period of seclusion. At that time, a young Brahman mother went to the river with two pots of water, rice, and millet, on any auspicious day after the forty-fifth day from birth, the time marking the end of seclusion. There she bathed and filled her water pots. On her return trip she dropped rice and millet along the way. These actions symbolized birth, purity, fertility, and marked the end of her liminal period and reincorporation. In Shanti Nagar the activities, symbols, and meanings centered on the well. Water was fetched from the well; women, however, did not bathe there. Since the well was regarded as akin to a river, and rivers were considered to be "nourishing mothers" because they provided offspring and good fortune (Morgan, 1953, pp. 112–114), Well Worship ideologically was equivalent to worshiping at the Ganges, the great nourishing mother. Wells with their circular shape and the water drawn from them symbolize the birth passage and process.

Well Worship was not only a matter of worship but also of recreation. It was held during the afternoon at a time of day when few women were apt to draw water from the well. The women who were invited to attend were members of the lineage and friends of the family. A Potter's wife brought a new clay pot to be carried to the well; she also accompanied the procession to the well and was paid with grain, sweets, or clothing. Poor families might give a headcloth in payment. The Nai Barber woman was also paid at this time, for she bathed the mother and child for the last time before the worship and assisted the mother at the well. If the family

FIG. 7. Procession of women and children to worship the well on the fortieth day after birth. On her head, the infant's mother carries a pot surmounted by ceremonial paraphernalia. Her husband's mother stands at her left.

no longer employed a Barber woman, then either the husband's mother or sister might help, providing she knew the rituals. All families that we observed but one had the Barber woman help at the well, even a family that could not afford her service during the lying-in. For Well Worship a Barber woman received a small fee; she was also given clothing and from Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 4 for her services during seclusion, usually in the lower range. If Well Worship was held before the 40 days had expired, the Barber woman completed her services through the fortieth day. Those who celebrated this event before seclusion terminated indicated that pollution during the last few days was not taken seriously.

For Well Worship the new mother donned clothing that had been included with the other gifts sent to her, the baby, and her husband's relatives by her parents when they learned about the birth of the child. If the baby had been born dead or died shortly after birth, the presents were sent only to the mother, and there was no Well Worship. More gifts were sent for a firstborn child whether a boy or girl, than for later children. The most and best gifts were sent for a son. Because of such gifts of clothing, usually all the women and children in the family wore new clothing on the day of Well Worship.

We observed Well Worship several times. One such occasion, here described, was for the first son, but second child, of a young

Lohar Blacksmith couple. The first child had been a girl, two years of age, at the time of the observed ceremony, of whom both mother and father were fond. There was, in addition, a male cousin four years of age in the joint family; he rather than the little sister was jealous of the new baby boy and would not eat any of the sweets sent by the parents of the new mother.

In honor of the occasion, the mother dressed the two-year-old girl in her first *silwar* suit, usually not put on children until they were four or five years old. A beauty mark, an urban trait, was placed on the child's forehead. The four-year-old boy (father's brother's son to the new baby) wore new clothes. The baby had on a shirt and was wrapped in a woolen shawl. The mother's costume consisted of a new *silwar* suit, a decorated headcloth, silver ornaments on her legs and arms, and new glass bangles, the latter always given to women at the end of seclusion, as an index that they would resume their wifely role. A neighboring Brahman woman fastened a white cloth containing a pocket full of rice to be used in the worship around the mother's waist underneath her shirt.

Meanwhile, the Nai Barber and Gola Potter women and other guests had assembled. The Potter woman had brought a spouted, clay pot and lid for the ceremony for which she was given a new headcloth. This pot, a metal pitcher, and a small clay pot were decorated with swastikas of turmeric, always auspicious. These containers were placed on a small clay saucer carrying seven balls of whole wheat dough interspersed with pipal leaves and piled on the mother's head: first a mat, then the saucer, the clay pitcher and clay pot, and the metal pot with lid on top (fig. 7). The mother's sister-in-law bent to press the legs of the Potter woman when she brought the pot, a sign of respect to older women. However, it was not often done to older women of lesser caste status. For example, a Brahman or Jat woman would not ordinarily do this for a Potter woman, but the Lohar Blacksmiths did not rank that far above the Gola Potters. When Gola Potter women participated in birth and marriage ceremonies they were shown respect, perhaps because of the association of pottery (clay) with earth, i.e., fertility, life and death.

As the procession, headed by the new mother, wended its way toward the well ordinarily used by the family, the women sang the following:

We go to worship the well.
We go to worship the well, Oh Richpal's wife.
We go to worship the well, Oh Ram Singh's wife.
We go to worship the well, Oh Jagai Ram's wife.
We go to worship the well, Oh Ram Gopal's sister-in-law.
We go to worship the well, Oh Jai Lal's sister-in-law.
We go to worship the well, Oh Amir Singh's sister-in-law.

This round was chanted all the way to the well and was extended by using the names of all male members of the family of marriage of the mother. In some processions, the women sang, "We go to the well to worship water." The constant repetition of the theme of well worship left no room for doubt on the part of any spectators as to the purpose of the procession. If a woman was encountered coming from the well carrying a pitcher of water, the mother-in-law or sister-in-law of the new mother dropped a coin in her pitcher. Some women joined the procession as it passed their homes.

The mother mounted the steps to the well, and the Nai Barber woman helped her with the ritual. She removed the containers from the mother's head, placed them on the raised rim of the well, and drew water with a bucket in order to fill first the large clay pot and then the metal pitcher. Before these containers were filled with water by the Barber woman, the mother pumped milk from her breast into the clay pot. This action marked a symbolic exchange of two life-giving substances (water and milk) between the new mother and the Mother of the Well, fostered by the fertility-imparting powers of the clay pot. By dropping her milk into the water and later feeding the Mother of the Well with the mixture, the new mother hoped to bear more sons and provide them with milk.

Next the mother took rice, sometimes *kicheri* (rice cooked with lentils), from a little

pocket underneath her shirt. She and the Barber woman arranged the rice in seven heaps (an auspicious number combining the symbolism of three and four) on the raised edge of the well, a center heap surrounded with six piles (the double three fertility symbol, which is also auspicious since mother and infant had survived the dangerous days of seclusion. In the center heap, the mother placed two pice (coins). The Barber woman then poured a little water into the mother's cupped right hand, which the mother sprinkled over the heaps of rice (a fertility rite to make the rice sprout). The Barber woman then sprinkled the mixture of milk and water around the well and poured the balance into the well. The mother joined her palms together in worship and said, "Give me more sons, and I'll come again and worship." Some women told us that they said nothing.

The Nai woman refilled the clay pot with water, dropped the coins previously placed on the center heap of rice into her own pocket, payment for her services, and rearranged the containers on the mother's head. Together the two women descended the steps of the well. At the foot of the well, the Barber woman distributed the remaining rice to female bystanders for them to eat. The belief was that they would have a son (fertility and good fortune) by so doing. The rice left at the well was eaten by roaming village animals, a form of charity or meritorious action for the giver. The procession then returned to the household from which it started.

When the party reached the courtyard of the house, the Barber woman stopped at the doorway and splashed water on both sides. She also removed the containers from the mother's head and put them away. The water remaining in the pitchers might be used by anyone. The balls of dough would be fed to cattle.

Women guests brought containers of wheat, gram (chick-pea), rice, or millet, depending on the season, and presented it to the senior lady of the house either before or after going to the well. For her part, the hostess distributed grain or gram to the guests; the return gift was a different foodstuff than the initial gift. The villagers believed that for all gifts there should be some return; thus, their system of exchanging grain impoverished no one. They also recognized that at festival occasions gift-giving was essential to maintain bonds of friendship. The exchange of grains at song sessions and Well Worship was a symbol of fertility and good fortune.

In the courtyard, young girls sang songs and mainly old women performed solo dances. Since these dances were considered provocative, strict Arya Samajis held no dances but distributed grain to end the worship. The young girls seldom knew any of the dances. One grandmother in a Jat family, not particularly interested in Arya Samaj tenets, was considered a lively and seductive dancer (fig. 8). The dance steps were simple, with no very decided pattern or complex steps, but with suggestive body and hand movements. When one of the older Brahman women danced, she used her thumbs and eyes a great deal in her gesturing. Dancing had sexual connotations and was a fertility symbol. Although the public dancing of women was tabooed by the high castes, partially because of the Arya Samaj, but also because of the position of women and the association of dancing and entertaining with outcastes and prostitutes, the dancing was enjoyed by everyone. The Barber woman distributed grain throughout the entertainment. As the older guests departed, the young females lingered and sang the following:

Wake up in time, give me my food, tie my bedding.
All the boys are going to work and I also want to go.
Oh, when he picked up the bedding, my work on the grinding wheel stopped.
When I went out, I looked and could see nobody.
You, oh groom, have gone, and how will I spend my life?
I don't want to live with my in-laws.
I want to go to my parents' house.
It is like being in a prison with the in-laws
And like being hanged in my parents' house.
All the girls taunt me, and the daughters-in-law make fun of me.
Two real brothers' minds and hearts can be separated very easily.

FIG. 8. Two elderly women dance in the courtyard of the infant's family after the ceremony of Well Worship.

When it is dark in the house, then the earthen lantern can serve as a light inside.
When a man is a widower, only God can help him.

This song bemoaned the fate of a young bride left alone with her conjugal affines when her young husband went off with the "boys." Many young men went to work in cities and left their brides with their parents because they did not believe that a young female should be taken to the city where she would be left by herself much of the day. Also, her labor was valuable both on the land and in the house.

In the first two lines of the song, the groom is speaking. He is preparing to depart and asks his bride to get his baggage ready. The next eight lines are the bride's thoughts. The sentence, "Oh, when he picked up the bedding, my work on the grinding wheel stopped," indicates the cessation of two closely related wifely duties, sleeping with her husband and preparing his food. Her husband is the only one to whom she feels any attachment. Being with her conjugal affines means that she has no freedom and is subject to the restrictions imposed upon married women in their husbands' villages, such as keeping her face covered in public places from older men, and not going about the village by herself. She cannot visit her parents unless her in-laws allow it and then only if someone takes her and brings her back. In her own parents' village, although her treatment is less harsh, once she is married it is pleasant only for a visit. If she were to stay too long, she would be taunted by girls who would think that her husband did not want her, or that she and her husband and/or conjugal affines fought.

The last three lines of the song change the subject and allude to a fear, perhaps even a

sublimated desire, of young brides that one of her husband's brothers may have sexual access to her. Formerly in this part of India among the Jats and possibly other castes, families considered that the brothers of a husband might have sexual access to a young bride. The reason given was that the bride should have offspring and that the offspring belonged to the husband's family. Although this practice was supposed to have been abandoned, occasionally a case came into the courts brought by a young wife's parents because her husband's mother and/or other members of his family attempted to force her into mating with a brother of her absent husband. In this song, the brother is a widower. The phase "Two real brothers minds and hearts can be separated very easily" indicates that a breach can come between two brothers because of sexual desires. The phrase "When it is dark in the house, then the earthen lantern can serve as a light inside," refers to the young bride's loneliness because of the absence of her husband (the light) in the house. Although an inferior substitute for her husband, his brother at least can light up her loneliness. The last sentence, "When a man is a widower, only God can help him," provides the clue to the two preceding sentences. Many songs indirectly alluded to sexual behavior.

Variations on Well Worship

Many factors were involved in the celebration of Well Worship by a specific family: family, wealth, degree of urbanization, Arya Samaj influence, caste customs, critical events in the history of the family, whether the ceremony fell during the busy time of the year, and the sex of the infant. Differences in the celebration of Well Worship from family to family also reflected the amount the family of a new mother wished to spend on gifts sent at *piliya*. For example, the parents of a Brahman Priest mother, besides food and the regular items of clothing, sent her a necklace made of beads of wood and dry coconut shells (for fertility), a piece of cloth with yellow swastikas on it, and a small circular straw mat to place on her head when carrying the pitchers to the well. The mat was intricately designed with small glass tubes strung around it to form the design of a pitcher with a spout and the omnipresent red thread around its neck. In addition, they sent small necklaces of wooden beads which were given to the young sisters-in-law in the household to wear for the procession to the well. These gifts represented modern urban tastes and were far more elaborate than usual. This worship was for a young mother with her first child, a son, whose husband and some affines were urban workers.

A Jat family had a very brief worship at the well and no celebration thereafter because it was harvest time, everyone was very busy, and because the worship was not for the first son in the family. A contributing factor to the brevity of the ceremony was the fact that the Nai Barber woman serving at the ceremony was young. Her observance of the rituals was less detailed than those of older Nai Barber women.

The Chamar Leatherworker and Chuhra Sweeper castes did not have a group celebration to worship the well at the time of a daughter's birth; but when the mother went to the well to draw water for the first time after the fortieth day of lying-in, she put seven little piles of rice on the rim of the well as an offering. This custom was followed for both boys and girls, but not everyone observed it.

The Gola Potter women had a ceremony called *Dogarh* (Two Pitcher Worship) which they considered to be a form of well worship. *Dogarh* was celebrated in the evening of the seventh day after birth for girls, the ninth day for boys. Two clay pitchers, one spouted, were prepared by tying red threads around them and drawing turmeric swastikas on their sides. These pitchers—the spoutless one on the bottom—were placed on the head of the mother by the new mother herself, or by the husband's sister or mother. The mother then heaped seven piles of rice on the ground, threw water on the heaps, and bowed before them. This worship was in place of worshiping at the well, which the Gola Potter females said only upper-caste women did. Afterward females in the family

distributed rice to members of the lineage, to husband's sisters, and to friends of the family who were Gola Potters.

The Chamar Leatherworkers indicated that they, too, celebrated *Dogarh* but only for sons. Their ceremony might take place any time from the seventh through the twenty-first day from the time of delivery. However, since among Chamars birth observances were concluded by the seventh or ninth day, Two Pitcher Worship generally was observed within this period. The worship described was similar to that of the Potters. The Chuhra Sweepers did not have Two Pitcher Worship.

All castes said that the mother resumed cooking at the end of 40 days. Adherence to this practice depended on whether it had been possible, due to family circumstances, to refrain from cooking and other work for this period. In a nuclear family where there was only one adult woman, it was more difficult to adhere to the rules. Although there seemed to be a weakening of the beliefs that fostered seclusion due to the lessening of taboos regarding menstruating women and the related belief that the mother and child would suffer from the evil eye or other disease and misfortune if the taboos were violated, women preferred to observe the forty-day seclusion, if at all possible. It was the only period of rest they ever had, and they believed it was beneficial to the health of the mother and child.

The village as a whole expressed no great horror over the pollution of women either during their menses or lying-in. The typical attitude more often linked pollution to ordinary dirt that one removed and then everything was in order again although separate words were used for ritual pollution and ordinary dirt. Mathur (1964, pp. 97–99) has shown that ritual impurity and physical uncleanliness may be related. His distinctions are similar to the attitudes found in Shanti Nagar. Dirt was an impurity, but physical cleanliness did not necessarily imply ritual purity. Preserving ritual purity and avoiding pollution were necessary to maintain the ordering of castes and social behavior in Shanti Nagar. As Douglas (1970, p. 12) succinctly phrased it, "Dirt offends against order." Nevertheless, females in Shanti Nagar were sufficiently conditioned by purity/pollution concepts in childhood to avoid breaking the most stringent taboos regarding childbirth and lying-in for fear that mother and child might die due to the presence of little understood endemic diseases.

On the other hand, members of one Brahman lineage said that they no longer celebrated Well Worship because a woman and her son who belonged to the lineage died after she had worshiped the well. Although this explanation may have been an excuse for not worshiping since members of this lineage seemed to have given up or reduced a number of ceremonies, it was generally true that a specific family would abandon the observance of a ceremony if a tragic event had occurred on the day of its celebration. The family would begin to hold the ceremony again when a happy event occurred on the same day. The recent event superseded the earlier tragic one. For example, one family of this Brahman lineage began to celebrate Well Worship again after a son had been born on the same date when the death had occurred.

Worship of Jahar

On the ninth day after birth, a Chamar Leatherworker woman might worship Jahar, or Guga Pir, a Muslim/Hindu saint and hero referred to deferentially by Chamars as Sayyid (Blunt, 1931, p. 291; Temple, 1900, III, p. xix). This worship was by individual choice and occurred in the Chamar compound where two *jal* trees grew close together. (A *jal* tree may be either *Salvadora persica* or *S. eleoides* [India, 1912, p. 12]). The mother placed oil on a metal platter and drew snakes and a horse (fertility symbols both associated with Jahar) on the wall of the building in which she lived. At the *jal* trees she joined her hands in thanks for the birth of the child who might be of either sex. Prior to the birth, the pregnant woman would have vowed to perform this worship after the child was safely born. In so doing, she took the names of "all of the deities," so that no su-

pernatural being was slighted, who would want to harm the mother and child, if so omitted. No one else participated in this worship which occurred as the result of the mother's vow when she was pregnant.

First Haircut (*Mandan*)

The ceremony of the first haircut may have been more important formerly than during the time of our residence in Shanti Nagar when no great emphasis was put upon it. Many informants neglected to mention it. There was considerable variability with regard to the first haircut indicating a trend toward the reduction and eventual elimination of this ceremony as a ritual in the life cycle. The haircut for boys described below was principally a ritual of separation from the mother with a minimum of religious content. No priest participated and no mantras were recited. Only the Nai Barber officiated.

The ceremonial first haircut was only for boys, on the fortieth day after birth, usually after Well Worship. Without any announcement that the first haircut was to take place, the infant boy was brought outside for the first time, and the male Nai Barber cut his hair. For this service the barber was paid Rs. 1.25. There was no attendant ceremony. A Nai Barber said that sometimes a band played for the first haircut, but no one in Shanti Nagar arranged for a band. The hair from the boy's first haircut was supposed to be saved and taken either to the Jumna or Ganges rivers and thrown into the water whenever a member of the family made a pilgrimage to one or the other river. Since villagers regularly went to the Jumna River near Delhi on the new moon (R. Freed and S. Freed, 1964, pp. 68, 82, 85), it was fairly simple to dispose of the hair properly. Other parents might take the hair to the temple of the Mother Goddess of Gurgaon, especially if they were fulfilling a vow to this goddess for the birth of a son. The Ganges and Jumna rivers and the Mother Goddess of Gurgaon were supplicated to have sons and for the health of sons.

Among the Chamar Leatherworkers, very few people did anything for the first haircut although some Chamars might sing songs to the Mother Goddess or go to Gurgaon and make an offering. The visit to Gurgaon, a town located about 25 miles from Shanti Nagar, often involved an overnight stay and therefore required most of two days. Not everybody could afford the time and money, but those who worshiped this goddess liked to go not only for the worship but because "the temple is covered with gold and there is a fair there." For girls, the first haircut was not a special occasion. Many families treated haircutting as a matter of routine for both boys and girls.

Ceremonies for Safe Passage from Infancy to Childhood

A ceremonial haircut for a boy anytime after the first year through the fifth year of his life was held specifically because his family had vowed that they would take the boy to the Jumna or Ganges rivers or to the goddess at Gurgaon, called Gurgaon-Wali-Mata, and make an offering there if they had a living son. One Brahman family had done this for two sons. In each case they had the child's hair cut by a barber on the bank of the Jumna River, put the hair and five sweets in the river, and paid the barber. The fee was usually Rs. 1.25. The mother took a bath in the river and bathed the baby boy in it, which was the high point of a pilgrimage to a river. A Chuhra Sweeper family promised that when their son was one year old they would offer at Gurgaon. The child lived and the family fulfilled the vow. The Sweeper estimated the cost of the pilgrimage at Rs. 15 to 16.

This ceremonial haircutting for boys was dependent upon the vow made by the parents and was an individual choice, not a caste custom. The ceremonial cutting of the hair at this age signified not only that the child had passed from infancy into childhood, but also that he had survived the period of greatest danger, from birth to about four or five years of age, when the greatest number of childhood deaths occurred.

The Chuhra Sweepers had a ceremony, called *Dasaundh,* for the welfare of a child

related to the custom of the ceremonial haircut. They held a worship and feast to celebrate the health of either a boy or girl anytime after the end of the first 40 days from birth, but generally from two to five years after birth. The celebration included the sacrifice of two pigs to the Mother Goddess who protects children. In the village, this goddess was known as the Crossroads Mother Goddess because her shrine (a few loose bricks) was located at the principal crossroads of Shanti Nagar. The Crossroads Mother Goddess was equated to Gurgaon-Wali-Mata. In Gurgaon, there was a temple to this goddess, to which the parents, their child, and any other relatives who cared to join them journeyed when the child reached the appropriate age. There they worshiped and distributed sweets worth Rs. 1.25. However, the whole process of worshiping and offering was more complex and started some years before. The following account given by a Chuhra Sweeper mother provides a graphic description.

When this Chuhra woman bore a son, she promised to reserve two pigs to be sacrificed to the Mother Goddess when her son was five years old. It was customary to make this vow when a child was from one to three years old. Its mother struck the pigs with a small stone and made the vow. When the son reached five years of age, the family went to Gurgaon, and on their return they killed and cooked the pigs, held a worship, made an offering to the goddess, and invited all the Chuhras with whom they were friendly to the feast. In the case of this woman, her son died when he was a year-and-a-half old. When this happened the pigs, which had been promised for the sacrifice, were allowed to grow. If no other children had been born before the pigs died, then the pigs would have been buried. In this case, the woman then bore a daughter so the family had the worship, sacrifice, and feast to celebrate the birth of the daughter. The mother said that she would again promise two pigs for her daughter when she was two years old and that they would go to Gurgaon when the girl was five, and the pigs would be sacrificed immediately thereafter.

The sacrifice, worship, and feast of *Dasaundh* usually were celebrated on Sunday, an auspicious day for this occasion. Early in the day, the pigs were butchered and prepared for cooking, an all-day process. Two types of cooking processes were used: barbecuing and simmering. The meat was flavored with red and black pepper, salt, coriander, and various other spices. The fat of the pigs provided the medium in which the meat cooked. The only other food served with the pork was rice. Invited guests from the Chuhra caste brought their own bread. During the preparation and cooking of the meat, adult males contributed words of advice to the host in charge, and children ran around and watched. The host often had to admonish the children to stop nibbling the meat and wait until the food was cooked.

The offering to the Mother Goddess took place about four in the afternoon. For this event, a priest was invited from the natal family of the mother of the child for whom the feast was celebrated, usually a father's brother or an elder brother. His main activity was to prepare and make the offering. Women had prepared a freshly dunged patch of earth in the compound. The priest took two clay dishes, filled them with ghee, set two wicks in them, and lighted them from the dung and ghee fire over which the pigs were being barbecued. He placed these two earthen lamps on the dunged patch, putting a piece of unleavened bread (*roti*) under each. The family gave him some sweets, five of which he placed on the ground near the lamps. The priest then threw small pieces of liver and 12 pieces of meat into the burning ghee in one lamp. In the ghee of the other lamp, he threw another five pieces of meat. He took the first lamp together with the bread under it to the Crossroads Mother Goddess shrine, where he placed his palms together, bowed his head, and left the offering. The bread and meat from the second lamp was given to a dog to eat. No reason was given for these two different ways of offering. Sanatan Dharma followers offered vegetarian foods to deities; Arya Samajis left vegetarian foods for dogs, an act considered a form of charity. The two kinds of offerings

among the Chuhras, to the goddess and to a dog, could well have been a case of syncretism, borrowing from both Sanatan Dharma and the Arya Samaj, and combining the practices with their own. Offerings to dogs, however, may have been to ward off death, since the Yam Duts (death's messengers) of Yama, the Lord of Death, are dogs.

At the same time that the offerings were prepared, individuals contributed to the goddess. These offerings were in the form of money given to participants in the ceremony. The family of the child contributed Rs. 1.25, which sum went to the priest. Additional money from other donors was divided between the priest and an unmarried daughter in the family of the child. As soon as the offerings had been completed, the feast began. Only Chuhras were invited and attended. In Shanti Nagar very few individuals, other than the members of the Chuhra Sweeper caste, ate meat publicly.

Ear and Nose Piercing

Formerly, for male and female children, there was a ceremony for ear piercing. Although the ears of girls were still pierced, the ceremony was apparently abandoned long ago, for no one remembered it. The style for men wearing earrings had stopped although some men over 40 still had pierced lobes.

Little girls had their ears pierced at from three to five years of age and wore little wooden pegs in the holes until such time as their parents bought them earrings when they were about to be married. The belief was that gold earrings were good for health. This belief was voiced not only by women but by a professional Arya Samaj priest and probably derived from earlier practices surrounding ear boring. Stevenson (1971, pp. 23–24) reports that ear boring for girls was done before the sixth day after birth because it was "not considered proper for a father to see the face of his daughter" until the ears had been pierced. She indicates that the ritual had already changed from one at which the father of the child (a member of a Brahman Priest caste) or a professional Brahman priest officiated to one in which a woman from outside of the family bored the ears, for which she was paid. A woman from outside of Shanti Nagar periodically visited the village to perform this commercial operation. There was no ritual surrounding it.

Stevenson (1971, p. 24) reports that males had their ears bored before 1920. She states that nose and ear piercing were performed on a child in infancy but that nose boring was not done for a boy unless an elder brother died; thus, the rite was protective and related to beliefs about health. The standards of male dress introduced by the British possibly overrode the beliefs about health, when applied to males, with masculine identification becoming more important than the protective rite. The fostering of ear piercing for girls may have been consistent with its characterization by the British as a feminine trait. The identification as a feminine trait was more important to the continuation of the practice than was the belief that it contributed to health although this rationalization, which once applied to both sexes, remained for girls.

In Shanti Nagar, a girl's nose was pierced when she was about 10 years old. She wore a little stick in the aperture until the family bought her a gold nose ornament. Since the nose ornament was easily lost, the family often waited until just before marriage to supply it. No females in Shanti Nagar wore jeweled nose ornaments, although women in the City of Delhi did. Since both earrings and nose ornaments had become a sign of femininity, women believed these ornaments enhanced their appearance. So did many of the men. The wearing of the gold earrings and nose ornaments was definitely an indication of the coming change of status to that of a married woman, even though ear piercing was performed in early childhood.

Except for ceremonial haircutting and *Dasaundh* to celebrate an infant's having passed into childhood successfully and the ear and nose boring rituals to mark the femininity of a girl, there were no other ceremonies during the process of growing up. All of these ceremonies appear to have once been protective, in addition to marking the stages in the development of a child.

EXPENSES OF CHILDBIRTH

The payments and gifts made at childbirth were related to an economic and social network which tied together consanguines and affines throughout the intermarrying region of Shanti Nagar. This network depended on a system of marriage and descent wherein a daughter was married out of her village of birth into the village in which her husband was born and usually lived. The system of marriage maintained rules of caste endogamy, clan exogamy, and village exogamy. The wife's consanguineal relatives ranked lower than those of the husband and gifts primarily flowed from the wife's relatives to the husband's family. The system of gift exchange was related to the inheritance of property by male issue in the patrilineal line of descent. A daughter did not inherit; therefore, her parents tried to marry her in proper fashion and send gifts to her and her offspring at festivals and life cycle events. It was because these gifts were often substantial and had to be given to a woman throughout her life and to her children even after her death that many an informant told us, "The girl is the dacoit of India."

The statement was somewhat of an exaggeration since a fair amount of money was spent on boys, as could be seen from the extent to which ceremonies centered on male offspring rather than female. In addition female offspring were economically productive, for they worked both in the fields and household, and helped care for their younger siblings.

A girl began to receive many gifts at her marriage (not at her birth as was obvious in the lesser attention that a female infant received) and at other ceremonies associated with her wedding. When she had her first child, her parents sent her a complex of gifts, called *piliya,* which included new clothing for her and her conjugal affines, toys, a locket for the child, and food to be fed to her at her lying-in. In addition, parents provided *chhuchak* (gifts when she visited them with the new baby) and sent her money, as wives did not receive spending money from husbands or fathers-in-law.

When a child was born, the head of the household instructed the Nai Barber man who worked for the family to travel to the village of the girl's parents and inform them of the birth, for which he was paid (Freed and Freed, 1978, pp. 123–124). Formerly, this trip was called *Kachar* because the Barber rode a little mare (*kachar*); more recently the Barber went by bus so the term *Kachar* was no longer applicable though sometimes used.

Some days later, the girl's family sent *piliya,* which provided good food throughout the lying-in and new clothing for the ceremonies beginning with the purification on the ninth day. Clothing for the new child was primarily supplied by the girl's family, together with the clothing their daughter would wear. Since her lying-in clothes were given to the midwife and since a suit of clothing was also given to the Barber's wife and a headcloth to the Potter woman, in a sense these contributions came from the girl's family. If an infant died before the gifts were sent, then nothing was given for the child unless there were other small children in the husband's family. Then some of the infant's clothing might be sent, for children as well as adults in the husband's family received gifts of clothing from the wife's family at this time. The purpose of gifts, as people repeatedly explained to us, was so that conjugal affines would treat their daughter-in-law well. The Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers said that *piliya* was sent to a daughter only at the first birth. (On *piliya* and *chhuchak* see Freed and Freed, 1978, pp. 123–126.)

When the parents of a girl died, her brother assumed the responsibility of gift-giving. The tie between brother and sister was important. If it had not been institutionalized, then many a sister would have received no gifts. This sometimes happened, though rarely. A man might complain about sending gifts to his sister or sisters, but he would feel compelled to do so at life cycle events and recurrent yearly festivals and never allow his wife a single paisa, even though he might eventually come to love her dearly. Considerations of prestige and family honor rein-

forced this gift cycle. If a man did not fulfill his obligations to his sister and it became public knowledge, then the relationships which he had with his affines and other people in his sister's village of marriage would deteriorate, his prestige would suffer, and he would acquire a bad reputation. When it came time to find a husband for his daughter he might have difficulty.

When the new mother was sufficiently well and the child was old enough to travel to its mother's parents, sometime after the fortieth day, mother and child visited her parents. On returning to her husband, she brought another complete set of gifts from her parents called *chhuchak,* primarily clothing for herself, her baby, and her conjugal affines. This visit helped perpetuate the postpartum taboo on sexual relations with her husband. Although *piliya* was often sent for every child born in a family, *chhuchak* was presented for a woman's first child and occasionally for the second, but, in general not for all her children.

As was to be expected, more gifts were sent for the first child than for later children, and more for a boy than for a girl. This difference in the value of gifts for boys and girls contributed to the lesser status of a female child, for a male child was well dressed by his mother's parents and therefore the father's household had to spend more for a daughter's clothing than for a son's. Under this system of gift exchange a girl appeared to be more of a burden than a boy. The fact that both males and females preferred male infants made it more enjoyable to spend money on males and less enjoyable to spend on females, and this preference, too, added to the feeling that a girl was a burden. The amount expended depended also on the caste and the wealth of a family. In general, Brahmans and Jats spent the most with the two lowest castes spending the least, but individual families varied; even those that were well off were sometimes parsimonious.

The family of the husband had expenses at the time of birth for the services of the midwife, the Nai Barber woman, the Gola Potter woman, the Jhinvar Waterman for a cradle, the carpenter for a cot, the haircut for a boy on the fortieth day, and food for the lying-in. There were other expenses: the payment to a priest for a horoscope and a purification ceremony plus the cost of substances used, the husband's sister's gift for the Nipple Washing ceremony, and four seers of brown sugar to be sent to the girl's family along with the payment to the Nai Barber for delivering the birth announcement. The new mother also received new bangles on the fortieth day. Some families gave her a new cot on the ninth day. One wealthy family had the Lohar Blacksmith make a movable wooden stand or walker to which a child could cling when learning to walk.

There was an outlay for food borne by the husband's family. On the sixth day, special foods might be cooked, usually rice pudding; grain or brown sugar was distributed by the hostess at a Sing. This latter expenditure was minimal because of the food brought by the guests. Any food distributions, that is, for the Sing, for the family, or those made in the village, were larger for a boy. There was, also, the feast on the tenth for a son, and the sacrifice of a pig and a feast among the Chuhra Sweepers at *Dasaundh.*

In addition to the foregoing, there were individuals who exchanged gifts between villages. For example, a group of women took a gift to another village for the birth of a child. In this instance, two sisters had been married, one into Shanti Nagar and the other into the other village. The sister in Shanti Nagar, together with other women from the village, took gifts. The sister's own gift was called *rupiya potra,* a rupee and a small cloth or towel to put under the baby. Other people of different villages who had affection for one another might bring small gifts of clothing for each other at birth. As one informant advised us when discussing gifts given at rites of passage and yearly festivals, "All of these devices are ways of increasing affection, and a great deal of aid becomes available also." This same man said, "The brothers and parents pay a large part of a daughter's living expenses so daughters

won't have a desire for the family property because in this way they get more than would be due otherwise."

There were hidden costs for pregnancy and lying-in. People believed that the work of a pregnant women should be reduced somewhat. In fact, it was reduced very little until the last month or two of pregnancy. Most families tried to relieve the woman of work in the last month of pregnancy especially if it was her first pregnancy or if she had previously had miscarriages and still had no living children. It was very rare indeed for a family to hire a substitute for this loss of labor. Instead, the family members either divided the work among themselves or postponed some part of their daily labor until such time as the pregnant woman returned to the work force. A lying-in within a nuclear family could wreak havoc during the peak of the agricultural season if the family consisted of only a husband and wife to carry on household and field tasks. In such a case, the woman would arise from her childbed early. If possible young married daughters might come from their husband's households to help, but only if permitted by the husband's family. They, too, might be pregnant or their services might be needed.

STORIES CREATING ANXIETY ABOUT BIRTH

The anxiety surrounding birth was perpetuated by reputedly true stories about strange events at birth, which went the rounds of the villages in the region, due to women visiting between their natal villages and their villages of marriage. The strange childbirths were explained as nature's work, but the stories about them contained many of the symbols of Hindu mythology. These stories and those concerning the birth and origin of deities contributed to the concern for the protection of mother and child during the periods of pregnancy, birth, and lying-in. At this time, purity and the acts connected with attaining it were incorporated in attitudes toward the health and welfare of the mother and child. The concern with purity was maintained because women were afraid that if they relaxed the rules of purity and pollution the mother and child would be in danger, fall ill, and die. Although women distinguished between ordinary dirt and pollution, the pollution concepts with which they had been imbued from birth added to the anxieties which they had about pregnancy and birth.

The legend about Krishna's birth related at the festival of Janamashtami, which was well known to women, created anxieties. Devaki, Krishna's mother, loses her first six children; then the seventh, Bala-rama, is transferred to her co-wife, Rohini, as Shesha, the serpent god (Daniélou, 1964, p. 178), which is enough to make any woman rather anxious; and Krishna's birth is shrouded in mystery. This legend is remembered when village gossips spread tales of strange births, such as the following stories of two bizarre births recounted by a Jat woman, born in Shanti Nagar, who was visiting her parental home.

> A woman in a village near my husband's village gave birth to a child and a snake about two months ago. The child drinks the mother's milk; the snake drinks cow's milk. During the seventh month of pregnancy, the woman felt something creeping over her lungs, and she told her mother-in-law. When she ate food, nothing happened, but milk and water went up. [The implication was that the snake was ingesting the food and that she was not digesting it.] A doctor X-rayed her and found a snake in her stomach. The delivery was brought about in the eighth month because she was afraid of the snake. Both a son and the snake were born. She wanted to kill the snake, but the doctor said, "If you kill the snake, the child will die." The doctor was a government doctor from Delhi. The snake is yellow and about half an arm's length—about 1½ to 2 inches in diameter. The child seems to be normal. Whenever the child takes his mother's milk, the snake also comes to the mother. They give the snake its milk separately. If they take the snake out and leave it a distance away, the snake comes back and sleeps on the bed. The people in the village are afraid of the snake. They think it is improper.

> Some say, "Kill it." Others say, "No, because the child may die."

This woman had not seen the mother, child, or snake, but said, "It's nature's work."

The second story narrated by the Jat woman concerned a human monstrosity. "This happened about 10 to 15 years ago. A child was born with horns, eyes, and the face of a deer. The rest was a normal human. When the people heard about this birth, they crowded around the house. The grandfather in the family got angry and buried the offspring in a vessel. It was normal except for the face, eyes, and horns. The mother started crying when this offspring was born and said, 'Don't show me what my body produced. Take it away. I have carried this weight for nine months in vain.'" This, too, the Jat woman explained as being nature's work. Then she reverted to the mother of the son and the snake, and said, "The mother isn't afraid. She says, 'This came out of my body, if it eats, all right; if it doesn't eat, all right.' She does, of course, feel awkward that the son may die if the snake dies. The first mother was a Jat woman. The second mother was from the east [meaning not the region of Shanti Nagar] and sold vegetables."

Stories such as these represent the myth-making process which goes on everywhere and should not be dismissed as the product of credulous, uneducated minds. Similar stories are told throughout the world. For example, we heard a story of a snake inside a person told by an intelligent, sophisticated American Indian. These two stories from Shanti Nagar incorporate storytelling techniques, incidents, motifs, and symbols well known in studies of folktales and myths. In the first story, "a government doctor from Delhi," attended the birth, thus giving credence to the storyteller. In addition, the raconteuse provided graphic details about the size and color of the snake and told the story in such a way that the snake exhibited behavior similar to that of a human infant. In the second story, the mother and grandfather behaved like ordinary human beings when an unfortunate birth occurred. When the storyteller concluded her two stories, she compared them by indicating that the two women who produced these strange offspring were of different statuses and from different regions yet each had given birth to monstrosities which were "nature's work." The two stories repeat a central theme that at birth all women are similar and subject to the laws of nature.

The stories relied on nature symbols, a snake and a deer, both of which signify fertility and exist in the mythological literature of Hinduism. The serpent represents both Shiva and Vishnu. Shiva carries a snake coiled around his neck. Snakes are always around his image even when he is represented by the phallus (linga). Vishnu, during his four months of sleep when marriages are in abeyance, rests on the coils of Shesha the serpent who provided Bala-rama, Krishna's brother, with the possibility of birth by being transferred to Rohini's womb. Shesha during the time that Vishnu sleeps is called the Remainder, what is left over to provide another universe; though somnolent himself, he is the life-giver when Vishnu wakes (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 151, 162–163, 178–180, 217). Freud categorizes snakes and serpents as sexual symbols. In a similar vein, the villagers' mythological orientation indicates they are fertility-creation symbols.

In the second story, the child is born with the head of a deer. A man with the head of a deer is one of the signs of the zodiac, Dhanus. Dhanus had a lengthy history and is a symbol within a symbol for he was Yajna, Ritual Sacrifice, who was married to his sister, Dakshina, Sacrificial Fee. Born with the head of a deer, Yajna was later killed; he then became the constellation called deer's head, or Sagittarius, the Archer. Both of these sacrificial concepts are incorporated into the vow a mother makes so that she will have an infant, and the offering (sacrificial fee) that she makes after her child is born (Dowson, 1950, p. 371; Daniélou, 1964, pp. 183–184).

Although these symbols were present in the two stories told by the Jat woman, she was not cognizant of them. What was of consequence in these stories was that when an unfortunate birth took place, it was reshaped in a story that came to resemble the traditional symbols and myths about births. Just

as the stories resembled the myths, so too women who had anxiety about the birth of a child feared that it might be born as the myths described. Because of childhood and lifelong imprinting with such stories, birth anxieties were increased. On the other hand they might also be allayed, for when an unfortunate birth occurred, the mother and family were somewhat prepared and could say as did the Jat woman, "This is nature's work." The stories, in turn, provided the rationale for the ritual behavior necessary to attain normal statuses for mother and child during the period of anxiety engendered by birth, from conception to the termination of seclusion (Kluckhohn, 1942, pp. 78–79; Goody, 1961, pp. 152–153).

CHANGES IN BIRTH PRACTICES

In the foreseeable future, the general outlines of birth events will probably continue because they reinforce the beliefs and status quo of the community. This is not to say that there will be no changes. As in all societies, there is always change and resistance to change; the combination of the two forces provides insurance against the elimination of everything that has ever been learned and at the same time assures that the community will not stagnate. Resistance to change is more often expected from an agrarian and caste community because both types have been described as conservative. Yet Shanti Nagar had a wide range of cultural alternatives with which to adjust to many different situations. These alternatives may well be a key to change.

Breaking with old customs is especially difficult if the substitution does not appear to assure the safety of mother and child, and if it reduces the amount of attention and care that mother and child receive. Expressing widespread sentiments, a woman said, "To give birth to a child is like having a second birth yourself. Many women die. To produce life is like producing your own life again." Mother and infant mortality present problems in bringing about change, although the changes themselves might well reduce the incidence of such mortality. Until such time as the villagers have a better understanding of Western medicine, and Western medicine adjusts itself to Indian village life, changes regarding delivery and postnatal practices will not easily take place. Moreover, as long as the celebration of birth ceremonies and postnatal events reinforces the established caste hierarchy, there will be no great amount of change unless the change introduces compatible practices to reinforce the hierarchy, or unless the social structure changes. The women themselves will resist change if, as was then the case, they believe that the practices protect them and their offspring and they derive pleasure from the rituals, receive new clothing, special food, care, and attention, and can rest for 40 days. All of these practices provide satisfaction and prestige.

On the other hand, the influence of the Arya Samaj has resulted in a reduction of ceremonies and practices at birth, in particular those of the little tradition which Saraswati condemned as "superstitious," and those that were cult practices of followers of Krishna, Shiva, or Islam, also condemned by Arya Samajis. The spread of education, at that time principally among men, contributed to the influence of the Arya Samaj. It reduced the importance of the Brahman as a priest by providing men of other than the Brahman caste with enough ceremonial knowledge to conduct attenuated versions of the ceremonies for childbirth, or to eliminate some of the rituals if they wished to do so. The Gola Potter, Chamar Leatherworker, and Chuhra Sweeper castes had most recently been affected by education and were following diluted models of Sanskritic rituals. Females had thus far been less affected by education; with the education of females, further changes in life cycle practices will in all probability occur.

Two trends that affected childbirth were due to urbanization. Young city-employed men and their wives sometimes gave evidence of dissatisfaction with the strict rules of seclusion after childbirth. Such couples preferred a more companionable, somewhat more democratic marriage than was traditional. These sentiments, often combined with economic considerations and lack of

time, militated against the strict observance of the rules of seclusion.

The second urban trend was in the direction of Western medicine. The members of wealthier and more educated households were willing to try Western medical treatment in some instances, both in the City of Delhi and through government services available in the rural area. However, the use of the government midwife was impractical in terms of costs and services received. Going to a hospital for a birth had little possibility of general acceptance in the immediate future because few villagers understood the process of hospital admission and because being admitted to a hospital depended on male intervention. In the village, the birth rituals, with the exception of the priest officiating at the fire ceremony, were in the hands of females. In the high-caste Brahman and Jat families, a lying-in at home was far pleasanter and produced less anxiety for a prospective mother because of the 40-day period of seclusion, special attention, rest, ritual, and gifts.

Various informants, including an Arya Samaj and two Sanatan Dharma professional Brahman priests mentioned a number of prenatal and postnatal samskaras which should have been celebrated, but no one in Shanti Nagar observed them. Among these ceremonies were two before birth for conception and pregnancy and a number afterward, including the first haircut. Only the first haircut remained, and it no longer was a Sanskritic ceremony but one of separation and identification performed by the Nai Barber. Even it was not celebrated universally in any caste. Thus, there appears to have been a reduction in the number of ceremonies not only of the little tradition but also of the great Sanskritic tradition. These changes were a result of the Arya Samaj, urbanization, and westernization.

MARRIAGE

Of all the rites of passage, marriage, including the prenuptial, wedding, and postnuptial events, had the most ceremonies and participation by members of family, lineage, caste, and village. Since birth perpetuates society and marriage is the social means by which birth is brought about, the culture of Shanti Nagar focused on these two rites of passage more than on death. Of the two, marriage received more emphasis than birth because marriage generally occurred once in a lifetime, legitimatized birth, and extended considerably the network of social relationships of the families involved. Because marriage formed the initial link between two separate kin groups, it had to be brought about gradually; more time and money were spent on this rite of passage than on any other.

All women were expected to marry and bear children. Although a barren woman might have a difficult life, she had a husband and family so that she was no threat or burden to the community. A nubile female, however, who remained unmarried was looked upon as a source of potential trouble to the community. Hindu belief holds that parents should see that all their children are married. In Shanti Nagar, this belief focused principally on a daughter's marriage, considered more difficult than arranging a son's marriage. The community was capable of accepting an unmarried male, for he would be able to take care of himself. However, young unmarried men were likely candidates for suspicion whenever the chastity of daughters or wives was questioned. The possibility that a male might be able to lead a life of celibacy was accepted by the villagers, albeit with some skepticism and uneasiness; but for a female to be a holy woman or a celibate was considered impossible. Men did not believe that a nubile female was able to exist without a husband to take care of her. There was also the belief that women required sexual activity more than did men and that, therefore, they had to have husbands. The nature of village society made it fairly difficult for a woman to go unmarried.

TABLE 1
Age of Females at Marriage and Related Events

Event	Age (Years)								
	Under 40			40–59			60 and over		
	Number	Mean	Range	Number	Mean	Range	Number	Mean	Range
Marriage	34	13.3	5–18	20	10.9	4–16.5	6	7.8	7–11
Menarche	34	15.8	12–17.5	20	16.1	14–18	6	15.3	13–17
Gauna[a]	34	15.6	12–18	20	16.2	12–21	6	14.5	11–14
Consummation	34	15.7	12–21	20	16.4	13–21	6	15	13–16
Permanent residence with husband	34	16.3	12–24	20	17.1	13.5–23	5	15.9	15–17
First pregnancy	22	18.2	16.5–24	17	18.8	15–23	6	17.9	12.5–22

[a] *Gauna* marks the second visit of the bride to her husband.

AGES RELATED TO MARRIAGE

There were a series of ages of females which were basic to understanding the events leading to a wedding and to the consummation of a marriage. These were the ages at menarche, wedding, and consummation. Additional ages pertinent to understanding the ceremonies of the marriage rite of passage were the bride's age at her second visit to her husband (*Gauna*), her age at going to her husband permanently, and her age at first pregnancy. These ages are given in table 1, and will be referred to from time to time. The term marriage refers to all the ceremonies encompassing the marriage rite of passage; the term wedding refers to the specific time at which the couple is wedded. These distinctions in terms are necessary since the rite of passage encompassed by marriage in Shanti Nagar lasted anywhere from one to 10 or more years.

The menarche was an important consideration in fixing the ages at which a female should be wedded and her marriage consummated. A female's age at the consummation of her marriage was very close to her age at her second visit to her husband. A female's age was important because the people of Shanti Nagar strongly believed that a female's wedding day should occur before her menarche and the marriage should be consummated shortly after menarche.

For a male, there were three ages related to marriage. They were his age at wedding, his age at his bride's second visit (*Gauna*), and his age when his wife began to reside permanently with him. These three ages for males are given in table 2.

Tables 1 and 2 are based on a selective survey of families consisting of three generations, namely youngsters presently and most recently wedded, mothers and fathers of such youngsters, and grandparents. The sample consisted of those families in our census most suitable to the three-generational history of ages at marriage. Most castes were represented.

To determine the accuracy of ages, interviewees were checked to see how well they could count and reckon ages in their life histories because we had encountered discrepancies regarding ages in earlier census data. Although most informants could count well enough and add and subtract, some females could count only to 10 and could not always add and subtract accurately when giving the number of years that elapsed between the ages at wedding, menarche, consummation, etc. In such cases, we tried to pinpoint ages by their relation to events that informants could remember and that could be correlated with calendar years.

In interviews with males, it was more difficult to get precise ages than with females.

TABLE 2
Age of Males at Marriage and Related Events

Event	Age (Years)								
	Under 40			40–59			60 and over		
	Number	Mean	Range	Number	Mean	Range	Number	Mean	Range
Marriage	23	14.5	10–27	15	16.2	5–27.5	11	20.8	8–30
Gauna[a]	21	17.7	13–27	14	20	15.5–27.5	11	20.6	13–35
Wife permanently resident	23	17.6	13–27	14	19.3	11–27.5	11	20.8	13–35

[a] *Gauna* marks the second visit of the bride to her husband.

Males were generally not interested in the questions and did not try to be precise about their ages at specific ceremonies and events. For example, we could not elicit separate ages for *Gauna* and consummation as we did among females because males generally said that *Gauna* and consummation were the same. Females were explicit about the difference. *Gauna,* generally, was taken by both males and females for the time at which consummation took place, but we were told by a number of females that at *Gauna* her husband was too young for consummation. Males never recounted such episodes. Similarly, females sometimes told us that at *Gauna,* they also were too young for consummation. Ages appeared to be more important to a female than to a male for two reasons: marriage provided a discontinuity with considerable change in status and role behavior for a female, but not for a male; second, females participated in very few events besides the rites of birth and marriage in which they were important.

Changes in Ages Related to Marriage

The mean age of females at wedding of 7.8 years for the generation 60 years old and over rose to 10.9 years for those in the 40–59 year bracket, and 13.3 years for those under 40 years of age, a difference of 5.5 years between the oldest and youngest age brackets, indicating that the age at wedding for females definitely rose during this century. For age at menarche, there was relatively little change in the mean. It was 15.3 years for females 60 and over; 16.1 years for those in the 40–59 year bracket; and 15.8 for those under 40. A similar pattern as that for menarche was seen for ages at *Gauna,* permanent residence with the husband, and first pregnancy. There was no outstanding difference among the three age brackets, which was not surprising since there was a correlation between menarche and the other three ages.

The mean age of males at wedding for the generation 60 years of age and over was 20.8 years; for those in the 40–59 year bracket, it was 16.2 years; and for men under 40, the mean was 14.5 years. There was a difference of 6.3 years between the oldest and youngest age brackets for males, indicating that the age at wedding for males declined during this century in contrast to the rise in the age at wedding for females. These opposing trends have brought the ages of wedding of males and females closer together, 14.5 years for males and 13.3 for females.

The ages reported by the oldest group of male informants must be regarded with considerable caution, for they involve logical inconsistencies and differ considerably from the ages reported by the oldest group of women. The oldest men reported 20.8 years as the average age of wedding and 20.6 years as the average age for *Gauna,* which is logically impossible since wedding precedes *Gauna.* Moreover, the elapsed time between wedding and *Gauna* for males and females

in each age bracket should be approximately the same, a situation which obtains in the two younger groups. However, the oldest women report 6.7 years between wedding and *Gauna* and the oldest men give ages that differ by only 0.2 of a year.

The only conclusion that appears to be justified by the age data is that the ages of wedding of men and women are drawing closer together because of a trend toward an increasing age at wedding for females and a declining age for men. These two trends appear to have occurred to some degree throughout India (Agarwala, 1962, Chap. IX, who provides figures through 1951). Wyon et al. (1966) found that from 1955 to 1958 in Punjabi villages, age at wedding had increased enough to raise the age of the beginning of cohabitation. Our findings indicate that the increase in the age at wedding for females had not had an effect upon the age of first sexual intercourse with the husband or upon the age of first pregnancy (Freed and Freed, 1971, pp. 283–284).

Age at Wedding and Attitudes Toward Females

Villagers compared young, female children to goddesses because they were considered pure. In fact, at certain religious events, they were fed because of their ritual purity. Such girls were the daughters of Brahmans and never older than eight to 10 years. This attitude was a key to the timing of events leading to the rite of marriage. Once a female had her first menses, she was no longer ritually pure. The villagers seldom referred to the menses; instead they used a euphemistic phrase denoting that a female was married. They said, "She has gone to her husband's relatives," because by the time she had attained menarche she was married. Another circumlocution for menarche was, "The girl is grown up."

The villagers believed that it tempted fate to allow a young female who had reached her menarche to remain unmarried. There was a possibility that an unmarried girl might become pregnant and disgrace her family. Therefore the timing of the events which led to marriage was based on the estimated age at which a young female would attain menarche. Although this fact was essential to the marriage system, there was neither ceremony, nor public announcement, nor any reference to the time at which a girl reached this state. Both mother and father, however, because of its importance were supposed to be alert to the possibility of its occurrence so that the proper steps were taken to have the girl married before the attainment of this physiological change.

The status of females was directly related to the attainment of the menarche because afterward a female was potentially polluting. This attitude remained even though the customs with regard to the menses of women were changing. Formerly, among the upper castes when a woman menstruated she refrained from any tasks, such as cooking, which would cause the members of her family or others to be polluted. Only a few of the older women in orthodox Brahman families still insisted that menstruating women be barred from the kitchen. Most women bathed immediately when the menses started and then went about their work. However, there was a tendency, at least in some of the Brahman families, for women in this state to avoid cooking if someone else in the family could perform the task. In addition, those women 35 years of age and older whom we interviewed on this subject stated that sexual intercourse was supposed to be avoided during the menses, but that not all males adhered to this rule. Even though these statements reflected considerable change with regard to the behavior of menstruating women, the attitudes toward menses and childbirth were that they were polluting.

Data gathered from some of the low castes, especially Chuhra Sweeper women, raised the question as to whether they ever refrained from cooking at childbirth and at the time of their menses. Chuhra Sweeper women considered the delivery and lying-in period polluting, as was indicated in the earlier secion on birth, but because of their economic status and the polluting nature of their occupation, they arose from the lying-in early and went about their daily chores. This

practice applied even to clean castes, both at birth and at menstruation, when only one adult woman was in the household. In other words, these women had to be pragmatic. Only when women were seriously ill would men carry out their tasks. Even then many would not. These problems regarding menses, birth, and work may be one of the reasons why women favored joint family life as much as men, although the lower castes and the poorer families tended to have nuclear families.

Generally women in all castes, at least women 50 years old and younger, bathed and then cooked during their menses, and in some cases had sexual intercourse with their husbands. This finding is consistent with other accommodations that the people of Shanti Nagar made to concepts of purity and pollution. They gave lip service to these beliefs and upheld them when possible, but not if the proscriptions made it difficult to carry out their daily tasks. Whether there had always been such flexibility cannot be shown, but it seems reasonable that departures from fixed rules may always have been convenient and accepted to some degree.

Relation of Age at First Menses to Arranging Marriage

Arranging a marriage was complicated by the need to predict the time of a daughter's first menses so that she could be married before then and sent immediately to her husband at the time of menarche if she was not already there. Girls were married as young as four years of age, but it should not be thought that they were at once sent to their husband's family to consummate the marriage. Rather, the events leading to consummation were spread over a number of years. The marriage of a girl under 10 years of age usually indicated that two sisters were married at the same time, often to two brothers, in order to save time and money; the older couple was usually in their teens and the other couple a number of years younger. In earlier times, high-caste families married their daughters quite early, and the low castes then followed their practice. At that time, girls were sent to their husbands at an early age and the marriages were consummated before the age of menarche.

Consummation before the menarche was changed by two laws. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1930 set 14 years of age for girls and 18 years of age for boys as the minimum ages at marriage (Moreland and Chatterjee, 1957, p. 538). In 1955, the Hindu Marriage Act set 15 years as the minimum age at marriage for girls and 18 years for boys (Lamb, 1975, p. 163). The reform acts of 1930 and 1955 must have had some impact as indicated by the changes in ages for the three different age groups given in tables 1 and 2, although in Shanti Nagar and the intermarrying region around it child marriage still existed. However, a bride was not sent to her husband for consummation until the time of menarche. Moreover, most parents preferred to keep their daughters with them until menarche and often longer if possible. In this regard, there was a difference between high and low castes and between well-off and poor families. The low castes and the poor families more often sent their daughter to her husband immediately after wedding if the conjugal affines demanded it. Such a demand indicated that the bride's labor was needed by the groom's family.

SEARCH FOR A GROOM

Most of the activities related to arranging a marriage were the responsibility of a girl's father. The girl's mother participated in numerous rituals and cooperated to the fullest, but she had little to do with the negotiations between the families of bride and groom. To what degree she influenced some of the decisions depended entirely on the personalities of husband and wife and how well they got along. The husband was not required to consult his wife or daughter.

The father decided when it was time to look for a groom for his daughter. He based his decision on her age and physical development. Mothers said that they did not and could not influence their husband's decision as to when to begin the search, but they did call his attention to the development and age of

their daughter. In the case of a first daughter, her father's mother might pressure her son to arrange a marriage. A man's mother usually had greater influence on him than did his wife, for he looked to his mother and to his father or father's brothers for information on arranging a marriage and for suggestions regarding where he should look and whom he should avoid. Usually, a father began to look for a groom at least three years before the expected menses and sometimes earlier. This long period reflected the difficulty in finding a groom, the complex series of events and ceremonies necessary before a marriage could be consummated, and the cost of marrying a daughter. In addition, the father who arranged a marriage had to do so in his spare time, which meant that the time available was limited. Neither the girl nor the boy saw the other until the wedding. The girl's mother did not see the boy until then, nor did the father of the boy see the girl.

Arranging a marriage was both a search and a negotiation, for the girl's father had to locate families with eligible sons and then persuade a family to agree to an engagement. It was taken for granted by the girl's father that it would be difficult to find a boy and obtain his father's consent. Because the girl's father was the searcher and because of the belief that it would be difficult to find a boy, the father of the girl was at a disadvantage in marriage negotiations, especially since there was a time limit to his search. If a father was searching for a boy for the first time, the search was more difficult than subsequent searches because of the man's inexperience. The more extensive the family group, the older the father, and the greater the prestige and wealth of the family, the easier it was to find a groom. When daughters were close together in age, it was not surprising to find them wedded at the same time to brothers or patrilineal cousins because this practice reduced the father's search for grooms to one rather than two occasions. Even well-off families followed this practice.

A man frequently took another man with him in his search who had experience and was familiar with the surrounding area in which marriages were arranged. If the man had a son in his teens who had attended school in the region of Delhi, he might take him along, for this young man would know other young men. The men who assisted the father were experienced members of his clan and caste because it was essential to find a groom within one's own caste who conformed to the rules of marriage. The family's Nai Barber might also suggest potential bridegrooms. Nais were usually well informed about such matters, for they visited many villages carrying presents and messages and formerly arranged marriages.

Several informants described their experiences in searching for bridegrooms. One man, for example, who began the search for a groom for his oldest daughter three years before the wedding, bought a motorcycle and spent evenings and weekends touring the surrounding countryside to locate a boy. He sometimes took a teenage son with him and sought the advice of his father's sister's son for potential mates. Despite the most careful checking and negotiations, the groom turned out to be a very poor choice. An experience such as this worried parents with marriageable daughters.

Among the Chuhra Sweeper caste we found an exception to the rule regarding the father of a girl looking for a groom. The groom was a widower and worked in Hyderabad. He was not very interested in marriage because his wife would live with his mother in Shanti Nagar, and he lived most of the year in Hyderabad where he had a lot of freedom. However, his mother, a widow, wanted him remarried and asked an elder male Chuhra in the village to find a girl for him and to act as a go-between (*bichola*). This go-between went to a village and asked if any girl was of marriageable age in the caste community. Someone suggested a girl, and negotiations started. He even saw her. She was fair, tall, and quite healthy in appearance. He was not allowed to talk to her but reported that she was intelligent because her parents seemed to be. The engagement was agreed upon and in the negotiations it was decided that the girl's family should pay the bridegroom Rs. 100 to 125. In the groom's first marriage he had received Rs. 300 to 325.

Although this search for a bride rather than a groom was an exception, it was due to the groom's being a widower, working in Hyderabad, and having no close living male relative to arrange his marriage.

Another Chuhra Sweeper marriage was arranged through an intermediary. In this family, there were three daughters, the oldest of whom was already married and living in her husband's village. Her father wanted to find husbands for his other two daughters but he worked in Bombay and was home only about once in two years. Therefore, he wrote the father-in-law of his oldest daughter and asked him to find two brothers to marry these two girls. The father-in-law agreed, found them, negotiated, arranged the engagement, and the marriage took place. For his services as go-between he received 4 rupees. The sum was relatively small because of the affinal relationship and because the mother of the girls regarded him as "a dear one." However, from the bridegroom's family for his services, he received a gold ring and a fancy sheet. The Chuhra examples differed from the rest of the village.

Before the 1920s, marriages of the high castes were arranged by the Nai Barbers. Since they were the regular messengers for high-caste families, they had knowledge of many villages and so acted as marriage intermediaries. However, Swami Dayanand's Arya Samaj reforms resulted in fathers in Shanti Nagar themselves looking for grooms for their daughters because Arya Samaj tenets held that an unrelated person did not have the welfare of the girl at heart.

PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL CRITERIA FOR A SPOUSE

A desirable bridegroom was healthy and a member of a family of good standing that upheld caste rules, was in a reasonably good financial condition, and lived relatively near his bride's village so that she could conveniently visit her parents. Most parents were seriously concerned about the welfare of their daughters and hoped that they would be married into families that treated them well. The poorer a man and the more daughters and fewer sons he had, the harder it was for him to find a suitable husband for a daughter.

A girl's family did not want a boy who had a physical disability. The villagers concurred in the belief that one should never marry a one-eyed man or a man who had one damaged eye. Such a man was considered to carry an evil aura. Two such men lived in Shanti Nagar. In one case, a one-eyed adult Brahman married a Brahman widow who was a member of his clan. The inauspicious aura of his blind eye was linked, in the minds of the villagers, with the Brahman widow's remarriage, a tabooed action. In the other case, a young male injured one eye in an accident shortly after his wedding. When he was in a hospital for treatment, all the male members of his wife's family went to see him to assure themselves that he would not be permanently blinded.

The desirable bride was fair, healthy, and not deformed in any way. If a boy was educated, he preferred a bride who had gone to the third or fifth grade. Knowing this preference, the parents of a girl might claim that she was educated, but she might not be or she might only have gone to school one or two years. Lies were told about the education of daughters because the demand for educated wives was increasing.

Parents declared that wealth was not necessarily a factor in finding a mate for their offspring. In the case of a daughter, parents preferred that she be married to good people who would treat her well. Our data indicate that those families who were well-off in Shanti Nagar tended to marry their sons and daughters into similar families, and that those who were not as well-to-do tended to marry their daughters into families in similar circumstances.

Parents generally did not investigate the living and working conditions which existed in a boy's family. Although conditions were somewhat similar from village to village, there were differences. A number of girls were married into families where there was a shortage of females so that their workload was heavy and they were lonely. Others were married where there was a sufficient

number of females to divide the work and provide companionship. There were a fair number of stories about newly married brides jumping into wells and committing suicide because they were the only women in the households of their husbands or because the workload was so great that their conjugal affines could not spare their labor so that they could visit their parents.

The requirements listed by villagers for both a husband and a wife accord to some extent with those given by Saraswati (1956, pp. 117–118) and in *The Laws of Manu* (Bühler, 1969, pp. 76–77). In fact, Saraswati's prescriptions are so similar to *The Laws of Manu* that they may well have been taken from them.

RULES OF MARRIAGE

The rules of marriage were governed by caste endogamy and clan, village, and regional exogamy. Village and regional exogamy derived principally from a system of fictive kinship that encompassed the people of Shanti Nagar and 15 other villages and also from the fact that the people of Shanti Nagar did not intermarry with the inhabitants of villages with which they shared a border. A number of villages often considered themselves to be related as a result of the history of Jat settlement in the region (S. Freed, 1963; Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 148–149, 151–152).

Caste Endogamy

The unit within which individuals married was the caste. For example, the Brahmans of Shanti Nagar were all Gor Brahmans but in the surrounding region there were other Brahman castes, such as the Taiga Brahmans, with whom they did not intermarry. Each of these Brahman castes was an endogamous unit. The Chamar Leatherworkers in Shanti Nagar were Jatiya Chamars and did not intermarry with any other group of Chamars. Similarly, the Gola Potters married only Gola Potters. Although there was one family of Mahar Potters in the village, they constituted a separate caste. The Chuhra Sweepers were Valmiki Sweepers and married only Valmiki. Jats in northern India were divided into three religious groups, Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. The clan names of these groups of Jats tend to be very similar (Ibbetson, 1916, pp. 104–131), but the Jats of Shanti Nagar, who were Hindus, said they did not intermarry with Jats who were of another religion.

Although the castes represented in Shanti Nagar were generally widely distributed in northern India, the effective region of intermarriage did not extend over a large area because parents preferred that their daughters marry into villages sufficiently close to Shanti Nagar so that they could easily visit their natal home from time to time. The same consideration affected the parents of women who married men of Shanti Nagar. The mean distance of marriage for both the wives of Shanti Nagar, who came from other villages, and the daughters, who married into other villages, was 11 miles (18 km.) (Freed and Freed, 1973, p. 95, table 1). The region of marriage included the Union Territory of Delhi and extended into the adjoining parts of the Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Exogamy of Family, Clan, Village, and Region

Although no one in Shanti Nagar spoke of familial incest taboos, these taboos prohibited marriage and mating between mother and son, father and daughter, brother and sister, and were basic to the substructure generating rules for marriage. Most of the village castes followed the rule of marrying outside of one's patrilineal clan (*gotra*). The main function of the clan was the regulation of marriage. In addition to the requirement of marrying outside of one's own clan, there were prohibitions against marrying within specific degrees of relationship on both the groom's and bride's part. These rules, referred to as sapinda rules in Hindu law, proscribe seven degrees of relatives from the father of an individual and four degrees from the mother. Another way of stating sapinda rules is that "one should count, in the male line, upward for six generations from ego's

father, up to three generations from ego's mother's father upward, and up to six generations from ego's son downward'' to determine ego's sapinda (forbidden relatives) for marriage (Madan, 1962, p. 68; Mayne, 1953, pp. 146–148). Sapinda rules did not coincide with village rules although in the case of many marriages their effects were generally the same.

The method of reference for marriage prohibitions in Shanti Nagar was to the clans of relatives on both the father's and mother's side for the groom and the bride. Castes within the intermarrying area around Shanti Nagar had a number of clans. Members of a clan were considered consanguines although relationships among most of them could not be traced. The people of Shanti Nagar were aware that they could not trace the line of descent back in time through known people in their own clan, not only throughout the region, but even between the lineages of any one clan in the village. They could and did trace descent for a number of generations within the extant lineages in the village. Those people who were landowners and had been settled longest in the village, namely the Brahman Priests and Jat Farmers, were best able to trace descent for a number of generations.

No one knew the complete regional distribution of their own clan although the men who arranged marriages or who traveled were reasonably knowledgeable as to the villages in which members of their own clan were present. The clan was in fact a nebulous category, but each one was identified by a distinctive name. When reference was made to it, the reference was to the actual name of the clan, linked with the relative who belonged to it, such as mother or father's mother.

The names of all the clans in one's caste were not as a rule known by all its members. Some castes seemed to know very few, for example, the Chamar Leatherworker and Chuhra Sweeper. On the other hand, members of the Brahman Priest and Jat Farmer castes knew a fair number. High-caste adult men who had participated in marriage arrangements knew the clans better than other men; some women were totally ignorant of clan names, even their own.

Four castes had more than a single clan resident in the village. No member of a caste that had two or more clans in the village could marry a co-villager of one of the other clans because of the rule of village exogamy. Because of clan exogamy and village exogamy, men also generally refrained from marrying someone who, although from another village, was nonetheless a member of a clan with representatives in Shanti Nagar (Freed and Freed, 1976, p. 92). Thus, the wives of Shanti Nagar were generally not members of the clans represented by the men of the village. Daughters, by virtue of the fact that clan descent came from the father, were members of his clan. When a female married she continued to belong to her natal clan.

Unless someone had been adopted, members of a nuclear family except wives and mothers belonged to the same clan. However, because mothers were blood relatives, marrying into one's mother's clan was prohibited. Most of the castes in Shanti Nagar also prohibited marriage into the clan of one's father's mother and the clan of one's mother's mother. Thus, the clans of two ascending generations on both the father's and mother's side were tabooed.

One caste, the Baniya Merchant, in addition tabooed the clans of the third ascending generation, i.e., the clans of the father's mother's mother and mother's mother's mother. In other words, although the other castes of Shanti Nagar prohibited marriages in at most four clans, the Baniya Merchants prohibited them in six clans. The Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers concerned themselves only with the clans of the father and of the mother, but the Chamar Leatherworkers said they did not marry their daughters into a village from which a mother came, nor did they marry their daughters into a village from which daughters-in-law came. The Nai Barbers said that they only avoided marriages within their own clan.

Within the Brahman and Jat castes, we discovered two exceptions or modifications to the four-clan rule. In one Jat family, due

to the difficulties of finding mates for all the members of this large extended family, they currently ignored the rule against marrying into one's mother's mother's clan. One informant said that if they were to observe this rule, they would not be able to find grooms for all their daughters. Lewis (1958, p. 161) stated that the prohibition against marrying into one's mother's mother's clan had recently been relaxed.

The other exception was in a Brahman family where a husband and wife were both members of the same clan. Our informants explained that the Bhardwaj clan had split into parts (*shasans*) between which marriage was allowed. The *shasan* of the husband was identified as Bhardwaj Dikhit Kherwal, a group that was descended from a man named Dikhit who came from Khera; the wife's *shasan* was Bhardwaj Indoria, a group that was descended from a man in another region. This would, in effect, be a case of one clan dividing because of regional spread. Moreover, a woman informant stated that at one time Shanti Nagar was small and it was difficult to obtain wives because it was little known so that this type of marriage was allowed. A male informant, on the other hand, said that such marriages were no longer allowed because their descendants were considered to be weakened by the practice. Regardless of how this case was interpreted, the two branches were said to have come together again. This case reflects the processes whereby a clan can divide into two clans and then recombine into one clan.

The rule of village exogamy further complicated obtaining a mate. This rule was based on the fiction that everyone in Shanti Nagar was related. It derived from the legend that Shanti Nagar was settled by Mann Jats who were the descendants of one man. The Jats of seven other villages were also descendants of this same man. Thus, these eight villages were considered to be related. This belief was adhered to not only by the Jats but also by all the other castes. Because of this belief, all the people in Shanti Nagar addressed each other by kinship terms, even though they were members of different clans and castes. Furthermore, all the members of the eight villages of Mann Jats addressed each other in the like manner (S. Freed, 1963; Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 148–152).

In addition to the eight villages settled by the clan of Mann Jats, there were eight other villages in which marriages were avoided. These were called "mother's brother's" villages. According to historical legend, a Jat who was not a Mann Jat resided in a village close to Shanti Nagar and married his daughter to a man who lived in a village some 60 miles from her father's village. Because the father did not want his daughter to live far away, he gave land to her husband so that the couple would settle near him. The young husband was the founding male ancestor of the Mann Jats in the region of Shanti Nagar, his wife, the female ancestor, or mother. Hence her natal village and seven villages descended from her clan were mother's brother's villages to the people of Shanti Nagar. No villager of Shanti Nagar could arrange a marriage within the eight Mann villages or the eight mother's brother's villages because all 16 were considered to be fictively related. The Mann Jats zealously upheld this rule and the other castes were expected to do so.

Originally the Mann Jats were the only clan of Jats in Shanti Nagar, but around the time that India became politically independent a group of Jats who were members of the Mehlawit clan bought land and settled there. This group came from the City of Delhi. Their land near Delhi had been taken over by the growing city. They had previously intermarried with Mann Jats but when they settled in Shanti Nagar they could no longer do so. They were thereafter subject to the same rules of village exogamy and of avoidance of the 16 Jat villages when seeking a mate as were the Mann Jats. An elder Jat of the Mann clan said that in his opinion the Mehlawit Jats would eventually forget their clan affiliation as a result of these marriage prohibitions and become Mann Jats. This process of assimilation seemed reasonable since individuals from other clans had been adopted into clans within the village.

The same elderly Jat who believed that the Mehlawit Jats would be absorbed by the

Mann Jats said that all the castes observed the 16-village rule of exogamy except perhaps the Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers. He said, "Chamars and Chuhras do not even know their own *gotras*." This statement was consistent with our own findings, for in a number of families of these castes, the persons interviewed did not know their clans or at best were vague about them. One 70-year-old male Chamar Leatherworker said, "No Jatiya Chamar will remember his own *gotra*." Further, none of the Chamar or Chuhra informants mentioned the fiction of the mother's brother's villages, although they knew the eight Mann villages and avoided them in marriage.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Once a man located a family with a young male who had been recommended as a bridegroom for his daughter, he took along one or two of his male kinsmen with experience in such matters and spent an afternoon or evening talking with the father of the boy. First, he tried to verify the information he had received about the family by examining their house to the extent that he could politely do so and by paying attention to the way in which the father and son acted. Alertness, courtesy, and skill in negotiation were essential in the search.

In one Brahman family where the son attended college, two men arranged to visit the family one evening when the prospective groom was at home. The father of the bride-to-be was the owner of a cloth store in Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. He and his friend came to the village by bus with the boy's father and stayed overnight. The father and son gave them dinner, the hookah to smoke, and were very hospitable and polite. The discussion regarding the proposed marriage lasted past midnight. The father of the boy said that he had taken a vow not to allow his son to marry until he received the Bachelor of Science degree. The father of the girl and his colleague said they were willing to wait a year for the wedding but wanted to go ahead with the engagement negotiations. However, the boy's father did not want to settle the matter immediately. To put pressure on the father of the boy, the girl's father said, "Why don't you ask the women of your family?" The reply to this was that the boy's mother was more adamant than the father. She wanted her son to graduate first. Then the intermediary or colleague of the girl's father intimated to the boy's father that his friend, who was quite prosperous, would see that the marriage party was properly taken care of and would provide an ample dowry for his daughter. The boy's father replied that he did not want to sell his son. The girl's representative then requested that he ask his son how he felt. The father of the boy answered, "There are three of us here of the same opinion, my wife, my son, and I." Thus, the negotiations ended in a stalemate, albeit a friendly one since the father of the boy indicated that when his son graduated in another year, he might then be interested. Had the negotiations ended in an agreement, then the two fathers would have proceeded to the next step in the prenuptial events, the engagement party.

MARRIAGES FROM JANUARY 1958 TO JUNE 1959

Because of the long time span involved in arranging and consummating marriage and the fact that part of the ceremonies took place in the groom's village and part in the bride's village, we never saw all the ceremonies of a specific marriage. However, we witnessed specific ceremonies from a number of marriages and gradually came to understand the general ceremonial sequence. Informants provided additional details about ceremonies and reported their sequence for marriages in which they were involved. We therefore present a general picture of marriage, that is the prenuptial, nuptial, and postnuptial ceremonies in the sequence in which they were most apt to occur with an indication of the time spans involved and whether or not the ceremonies and other events occurred in the village of the groom or of the bride. In order to comprehend the sequence of the events and the complexities

TABLE 3
Males and Females of Shanti Nagar Who Married from January 1958 to June 1959

Caste[a]	Sex	Age (Years)	Single or Double Wedding[b]	Education	Occupation
1	M	22	double	none	laborer in factory
1	M	19	double	failed matriculate	police
1	M	21.5	single	7th grade	bus conductor
1	M	18	single	10th grade	student
1	M	18.5	single	failed higher secondary	student
2	F	17.5	double[c]	5th grade	household and farming
2	F	15.5	double	5th grade	household and farming
2	F	15	single	none	household and farming
3	M	16	double	10th grade	student
3	M	14	double	none	farmer
3	M	17	single	matriculate	clerk
4	F	14	double	none	household and farming
4	F	12	double	none	household and farming
5	F	15	double	none	household and traditional caste occupation
5	F	13	double	none	household and traditional caste occupation
6	M	14	double	8th grade	student
6	M	13	double		student
7	M	14	double	9th grade	student
7	M	11	double	3rd grade	student
8	M	22[d]	single	4th grade	sweeper in city
8	F	14.5	double	none	sweeper
8	F	11.5	double	none	sweeper

[a]The castes are identified by number as follows: Brahman Priest (1), Jat Farmer (2), Bairagi Beggar (3), Mali Gardener (4), Nai Barber (5), Gola Potter (6), Chamar Leatherworker (7), and Chuhra Sweeper (8).

[b]In a double wedding, two brides and two bridegrooms are married rather than a single bride and bridegroom as in a single wedding. In the table, participants in double weddings are listed in adjacent rows. All but one double wedding involved the marriage of two sisters with two brothers.

[c]Two sisters were married to two men who were not brothers.

[d]This man was a widower marrying for the second time.

of marriage rituals, we attended a number of ceremonies not only within Shanti Nagar but also in three other villages. We were able, through these visits, observations, and discussions with informants, to piece out the whole sequence of events on both the groom's side and the bride's side.

The weddings that took place from January 1958 to June 1959, are listed in table 3, by caste, sex, age of the bride and groom, whether the wedding was double (two grooms and two brides) or single, education of each spouse, and information on occupation. In the wedding of two Bairagi boys from Shanti Nagar and two sisters from another village, the older sister was 15; the younger, six to seven years old, the youngest person to be wedded during our fieldwork. Nine females and 13 males from Shanti Nagar, a total of 22 individuals, were wedded during this period. The females ranged in age from 11.5 to 17.5 years with a mean of 14.2; the males from 11 to 22 years with a mean of 16.9. Of the nine females who were wed-

ded, eight were involved in double weddings. Of the 13 males who were wedded, eight were involved in double weddings. All but one of the double weddings were cases of two sisters wedded to two brothers. In one Jat family two sisters were wedded to non-brothers from different villages on sequential days.

If we consider that the older girl in a double wedding was the one for which the father first set out to arrange a marriage, then her age represented the age at which the father thought it desirable to marry a daughter. Using this age as the basis for the normal marriageable age (i.e., disregarding the age of the younger girl when two sisters were wedded), the age range for marriageable girls at this time was from 14 to 17.5 years; the mean was 15.2. Double weddings were meant to save time and money; they were not intended principally to have a marriage for the younger daughter. In any case, the younger daughter would not go to her husband's house for consummation of the marriage until her menarche took place. For males from Shanti Nagar, the age range, again discounting the younger of two brothers wedded at the same time, was 14 to 22 years inclusive with a mean of 18.1.

Table 3 points out the differences between males and females in education and occupation. Among the 13 males, six had a means of earning a living at the time of wedding, and a seventh was training to be a pharmacist and expected shortly to have a job. Five were in school; one had no education and helped his father in the village. Of the females, only two had gone to school. All of them would be housewives and also work in the fields, but the Nai Barber and Chuhra Sweeper females would be trained to help their mothers-in-law with the traditional work of their castes (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 96–97, 98–99). The two Jat girls who were in a well-off family where all the females and males in the current generation had been sent to school, had gone to the fifth grade. Although their lot might be easier because of the status and wealth of the family, these two females would in all probability do household and agricultural work similar to that of females without education.

PRENUPTIAL CEREMONIES

Once the fathers of the prospective bride and groom came to an agreement, a series of prenuptial events was set into motion in the villages of the boy and girl. These events were the engagement party, the dispatch of two letters that fixed the times for prenuptial baths and the wedding day, the rituals that accepted these dates, the initiation ceremony of males who were members of twice-born castes, the feasting of guests in the groom's village, the reception of the mother's brother of both bride and groom, the ceremonial exchanges that helped to finance the expenses of the wedding, the worship of the potter's wheel, the erection of the marriage pavilion, and the departure of the groom's party for the bride's village.

ENGAGEMENT (*SAGAI*)

The first of these events, *Sagai,* the engagement party, occurred shortly after the preliminary negotiations between the fathers of the proposed couple, but the dates for the remaining events were later set by the girl's family although the groom's family was advised and consulted before final dates for the wedding were settled. These dates depended upon the needs and demands of both families and upon the ages of the boy and girl. For example, if the groom's family wanted to delay the marriage until a specific stage in the boy's education had been reached, the girl's father might agree provided his daughter would not be beyond the menarche at that time. The girl's father set the date for the wedding based on the age of the girl, his economic situation, and also in conjunction with the groom's horoscope. In no case were marriages held during the months of the year when "the gods were sleeping," from Asarh sudi 11 until Dev Uthani Gyas, The Gods Awakening Eleventh, in the bright fortnight of Karttik (Freed and Freed, 1964, pp. 83, 85–86, 88). This period began toward the end of June or early July and ended in late October or early November.

Sagai, held in the village of the groom, consisted of convening a group of men who acted as a panchayat (council) to witness the agreement for a marriage between two men

FIG. 9. Witnesses at an engagement ceremony.

representing the families of the bride and groom (fig. 9). *Sagai* contained ritual and social elements but it primarily forged a binding contract between the two families who were party to the marriage. The main actors in this ceremony were the groom and the representatives of the two families.

Engagement practices had changed during the last several decades. People 60 years of age or older reported that formerly only a Nai Barber and a professional Brahman Priest represented the girl's family for engagements in high castes. Because of Arya Samaj influence, these two no longer functioned as representatives. A father, father's father, father's brother, or even the brother or patrilineal cousin of the girl represented her and her family. The girl was never present at the engagement. The groom's representative might be his father or surrogate father in the lineage, when the father had died or was absent from the village due to work. The mother's brother of the groom might also be present, as he would later provide a fair portion of the money and gifts required by the groom's family for the marriage.

INVITATIONS

An engagement party could take place any day of the week; it usually occurred in the morning or afternoon of a weekday. Occasionally it was held in the late afternoon or early evening if the principals worked in the city and could not be present until late in the day. There was not much fanfare for engagement parties. Often they took place before many people in the village became aware of them.

Previous to an engagement party for high castes, the Nai Barber serving the boy's family presented verbal invitations to the male head of each household belonging to the lineage of the family involved, unless for some reason there were bad feelings between some

families. In addition, the Barber extended invitations to the adult male heads of households in each Jat lineage. As many as were present in the village at the time of the engagement might attend, but one representative from each lineage was expected to attend.

Males in Brahman and Jat families were regularly represented at engagements of the high castes. In the families of the Bairagis, Jhinvars, Lohars, Malis, and Nais, those who attended their engagements were members of their own caste and those male heads of families of the Jats and Brahmans with whom there were occupational and other ties. Usually one of the two Baniya Merchants or a literate Jat was present to record all money transactions in an engagement panchayat for the high castes. Among the Kumhars, Chamars, and Chuhras, members of their own castes witnessed their engagements, but sometimes individuals from other castes might be invited with whom there were ties of patronage or friendship. Thus, the general pattern of representation at engagements was similar for all castes, but there was some difference regarding invitations to an engagement that depended on the caste in which the engagement occurred.

At a Jat engagement, adult males from all Jat households were invited so that any male who wished might attend. The Brahman who had a jajmani relationship (Freed and Freed, 1976, p. 120) with a Jat family in which an engagement occurred was also expected to attend, as were representatives from all Brahman households with which the Jat family had friendly relations. When families fell out, they did not invite each other to engagements or to weddings. Caste fellows did not attend the ceremonies of a family that had been outcaste (cf. R. Freed, 1971, p. 432). Members of the low castes might be invited to high-caste engagements if they had a tie of friendship or patronage.

The engagement parties of Brahmans and Jats were generally larger, cost more on the average, and were more concerned with the validation legally of the proposed marriage agreement because of the inheritance of property and the amount of dowry than were those of the other castes.

TABLE 4
Age at Engagement and Marriage of Brahman Males, 1958–1959

Identifying Number	Engagement	Marriage
1[a]	18	19
2[a]	21	22
3	20.5	21.5
4	17.5	18.5
5[b]	—	18
6[c]	19	—
7[c]	15	—

[a]Nos. 1 and 2 were brothers engaged at same time.
[b]No. 5 was engaged prior to 1958 and married in 1958.
[c]Nos. 6 and 7 were engaged in 1959 toward end of our fieldwork.

Jat engagement parties consisted only of males although the women in the family might be within hearing and watching distance. The Brahmans allowed both men and women to attend from among the Brahmans and their friends in the Jat, Bairagi, Jhinvar, Lohar, and Baniya castes. The women might be invited by the women themselves when they lived next door, or by the Nai Barber woman who served the family. Women were always invited by women, and men by men. The male Nai Barbers serving the prospective groom's and bride's families assisted at the engagement.

ASSEMBLING OF GUESTS

Although the engagement party was set for an approximate time, it usually took at least an hour for all the people invited to assemble. Sometimes they needed to be reminded and called from the fields. The representatives from the girl's family usually arrived first. The host in whose house the engagement was held would be present to see that all guests were greeted and that there were sufficient cots upon which to sit. The hookah was passed by the Nai Barber serving the family or by a young male in the family. Brahmans and Baniyas smoked the hookah only within their own caste; Jats, Bairagis, Lohars, Malis, and Jhinvars sometimes smoked the hookah together. The representatives of the bride were given a separate

hookah, indicating the lower status of the bride's family and that the two families were strangers. *Lassi* (a mixture of curd and water) or tea might be served to the assembled male guests.

The engagement ceremony was often held in an open area, such as a courtyard which was part of the domicile, either of the family of the boy or of a member of the boy's lineage. In the case of the Jat caste, the party was convened in or near the men's sitting room, often part of the cattle shed, sometimes the most prestigious and newest building. When the men assembled they sat on cots according to caste, age, and prestige so that one group of cots might hold all Brahmans, and another group, Jats. If the male members of the Lohar family came, they would either sit on a cot by themselves, or if only one person came, he might sit with men from castes of relatively equal ranking. The older caste members preferred to sit together with the most prestigious and usually the most senior aligned in prestige order on one cot, and the younger men together on another. The representatives of the girl's family, usually numbering from two to four persons at the most, sat on a seperate cot, or if there was only one person, sometimes on a chair.

When females attended the engagement party, they spread a large cloth on the ground and sat cross-legged on it. While the various ceremonies proceeded and the men talked and smoked the hookah, the women occasionally sang, depending on what was going on. The following roundelay was sung specifically at an engagement party:

From whence comes the coconut and the *tikka* for my handsome groom?
From Rampur, the village of the bride, comes the *tikka*.
From the garden there, comes the coconut.
I will place the coconut on the lap of the handsome groom,
And the *tikka* on the forehead of the handsome groom.
Oh, the groom's wife's sister has big eyes and is very clever.

Three refrains are repeated in this roundelay, the *tikka* or tilak mark, a blessing; the coconut, a symbol of fertility; and the handsomeness of the groom. The last line identifies and characterizes a relative of the bride. The round was repeated several times with the last line naming a different relative each time. The only symbols of the engagement stressed in this song are the tilak mark and the coconut. Lewis (1958, p. 169) reported a similar but longer song from another village in the Union Territory of Delhi. Depending on which village the bride came from, the singers inserted the name of the village. Thus, the villagers were informed of the community of the bride.

ACCEPTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT BY GROOM

After everyone was seated, the eldest representative of the bride's family brought out a coconut, red thread, money, and various foodstuffs, which the Barber arranged on trays. One tray contained wheat flour, turmeric, and rice and was positioned in front of the bride's representative. Another tray was laden with mangoes, bananas, oranges, litchi nuts, jujube (ber), and an assortment of other nuts and dried fruits. A third tray held sweets. All these foods were later distributed to those witnessing the engagement. Sweets, grain, and fruit symbolize sexual pleasure and fertility (Freud, 1962, pp. 163, 165, 172). A ceremonial bench was centered opposite the bride's representative.

The groom then entered, dressed in a new shirt and trousers with a pink or yellow scarf tucked into the shirt. Pale yellow, pink, and green were considered auspicious for marriages. The groom seated himself cross-legged on the bench facing the representative from the girl's side. The girl's relative then asked the assemblage if he might proceed, to which they acquiesced. He dipped his fingers into a mixture of water and turmeric, then into rice, and dabbed a tilak on the prospective groom's forehead, thus indicating that the engagement rituals were religious, and signifiying that a bond existed between him and the boy on this solemn occasion. Then he covered the boy's head with a cloth and presented him with the coconut, sweets, and a rupee and tied a red thread on his right wrist, after which he touched the boy's shoulders with his hands, as a blessing. The

boy said, "*Namaste,*" to him, a form of thanks, acceptance, and returned blessing.

The religious part of the engagement having been completed, the bride's relative then presented the boy with the first installment of the dowry, the total sum of which had been agreed upon in the pre-engagement negotiations. This money was either placed on a tray in front of the groom or more usually was stuffed into his shirt or shirt pocket. The total amount always ended in the digit one. In Jat and Brahman families, this first installment might be 101 rupees. However, in poor families and in other castes, the sum might be as little as Rs. 21. The payment not only constituted the first installment of the dowry but confirmed the marriage contract. The balance of the monetary part of the dowry would generally be paid in two more installments: one at the time of the wedding, and the other at the time that the bride went to her husband for consummation of the marriage, usually the second visit of the bride to her conjugal affines, called *Gauna*. Tandon (1968, p. 271) indicated that the practice of paying this sum at an engagement had long been considered earnest money in the Punjab to confirm a marriage proposal.

When the groom accepted the money, he also accepted the engagement and entered into the marriage contract. There was no ceremony of acceptance by the girl because a girl was not a free agent and could not contract. Until the wedding, she belonged to her natal family and her father or father-surrogate legally acted for her. Her father-in-law and later her husband, as he grew older and became the head of the family, would act for her after marriage. The engagement party marked the first step in the transfer of the girl as a property from her natal family to her family of marriage (Maine, 1963, pp. 147–149).

The coconut, rice, and sweets were symbols of fertility and good fortune associated with Ganesh, a deity symbolized in wedding ceremonies. The foodstuffs on the trays served a number of purposes. First, they represented the purest kinds of foodstuffs: grain, fruit, and nuts. Second, they were uncooked except for the sweets and so could be eaten by everyone present. The sweets too, could be offered to anyone because they were obtained from confectioners. Sweets were distributed by villagers as *prasad,* an offering at occasions of good fortune. A family that did so attained merit and thus more good fortune. In addition, the distribution of *prasad* was a demonstration of community solidarity from the people who accepted it. They shared in the good fortune and hoped to increase it for everyone. The acceptance of *prasad* from the bride's representative forged another link in the bonds of relationship between two families created by a marriage.

SOLICITING FEES

Males who witnessed the engagement were regarded as a legal panchayat (council) and were paid a fee. In one Brahman engagement the groom's mother's brother dominated the engagement proceedings and announced that, as was the custom, there would be a *Mangni* (begging for or soliciting fees) immediately after the acceptance of the marriage contract by the groom. During the session, the grandfather of the bride paid one rupee apiece to all the heads of families in the groom's lineage and to the heads of families from any other castes who were present at the engagement. When one man started to leave before receiving his fee, the rest of the panchayat jokingly told him to remain and receive his rupee. Everyone laughed at this. The joking, some of a ribald nature, which accompanied the soliciting and payment of fees indicated that the witnesses should be reluctant to be paid for this service; yet at the same time if they were not paid, the oversight would be an insult. The payment of fees to witnesses forged another link in the marriage contract. The joking which took place between the males from Shanti Nagar and the representative of the bride manifested itself partially due to uneasiness in bridging the gap between two strange families and two different communities, but it also helped "break the ice" in the effort to establish friendly relations.

Among the Jats the payment of no more

than 1 rupee to each witness was taken quite seriously. At one engagement, the most prominent man in the strongest Jat lineage made the people from the girl's family adhere to the rule that only a single rupee be paid to each head of a household. When a male from the girl's side wanted to pay more, this elderly Jat stated that paying 1 rupee at engagement was the rule in the village and to give more would cause difficulties. Once, after all the payments had been made by the girl's side, the father of the girl tried to give this elderly Jat 2 rupees. He and everyone else laughed when he refused the rupees. From the conversation, it was apparent that not all villages had the 1-rupee rule.

Not only were differences between villages reflected in the way in which the payments were made at different engagement ceremonies but also traits about the people and families who received the fees. For example, in one case where a joint family had recently divided into three families, the family head who was present at the engagement party wanted at first to take only 1 rupee. When it was pointed out that he now represented three households, he took 3 rupees. It bothered him that his family had split, but not to the extent of rejecting the additional money when it was pressed on him. Some months later at another engagement he went through the same procedure, as a matter of pride. After a year or two of separation, he would abandon this behavior and become resigned to the separation.

There were various payments at *Sagai*s. A Brahman's engagement provided some examples. Seven rupees were paid to the father of the groom to send to his caste brotherhood residing in another village because they regularly sent him money when he had to pay for engagements of daughters. In this same family was an old man, a father's father's sister's son of the prospective groom. The following rule applied in his case. Sons of women born in a village and therefore related as "sisters' sons" to the people of that village, who were visiting their mother's natal village or who lived there permanently rather than in the village of their fathers as was customary, received 1 rupee apiece if they were castemates of the bridegroom. In this case, the woman, deceased, had been married into the village from which the prospective bride was to come, but she had been born in Shanti Nagar. Her son, an old man, had no one to take care of him other than the family of his mother so he resided in Shanti Nagar. The payment of 1 rupee to him was a payment to a sister's son. In addition, the head of the family of the prospective groom requested that an additional rupee be paid to this sister's son because the man had formerly had a highly respected government position and was the oldest man of the family. The representative of the bride demurred at this double payment to the old man and finally became quite cross about it.

The atmosphere of this fee soliciting session differed somewhat from other engagements because the representative for the girl's side (the bride's father's brother's son), young and somewhat arrogant, did not understand the role he played as a prospective affine. He had assumed this role because his father was quite old and because he was already known to the family of the groom, into which his own sister was already married. Had he understood his role, he would not have quibbled over paying the extra rupee to the old man. All the elders sitting on the engagement council recognized that his lack of knowledge was due to youth and inexperience and jokingly maneuvered him into the proper behavior expected from him as a representative of the prospective bride. In the end, he paid the correct amounts.

One rupee apiece was regularly contributed for the two village meeting houses (Brahman and Jat) and to the village council; the money was deposited with the Baniya who handled the village funds. Money might be collected for various associations such as a local school.

At a Brahman engagement after all the male witnesses had been paid, the bride's representative asked how many women were in the family of the groom and wanted to know how much to give them. In this case, there were four adult women so he gave 8 rupees, 2 apiece; but the bridegroom's mother's brother said that it was the custom to

give only 1 rupee apiece so the extra 4 were returned, much to the women's disappointment. The bride's representative also paid 1 rupee to the boy's father, to the Nai Barber serving the boy's family, and to his own Nai. Acceptance of all of these fees indicated that the participants in the ceremony were well informed that there was a binding agreement and that a marriage would take place. These rituals affirmed the engagement as the first step in establishing permanent relations between the families and lineages of the girl and boy as well as ties between the two villages and reaffirmed them if they had already existed due to previous marriage ties.

After the distribution of the rupees, a mother's mother's brother took some rice in his hand, chanted a Sanskrit couplet to the effect that the wedding should take place without disturbance and be auspicious, and threw the rice over the heads of the assembled party.

When the payments had been made, the hookahs were filled and smoked, the sweets and fruit distributed, and the women sang while the panchayat gradually disbanded. From the time of this engagement ceremony, the girl's parents sent gifts to the boy and his family. For example, immediately following the engagement in one Brahman family, the bride's parents sent the following to the groom's family: cloth for suits for two daughters, a headcloth and skirt for the mother of the groom and for the groom's father's mother, a sheet for the groom, seven seers of sweets, and Rs. 21. The father of the boy planned to send return gifts to the girl and her family at *Lagan,* a ceremony at which the marriage date was announced. Only Brahman families sent the girl gifts at *Lagan.*

When a man's children were quite young, he may not have yet fully entered into this marriage-gift cycle. For example, one Chamar said that none of his sons or daughters had been married, but that he had a son 14 years of age who had been engaged for seven years. At the time of the engagement, the father of the girl gave him Rs. 51, two turbans, and two to four rupees for the kinfolk in his family and lineage. Thereafter whenever he met the father of the girl or one of her brothers they gave him a rupee.

IMPLICATIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

An engagement was a serious matter. After an engagement was formally entered into by the parents of the boy and girl, the male relatives of the girl could not take water, food, or hookah in the village of the boy. The one exception to this rule was a brother of the bride. He acted as intermediary between his and the groom's family and escorted his sister back and forth between her villages of marriage and birth whenever necessary. Although the brother smoked the hookah in the husband's village, he received food and water only from his sister's hands. The rule against other relatives of the bride taking food, water, and hookah in her husband's village was indicative of the lower status of her family. The brother of the bride was not included in the rule because he acted as intermediary between the two families of marriage and would be the future giver of gifts to the girl, her children, and her conjugal affines at festivals and life cycle events.

Engagements were generally not broken, but there was evidence that in urban families this sometimes occurred. Once the elder Baniya Merchant was seriously disturbed when a broken engagement took place in his kin group. A man traveled overnight by bus from Meerut, a city in Uttar Pradesh, to seek his advice about the broken engagement. This man's wife's brother's daughter had been engaged to the sister's daughter's son of this Baniya. The boy had previously broken two engagements and then did so again. The Baniya asserted that the boy's action was an insult to the girl's family because a ceremony had been gone through at the time of the engagement at which a tilak was placed on his forehead, signifying a sacred kinship bond. After that act one could not break the engagement.

The Baniya was so upset by the broken engagement that he fell into deep thought and became chilled from sitting still. He sent his younger brother to apply pressure so the boy would continue the engagement. The elder Baniya commented that both families were fairly modern and had allowed the boy's father's younger brother and a few other people to view the girl before the engage-

ment. All of them had approved of the girl. Both the boy and girl lived in Meerut where customs were urban and changing more rapidly than in Shanti Nagar. However, the kinfolk in the village were still called upon to reinforce the engagement contract. Lewis (1958, pp. 167–168) indicated the seriousness of the engagement in this region. It was a legal contract because the parties to the agreement were strangers, but it invoked supernatural power by the use of the tilak on the forehead, thus creating a moral bond of a social and religious nature between the two families which devolved upon the groom in particular.

Wedding Letters

The parents of the bride set the wedding date, usually when the bride was about 14 years of age and they had sufficient funds set aside for the wedding. Most marriages were planned for two to three years from the time of engagement to allow sufficient time to accumulate money for the wedding. Occasionally a man might try to set his daughter's wedding date at the time of engagement, but the father of the groom rarely allowed such an arrangement.

When the girl's family was ready for the girl to be married, they sent successive wedding letters to the groom's father. The first of these letters, called the letter of marriage, was sent from one to three months before the wedding date. The family of the groom usually expected the letter because both families kept in touch with each other during the engagement period and previously had agreed on an approximate date for the wedding. The second letter was called *Lagan* because of a prenuptial ceremony fixed by this letter which was called *Lagan*.

LETTER OF MARRIAGE

Professional Brahman Priests wrote the letter of marriage in Sanskrit for all the high castes; for the Chuhras and Chamars, literate members of either their own caste or of a somewhat higher or related caste wrote it. The letter contained the date and hour for the wedding. The time was based on the horoscope of the groom, the month in which the bride was born, if remembered, and the conjunction of their signs with days of the week considered to be favorable for weddings. When the parents of the girl consulted their priest for the setting of the date, they also indicated the month or months in the year which would be most convenient for them to hold the wedding.

In addition, the letter of marriage included the names and *gotras* of the bride and groom. If two brothers were to be married to two sisters at the same time, then the names of all four were listed in the letter. This letter was a legal and social contract, for it was signed by five respected elderly males who were members of the bride's village. In signing it, they attested to its contents and to the good character of the girl. The Nai Barber, who served the girl's family, or in the case of the Chuhra and Chamar castes, a member of the kin group, delivered the letter of marriage to the groom's father in his village. For this service the Nai Barber was paid Rs. 1.25, fed by the boy's family, and housed by Nai Barbers in the boy's village if he stayed the night. The professional priest serving the groom's family then reviewed the information in the letter with the men of the groom's family and immediate lineage. If they agreed to the contents of the letter, then five respected elderly males signed it. Then the Nai serving the groom's family returned the letter to the girl's village and was paid Rs. 1.25 and fed by the girl's family. The return of the letter indicated that the wedding arrangements were agreeable to both families to the marriage, and preparations for the wedding immediately began. These preparations included making clothes, compiling the lists of people to be invited and of items to be borrowed, rented, and purchased such as cots for guests, jewelry for the bride, food for the wedding feasts, and arranging for professional cooks and others who assisted at the wedding.

LAGAN

The letter of *Lagan* was referred to as the letter of reminder of the date of marriage. The professional priest employed by the

girl's family drew up this letter also. The Nai Barber took it to the boy's family from 11 to 21 days before the wedding date. The *Lagan* ceremony was performed in the boy's village shortly after receipt of the letter. Only Brahmans performed a *Lagan* ceremony for a bride, but this custom was rare and said to be going out of date. The letter of *Lagan* not only reminded the boy's family of the time of the wedding, but it also set the number of oil baths the bride and groom were to take before the wedding. Like the wedding date, the number of baths was based on astrological signs so the letter of *Lagan* contained the relevant astrological chart for both the date and the baths. The letter of *Lagan* itself was a printed form obtained in an urban market place which was filled in by the priest for the bride's family. In the completed letter, he placed a betel nut, two paise, and some pieces of turmeric, all of which were for good fortune. On the outside of the letter which was folded into a square packet and was tied with red thread, the priest drew swastikas with turmeric.

For the *Lagan* ceremony, male members of the groom's patrilineage, one from each household, were expected to attend as was also the case at *Sagai.* Men who worked in the city or had some pressing task might send a young son to represent them, but usually the lineage representatives were at least of middle years. Brahman women from the same family and immediate lineage might attend a Brahman's *Lagan,* but not in other castes.

Although all castes held a *Lagan,* the Brahman caste had the greatest amount of ritual; but in each instance of a *Lagan* the ritual depended on whether the professional priest was an Arya Samaj or a Sanatan Dharma Brahman, or whether he was acting as a priest for the low castes and had no Sanskritic background.

When a professional Brahman Priest of Sanatan Dharma persuasion officiated in a Brahman *Lagan,* he drew two squares, one to symbolize the nine *grahas* and one to contain the fire. Occasionally a Jat father held his own *Lagan,* but since most of them were unfamiliar with the ritual and a fair number of them could not read, they preferred the services of a professional priest.

While the guests gathered for a Brahman *Lagan,* the women of the house sat cross-legged on the ground singing. When all was ready, the groom entered and seated himself on a wooden ceremonial bench facing the priest across the two squares. The priest placed a cloth on top of the boy's head and tied a red thread around his right wrist which was to be worn throughout the ritual baths and the many marriage ceremonies. He fixed a tilak on the boy's forehead, placed rice in the boy's cupped right hand, took some himself, and the two together threw rice into the fire as offerings to all the gods, but in particular to Agni, the god of fire. At the same time, the priest chanted seven mantras.

The boy's Nai circled the groom's head with a rupee and then placed it in the groom's hand. (In one case the boy's father's mother performed this ritual.) Next the Nai placed a coconut tied around with a cloth and the *Lagan* letter in the groom's lap. When the priest and boy concluded the fire ceremony, the chanting of mantras, and the offering of the gods, the priest then read the letter to the assemblage, informing them of the date of marriage again and the number of baths to be taken by the bride and groom. He wrapped the betel, coins, and turmeric in the letter, placed it on a metal plate, and handed it to the Nai, who in turn passed it to the Nai of the bride who returned it to her village.

Afterward sweets and fruit were distributed to the assembled guests by the elder Baniya merchant, who was paid 1 rupee for the service. For relatives and close friends of the groom's family, there was a small feast.

No Nai Barbers officiated for the Kumhar, Chamar, or Chuhra castes, or for poorer families of the high castes. In such cases, members of the family, lineage or an invited respected elder organized and carried out the rituals. The Chamars called their priests from a nearby village; the Chuhras summoned theirs from the City of Delhi; and the Kumhars employed an old professional Brahman Priest from the village who had al-

ways served them. He was so old that one of the young males in the large extended family with which he lived carried out most of the ritual even though the old man presided. This family tended to serve the poorer high-caste families, the Lohar Blacksmiths, the Mali Gardeners, and the Nai Barbers; other Brahmans of the village served the Bairagi Beggars, Jhinvar Watermen, and sometimes the Lohar Blacksmith. In the case of all but the Jats and Brahmans, the number of mantras recited and the amount of ritual tended to be reduced. In a *Lagan* for a Bairagi boy, the Brahman who officiated as a priest was unable to read the Sanskrit and asked a Brahman high school teacher to help him translate the letter of *Lagan*.

The *Lagan* for a Brahman girl was similar to the ceremony for a groom except that it was held in the morning, whereas the boy's was held in the afternoon or evening. For a girl's *Lagan,* the groom's family sent clothing, sweets, and jewelry (a sexual symbol), depending on the status of the family. It was at this time that *God* (a dried coconut wrapped with 1 rupee in a red cloth) and *Rang* (a tin box containing cosmetics and red threads for the bride's hair) to be used in a ceremony called *Sirgundi* (thread-winding) were sent by the father of the groom to the bride. In addition to the red thread, *Rang* contained a comb, a mirror, henna for staining the palms and a part in the hair, vermilion for a beauty mark on the forehead, and oil for the hair. All of these items marked the change from unmarried to married status because an unmarried girl was not supposed to use them, but a married woman was, even though after the wedding days married women seldom so adorned themselves because they had little time from their work. In or along with this box, the groom's father sent sweets and dried fruit as well as the coconut. The use of *Rang,* the metal box and its contents, occurred at the first and last oil bath of the bride just before her departure for the groom's village, and also in the groom's village.

The presentation of *God* to the bride took place, along with *Rang,* at the *Lagan* of a Brahman girl, but there were two fertility ceremonies connected with the coconut at the time of *Bida* (departure of the bride and groom after the wedding), and when the bride first visited the groom's village. At *Lagan,* as well as in the later rituals with *God,* the coconut was placed in the bride's lap as a ritual of imitative magic, suggesting that she would be pregnant, bear children, and then hold them in her lap. Sometimes only half a coconut was sent along with 2 to 4 paise because traditionally, about 30 or more years previously, the Nai Barber women who served a family accompanied the bride to her conjugal affines on the occasion of her first visit, for which she received half a coconut as payment.

In addition to *God* and *Rang,* the father of a Brahman groom sent a ring and new glass bangles to be worn by the bride. He might also send a necklace. These items, *God, Rang,* and jewelry, might be carried to the bride's village by a male member of the groom's lineage or by the groom's Nai Barber, but never by the groom.

The bride's family also sent gifts to the groom's family at the time of the boy's *Lagan.* These gifts were carefully inspected by the women in the household to assure them that the boy's wife came from a good family, one that was not stingy. Lewis (1958, p. 171) has commented on this inspection of gifts in Rampur. The following gifts were sent in a Brahman *Lagan* in Shanti Nagar:

A cotton suit for the groom (shirt and pants)
A *silwar* suit (long shirt and pants) for the boy's father's mother
A similar suit for the boy's mother but more resplendent since the father's mother was a widow
A pair of shoes for each of these women
10 seers of sweets (a double 5 representing union).

Among Chuhras, the bride's family sent a ring to the groom's family with the *Lagan* letter. The groom later took it to the girl's village for the wedding; then the new bride wore it to the boy's village.

The ceremony of *Lagan* marked the time when the bride and groom were set apart from the rest of their communities and began

a liminal period, one in which they took a series of ritual baths to establish their purity for marriage and for the samskara of the wedding. Incorporated in *Lagan* were protective and integrative rituals as well as fertility and sexual symbols. The integrative rituals bridged the boundaries between the families in the marriage. For example, the relationships were sweetened by gifts and food even though *Lagan* was essentially a ceremony of separation for both the bride and groom.

Oil Baths

A series of daily ritual oil baths (*Bans*) were taken by both the boy and the girl of all castes in their natal villages prior to the wedding. Although the number of oil baths taken by the bride and groom were said to vary from five to 11 and to be based on the sign of the zodiac (*rashi*) that established an auspicious date for the wedding, in all the cases that we recorded the boy took them for seven days, and the girl for five. Seven and five were auspicious numbers for marriages. When a *Lagan* for a groom was performed on the eleventh day before the wedding, he waited four days before starting his series of baths and then took them for seven days, the last bath taking place before his departure with the bridal party for the girl's village. The same calculation applied to the girl's baths except that she took them for five days; and her last bath was immediately prior to dressing for the wedding. In the case of remarriage of a widowed young man of the Chuhra caste, he, too, took the oil baths for seven days.

For seven to nine days prior to marriage both bride and groom were not allowed to work. They stayed in the shade and were fed special food. If the boy or girl was in school or the boy had a job, they took leave for the time necessary for the wedding. Both parties to the marriage during the liminal period usually wore old clothes which became quite dirty and oily from the baths. Some families, however, did not follow this practice, for it was not taken too seriously. It derived from the belief that when one looked beautiful or handsome or was dressed in fine clothes, he or she might be afflicted by the evil eye. The dirt and old clothes averted the evil eye. Although girls did not customarily dress well in their natal villages, during the period of the oil baths they wore their oldest and drabbest clothing. When they were finally clad in their bridal finery, there was quite a contrast.

These ceremonial baths were held in the house or courtyard of the family of the groom or bride, or in the house of a member of their lineage. If in the house of a lineage member, then afterward the girl or boy was feasted there. Friends of the family might give the groom or the bride a dry bath (*Ban Sukh*), which was no bath at all but rather the raw ingredients for a feast. In one case, the females of a Brahman lineage carried raw foodstuffs to a Jat family in another village, with whom they were on friendly terms for the marriage of a daughter in the family. They did not participate in the bathing ceremony, but instead sat around gossiping, eating, and enjoying the pre-marriage excitement. The poorer high-caste and the low-caste families might omit or limit these feasts.

For the prospective groom, the first oil bath was celebrated as a little drama and joking session between the groom and the females who bathed him. In one Brahman household, guests were invited from a number of castes. The women sat on the ground in the courtyard and sang pertinent songs. At a Sing the preceding evening to celebrate the marriage, the songs described the bride and groom, but in this session for the bath the songs were only about the ceremony. Lewis (1958, pp. 174–175) has recorded two songs sung at oil baths in Rampur, both of which were very similar to the two recorded at the similar ceremony in Shanti Nagar.

The groom was bathed ritually by seven married women of his lineage who were his real or classificatory sisters. They were assisted by the female Nai Barber who served the family. In all castes, seven sisters served as attendants, but in the Potter, Leatherworker, and Sweeper castes, a senior woman of the family or lineage acted in the capacity of the Nai Barber women. Although the sev-

en women were married, they were not supposed to be pregnant when acting as attendants. While bathing the groom, they wore red threads for worship tied around their wrists, similar to the threads tied around the groom's right wrist at *Lagan*. In the Chuhra caste, these threads were not tied on the bride and groom until the baths and then they were tied on both wrists and legs. Lewis (1958, pp. 172–173) reported that Ibbetson in 1883 described the threads for oil baths as made of black wool (no doubt for Krishna/Vishnu and before Arya Samaj influence). For Rampur as well as Uttar Pradesh, Lewis reported practices that differed somewhat from Shanti Nagar.

In Shanti Nagar the bridegroom came to the bathing ceremony wrapped in a voluminous white homespun cotton cloth. He seated himself cross-legged on a wicker box or bathing stool. Two pestles used for pounding grain stood ready for use. The hostess brought out a mortar in which were placed unground grain, some pieces of turmeric, and a few coins. Mortar and pestles had the ubiquitous red thread tied around them. The seven women attendants pretended to pound the grain and turmeric. Two women worked together at a time and all the attendants took turns. A woman placed her pestle first on one side of the mortar and then the other; then the second woman repeated the action. There was no real pounding, just make-believe, but the females alternated in this mime for some time. Then two attendants put their four hands together to scoop up a little bit of the material and place it in the groom's lap. When they finished, the groom dumped what was in his lap back in the container simply to be rid of it. This ceremonial pounding imitated the preparation of the cleansing substance (*ubatana*) used in oil baths in past times.

Next a dish of wheat flour was brought out from underneath the box on which the groom sat. This was taken inside the house where the flour was prepared and placed in a dish along with oil and turmeric. There were three additional dishes, one filled with henna powder and two with curd. The flour, oil, and turmeric formed *ubatana,* the oil paste with which the boy was to be bathed. An old man later said that, in olden times, *ubatana* contained a mixture of gram flour, turmeric, and mustard oil.

The groom shed his voluminous wrapper, under which he wore a striped pajama for modesty with the pants legs rolled up to the top of his thighs. He was somewhat embarrassed by the public bath although at the same time enjoying it. The serious task of bathing then began. The seven sisters one after the other each took two bunches of a fine soft grass, a bunch in each hand, dabbed them in both the henna and curd and applied them twice in seven places to the groom on each foot, knee, shoulder and then the forehead.

Next the Nai Barber woman rubbed the oil mixture all over the boy as though he were a small child, to his great embarrassment and discomfort. When the Barber woman finished bathing the groom ceremonially, he asked for soap and water to wash himself. This washing was not part of the ritual, but all the grooms bathed with soap and water after the oil bath. One young groom managed quite modestly to slip into a clean shirt; another simply washed with hot water brought by his mother and rinsed with cold water at the hand pump in the family courtyard.

The mother of the groom then dabbed tilaks on his forehead, cheeks, and chin. She outlined his eyes with kohl, as for an infant or child, symbolizing the last time he would be a child, a reminder of the period when small children were married, and as a protective ritual. Then she presented the boy with a tray containing wheat flour, seven small balls of dough, seven pieces of turmeric, a stone crisscrossed with red thread symbolizing Ganesh, pencil, paper, and cotton wicks. These items represented the status symbols of a householder, and the groom's future role after marriage: provisions for feeding his family, Ganesh for offspring and good fortune, the pencil and paper because the groom was a student and hoped eventually to have a clerical job or better, and the cotton wicks essential for studying and for *Arati,* the waving of light in worship

before a shrine or deity, which in the case of a Brahman householder should be performed nightly.

Next the mother's brother presented the groom with a silver rupee, after which the boy placed 10 paise in a small clay dish, covered it with a similar dish, and broke both by stepping on them to indicate, as our informants said, that he rather than his wife would be the boss (cf. Stevenson, 1971, p. 74). Additional interpretations were fertility from the clay dishes, double five representing union, and the crushing together of the two clay dishes to form one, a repetition of the symbolic union of man and wife.

The groom's mother's brother then carried him into the house (no easy task) and placed him before the image of the goddess Savitri, sketched on the wall (fig. 10). Different Brahman families indicated that this image was either Savitri or Saraswati and that both were the goddess of knowledge and speech, traits which were linked. Since the solar hymn (Gayatri) is called Gayatri in the morning, Savitri at midday, and Saraswati at sunset, and since Daniélou (1964, pp. 35, 236, 238, 261) indicated that Savitri and Saraswati are linked with knowledge and speech, the thought-forms are similar but the difference in names depended on the time of day that the bath was celebrated. This bath was concluded about midday.

On entering the house, the groom dipped his palms in henna mixed with water and pressed them against the wall within the framework of a drawing representing the goddess Savitri which had been prepared by a senior woman of his family. His mother performed *Arati,* the ceremony of worshiping a shrine or deity by rotating a light before it, for the goddess. Then the groom worshiped Savitri.

Geometrical images of goddesses were drawn on the inside and outside walls of households by senior women in a family or lineage on the occasion of rites of passage and festivals. These art forms have been reported for the Punjab and the Delhi region by Mago (1963, 1967) and by Bonnerjea (1933) for other parts of India.

The foregoing description of an oil bath was characteristic of the ritual of the oil baths as practiced by Brahmans who were followers of Sanatan Dharma. Followers of the Arya Samaj did not worship the goddess nor did they perform *Arati* to any deity at this time. Members of other castes did not perform *Arati,* but they drew the goddess. The bride or groom pressed their palms against the wall, and then folded their hands in front of the goddess.

The oil baths for the bride similarly had seven sisters as attendants as well as the Nai Barber woman who served her family. If the family could not afford the Barber woman or was a member of the two lowest castes, then a senior woman in the bride's family organized the baths. There were no males other than small boys present; the rituals were less public because of the emphasis in Shanti Nagar on greater modesty for females than for males. Various families in the girl's lineage might feast her after each bath, providing they could afford it.

For the Brahman bride, the presentation of the metal box with cosmetics and red threads provided the materials for the rituals of dressing her hair, winding red threads in it, making up her face, and applying henna to the part of her hair and the palms of her hands. Songs were sung during the first and last bath, both of which always received the most emphasis and which female guests attended.

Stevenson (1971, p. 94) commented that "amongst many Brahmans the hair is never parted till a girl's wedding day. At the commencement of the ceremonies some 'fortunate' woman usually makes an auspicious mark on the bride's forehead at the beginning of the parting." She quotes the groom as saying toward the end of the ceremony, "Oh, Lady of the sweetly divided hair, I know the tenderness and the moonlike purity of your heart. May that heart know my heart." In Shanti Nagar, the auspicious mark of vermilion on the bride's forehead, the parting of her hair, and marking the part with henna, begun at the oil baths, were repeated at *Bida* and were reiterated in a post-nuptial ceremony for the bride at the groom's house. The *Sirgundi* (thread winding) ceremony estab-

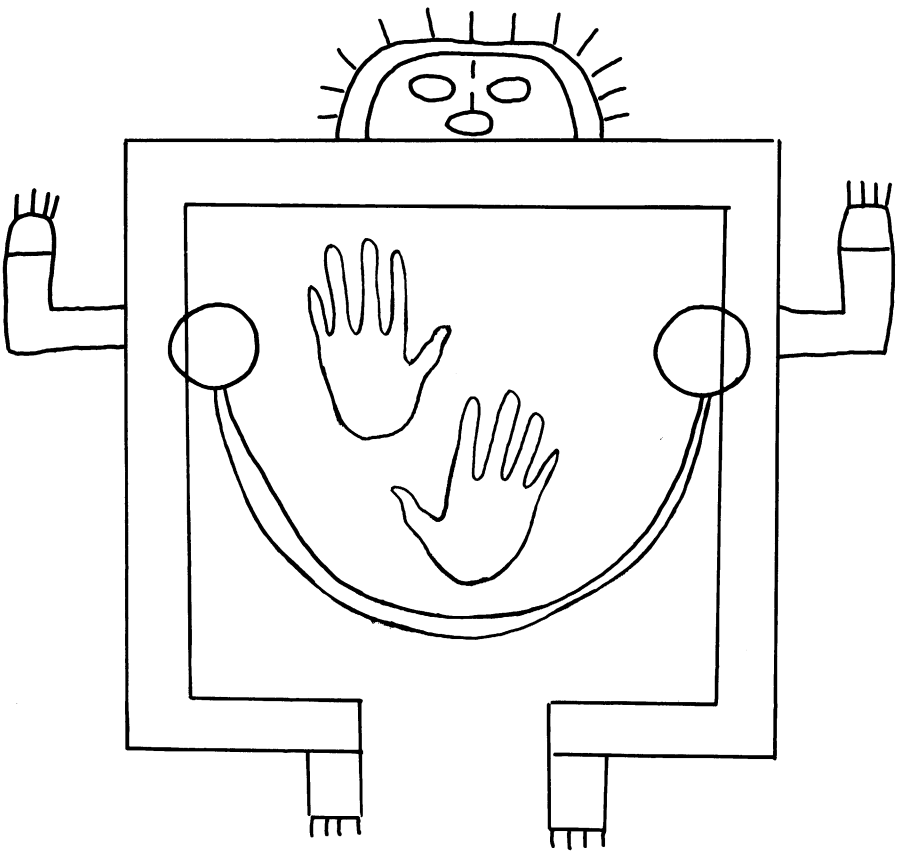

FIG. 10. Savitri, Goddess of Knowledge. The twelve lines on the head of the goddess are symbolic of the solar hymn; the four digits on each hand and foot symbolize Vishnu. The circles with cord attached are the necklace of the goddess. The body of the goddess is in effect a square (*chauk*, yantra, *mandala*) and has an opening characteristic of mandalas.

lished the twice-born status of Brahman females at the time of marriage.

With the celebration of the first oil bath, the bride and groom passed into a totally liminal phase which began with *Lagan*. The end of this transition with the last post-nuptial ritual would mark the groom's change from a child to a young married householder and the bride's passage from a child in her natal family and village to a young wife in her husband's family and village. The oil baths, therefore, signified a sacred and dangerous state for the young couple, purification, segregation, and incorporation, and included many symbols of auspiciousness, protection from danger, fertility, and union.

Changing clothes denotes separation, incorporation, and purification; wearing dirty clothes, protection against evil. Washing, being washed, or bathing rituals separate, incorporate, purify and protect. Singing (making noise) is protective as are tilaks, which are auspicious. Joking, teasing, breaking of clay dishes, covering with a large mantle, and not working are separative. Rituals of incorporation are covering with a large cloth or mantle, feasting or eating together, transforming an individual from a child into a man

or woman, the threads which tie the rituals and rites of passage together (in this case red threads), and the repetition of any ritual or of numbers, such as seven, throughout the bath. Other auspicious and protective symbols are the deity Ganesh, the numbers five and seven, the kohl drawn around the eyes, the grass used to dab on the henna and curd, and the bathing substance (*ubatana*); the latter two are also considered purifying. Symbols which indicate fertility and sexual union are the mortar and pestle (mortar, female; pestle, male), Ganesh, the water used in bathing, and the oil, flour, and turmeric in *ubatana*. The worship of the goddess at the end of the ritual indicates the pure state of both bride and groom after bathing, the solidarity of the household where the goddess is drawn and worshiped, and protection by the goddess. The hand marks, *thapa*s, are a very ancient magical device considered to be auspicious and magically protective; they also signify the new status of the bride and groom who make them.

Song Sessions for Marriage

Song sessions took place at *Sagai, Lagan,* and during the period of the oil baths prior to the wedding. Held in both the boy's and girl's village, they were attended by female relatives of the bride and groom and females from various castes. Young children accompanied mothers. Both salacious and abusive songs (*sithani*s) were sung. The abusive songs insulted the bride, groom, and their relatives.

The following six-part song, entitled "Chandrama and Surajmal," was especially popular at song sessions. The first part of this long song identifies the heroine as the Moon, Chandrama, and the hero as the Sun, Surajmal. Hindu mythology depicts a long period during which the deities, the universe, and human beings evolve. One of the earliest mythological events, from which the earth and human beings evolve, is the union of the Sun and the Moon (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 94–101). Although this song is allegorical in that it uses mythological figures, the Sun and the Moon, it is also modern because of its timeless theme of creation. Each of the six parts of the song can stand by itself, but informants stated that they belonged together. Because of this statement, they have been analyzed as a unit.

The song of Chandrama and Surajmal was obtained from one informant early in the period of fieldwork and from a second informant toward the end. Analysis of the song derives from the context in which it was sung, from questions asked the informants who went over the song more than once, and from the symbols contained within the songs. The titles for the five parts of the song following the first part are our own. The only title given in Shanti Nagar was "Chandrama and Surajmal."

The emotional tone of the song was mocking, as though the singers were saying, "Who knows what to believe?" The characters in the song, although often bearing the names of supernatural beings or personages depicted in the Puranas and Epics of India, were identified with the young singers, who had either recently married or were soon to marry, and their actual or potential husbands. The characters also represented the two sides involved in a marriage, the kinfolk of the bride and groom. The songs accused these relatives and the bride and groom of having been negligent in their duties and responsibilities, of having defects of character or physical disabilities, and of acting wrongly. It was believed that by singing abusive songs and describing the worst that might happen, misfortune could be averted and the marriage would turn out well. If one were to praise the individuals and families involved in a marriage, then misfortune would be apt to occur. The songs indicated various difficulties that might occur in the process of marrying and thereafter. The problems of arranging marriages, carrying out the rituals, and all the events leading to consummation were complex, so often numerous petty squabbles and conflicts arose between the relatives on both sides of a marriage. *Sithani*s, therefore, were not only intended to avert disaster but they also provided catharsis during the rite of marriage.

Since the Epics and Puranas endowed su-

pernatural beings with the passions and problems of villagers from which villagers learned dharma (ethical and proper behavior) and since these tales were told throughout the life cycle, the names and events surrounding these mythical characters were well known. The women who attended the song sessions projected the characteristics, attributes, and proper or improper behavior of these characters in these stories onto the members of their families and themselves as well. Therefore, the villagers believed that everything these mythical beings may have experienced could well have happened. However, the multitude of mythical characters and their often conflicting attributes and activities contributed to the attitude of derision regarding what might happen and what was to be believed or feared.

PART 1: CHANDRAMA AND SURAJMAL

There was a king, a moon, and a sun.
When the king came to eat his meals, the queen said,
My husband, Chandrama is growing up and you haven't given it any thought.
The king left without saying anything.

Chandrama then put the cooking pot on the fire.
Some college boys thought of playing a game.
Holding white flags in their hands, they went to the palace.
Surajmal was playing ball and the ball fell into the cooking pot.
Chandrama's hands were burnt; she shrieked and shrieked.
Hearing Chandrama screaming, all her friends came running.
Some friends were singing songs, some were abusing.
Some friends were massaging her hands; some were busy sifting flour.
When Chandrama's mother came out, they were ashamed.

Oh you, who live in the palace, look here!
We are college boys, Give back our ball.
The mother said, Get up Chandrama, throw out the ball.
Chandrama angrily threw the ball cursing,
Oh college students, be you ruined.
I am a king's daughter, I can put you in jail.
I can have you hanged; then you won't be alive.

Within the story depicted in this part of the song is a complex web of symbols. The overt story is one of a princess who is engaged to Surajmal. According to our informants, Chandrama represents the moon, and Surajmal the sun. The king, Chandrama's father, does not pay attention to her age and fails to see to her marriage, even when the queen prompts him. Therefore, Chandrama takes her fate into her own hands, goes into the courtyard (cooking was usually carried out in a courtyard in the village), and begins to cook. (Notice how the royalty in this song as well as in the tale of Jaswant Singh performed everyday tasks, indicative of the villagers' identification with them.) By cooking, Chandrama is preparing herself for the wifely role; the cooking symbolizes her marriage preparations.

In the meantime, Surajmal, a college boy, along with his friends, plans to play near the palace (the house and courtyard of Chandrama), hoping to catch sight of his fiancée. Some engaged males in Shanti Nagar said they had tried various schemes to catch a glimpse of their fiancées, which was considered incorrect behavior. Surajmal hoped that when he threw the ball into the courtyard, Chandrama would come out with it. However, the ball fell into the cooking pot, which according to informants was a bad omen. As a result, Chandrama not only was burnt but knew that her marriage would come to naught. The various actions of her female friends were camouflage for their guilty feelings, as shown by the queen mother scolding them. The thoughtless and careless college boys were only interested in themselves and not in the tragedy caused to Chandrama, as indicated by their calling for their ball. The mother told the girl to throw it to them, which she did while cursing them for ruining her life.

The covert, symbolic analysis identifies the Moon as standing for the female, watery principle, and the Sun for the breath of life and intellect, the masculine principle. One aspect of the Sun is fiery; and one aspect of the Moon is as a vessel for the offering of Soma, the food of the gods, also the ambrosia of immortality. The Sun in its fiery form

(Agni, the god of fire), feeds on Soma (the Moon) or on wood, representative of the female form. The Sun as Agni (Fire) is a masculine symbol and is the devourer of wood, which represents the female. Fire is also a form of Lust identified as the deity Kama. Lust's younger brother is Anger (Krodha) shown in Chandrama's anger. In a creation myth in the cosmology of Hinduism, Lust appears as born of a watery principle represented as the Moon, and a fiery principle or life breath, assimilated to the Sun. Applying these symbolic meanings to the song, we have a tale of lust on the part of Surajmal who tries to see Chandrama before they are married (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 48–49, 63–64, 92–94, 96–99).

The white flags carried by the college boys, Surajmal's companions, can be interpreted variously. They may represent the white bull (Nandi) of Shiva which appears on Shiva's banner. This bull is the embodiment of sexual impulse and is described as always looking for a mate. However, the white flags might also represent Vishnu's pennant which symbolizes the glory of the Sun and Moon. The college boys themselves represent the seven horses who draw the chariot of the Sun, a reflection of his energy and symbols within symbols, such as the auspicious number seven, going around the fire seven times at the time of the marriage ceremony, and the seven attendants of both bride and groom. Since the Sun in Vedic lore is the center of creation and all that exists is born from the Sun, Surajmal represents the creative principle, and Chandrama, the watery principle, birth. The Sun—the white color—also symbolizes enlightenment, which in this case is alluded to in the form of college boys who should be enlightened because of their education. However, there is a play on word-symbols, for though the boys may be educated, they are not enlightened. Otherwise, Surajmal would have been able to control his lust. This aspect of the song reveals some of its derisive quality.

Playing (indicative of coitus) with the ball (the Sun) results in the essense of Surajmal entering the cooking pot. The courtyard and domicile (palace and grounds) are symbols of a woman; and the cooking pot and stove are symbols of the vagina and womb. Thus, putting a ball into Chandrama's cooking pot implies sexual relations between her and Surajmal, and the possibility of pregnancy before marriage. The burnt hands (Fire-Sun-Burning) symbolize Chandrama's sexual relations (Moon with Sun) and loss of chastity. The miscellaneous activities of her girl friends are an attempt to hide their guilt in being party to the liaison between Chandrama and Surajmal.

Although the actions of Surajmal and Chandrama were the result of lust, they resulted in creation. However, these actions without marriage (enlightenment and control of desire) flaunted the social order. Chandrama's mother had no alternative but to tell her daughter to get rid of the ball, and she did in a twofold manner. She threw it away in anger (Krodha) and cursed the college students so that they too would be ruined (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 16, 92–93, 219, 222, 226, 238, 243–244, 312–313; Freud, 1962, pp. 161–172). Throwing the ball away might imply an abortion but more probably indicated breaking the engagement, a negation of creation.

The moral principles taught by the song are that a father should see that his daughter is married before her life can be ruined by young, lustful males, and that neither a young male nor female should give way to lust until they are married. Naming one's daughter after the Moon does not permit her to behave like the Moon, for its influence destroys unhappy lovers (Daniélou, 1964, p. 100).

The first part of this song includes subliminal references to gradually changing attitudes toward arranged marriages especially among young males who attended college or took advanced occupational training. They came in contact with urban males who had read about romantic love in the West and were interested in seeing their potential wives before marriage. In addition, young male informants said that when they were part of marriage parties, there often was interaction between them and the daughters of the villages in which the marriages occurred and that sometimes these flirtations led to

coitus. Thus, the song and its symbolism to some extent reflected current conditions.

The first part of this song also depicts the opposite sides of the marriage, that of the bride and that of the groom. In the end, the bride's side abuses the groom's side. The groom's side includes Surajmal and the college boys, who could well represent the groom's wedding party. By depicting the worst that could happen and by abusing the groom and his representatives, the singers ward off misfortune from the marriage, the aim of *sithani*s.

PART 2: SAVITRI AND SATYAVAN

Savitri's parents sent Brahmans and Nais.
Mother-in-law blind, father-in-law blind.
No long age for her husband.
Lagan was sent, marriage was fixed.
Husband will live for only one year.
After a year he died.
Satyavan was going, Savitri was following.
Satyavan climbed a tree, Savitri stood below.
Yam Duts came to fetch him on an elephant.
Yam Duts were gone, Savitri stood alone watching.
Savitri passed through the jungle crying,
Mother-in-law blind, Father-in-law blind.
She became as thin as a dry stick of wood,
She went after whom she married.
Leaving red clothes, she started wearing saffron clothes,
She went to God's house and brought back her husband.

The second part of the song refers to the well-known story of Savitri and Satyavan as recounted in Shanti Nagar and verified in Dowson (1950, p. 291). King Aswapati did not want to look for a husband for his only daughter, Savitri, so he told her to look for one herself. She met a man killing a lion, Satyavan, an exiled prince, and promised to marry him. Her father disapproved of the marriage because Satyavan's parents were blind and exiles from their kingdom. Savitri insisted on marrying Satyavan even though the seer, Manu, prophesied that Satyavan had only one year to live. When the time for Satyavan's death arrived, he went into the forest to cut wood; Savitri followed him. Satyavan climbed a tree, fell down, and died. Yama, the god of death and justice, appeared to Savitri in a vision and told her that he was taking Satyavan's spirit with him. Savitri followed him. As a result of her persistence in following him and asking for her husband's life, Yama offered her any boon except her husband's life. She asked that the vision of her mother-in-law and father-in-law be restored. He granted the boon, but she persisted in following Yama and beseeching him for her husband's life. He granted her another boon. This time she requested that the kingdom of her father-in-law be restored. This, too, was granted. But still Savitri did not give up so Yama, because of her devotion, said he would grant one more boon. This time she asked for 100 sons. Yama granted the boon, but as a twice-born widow of Satyavan, Savitri could not have children unless they were the children of her husband, so Yama had to restore Satyavan to life.

The analysis of the story indicates that parents are blind to their children's needs because they do not recognize the time when they should be married. Freud (1967, pp. 433–434, n 1) regards blindness as an index of two interrelated complexes, the castration and the Oedipal. Hindu mythology has similar symbolism, for vision represents the power of procreation (Daniélou, 1964, p. 324); therefore, blindness would indicate the opposite, castration. Further, the word for vision, *kashyapa,* is a transposed form of *pashyaka* (seer). Since both words imply vision, but of two kinds, both meanings are intended (Daniélou, 1964, p. 95, n 6).

Manu, the seer, although indicating to Savitri that Satyavan would die within a year, represents vision and the power of procreation, a contradiction to blindness and castration. As a seer, his prophecy is veiled or transposed. Manu, as well as his brother Yama, as progenitors of the human race, are symbolic of procreation even though Yama is Lord of the Dead, specifically of ancestors. Yama is justice and Manu is the lawgiver so they symbolize law and justice together. Both of them are symbols of procreation, for Yama, through his judgment of past actions, determines the rebirth of a soul and Manu, because he is a seer, contributes to

birth. Without *kashyapa* (vision), there can be no procreation (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 132–133, 324). Although the story of Savitri and Satyavan is usually cited as an example of how wifely devotion can supersede Dharma, justice, as represented by Yama, in fact the story results in the birth of sons to Savitri, the other aspect of the symbolism of Yama and Manu. The replication of the creative symbols vitiates the castration symbol of blindness. Since life leads to death and death to life in the round of rebirths, Yama as the Lord of Death decides on the next life of the individual (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 96, 132–134, 236).

Castration is indicated by numerous additional symbols. For example, when Savitri went in search of a husband, she encountered Satyavan killing a lion. Since the lion is a symbol of greed, which in turn symbolizes lust, greed for food is equivalent to being unable to control one's desire and lust. The Bhagavad Gita states, "Lust is a great eater," as is the lion representative of Shiva (Daniélou, 1964, p. 220); but since Satyavan killed the lion, he repressed his lust for Savitri. Freud (1967, p. 445) strengthens this interpretation by stating that a wild beast may represent a person possessed by passion.

Savitri persists in desiring Satyavan for a husband, marries him, and follows him to the forest where he climbs a tree, saws a branch, falls, and dies. These activities represent sexual desire and coitus interruptus, for the forest is symbolic of pubic hair; climbing a tree and sawing a branch, of coitus; cutting and falling, of termination of coitus (Freud, 1962, pp. 163–164, 169; 1967, p. 391). The fall of Satyavan also may be interpreted as pleasure derived from sexual activities, anxiety about sexual excitation, and the desire to perform the same activities again. The death of Satyavan may indicate his death or the interruption of sexual activity and the castration of both Savitri and Satyavan, resulting in frustration and anxiety on Savitri's part so that she may be ambivalent about Satyavan's life or death (Freud, 1967, pp. 281–293, 305–307, 428–431, 466–467, 500).

The next series of symbols relate to death. The Yam Duts, messengers of Yama, the Lord of Death, appear to take Satyavan. These messengers have been described as sickness and other causes of death; they are also depicted as dogs associated with the land of the dead. They bring the dead to Yama (Daniélou, 1964, p. 134; Dowson, 1950, p. 374).

The elephant brought to fetch Satyavan has numerous meanings; he guards the doors of heaven but also represents the stage when existence begins. In addition, he is the mount of kings and symbol of royal power or of the power of domination. The word *gaja*, elephant, means the origin and the goal (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 109, 283, 293). The elephant, therefore, can be inferred to mean that Savitri and Satyavan will attain their goal, which is for Savitri to have a husband for whom she bears sons. Royal power and the power of domination indicate the granting of one of Savitri's boons, that is, the restoration of the kingdom to Satyavan. However, it also means that Savitri will eventually defeat or overrule castration and death and bear children.

The myth of Ganesh, the elephant-headed deity, essential to the success of all marriages, is likewise symbolized by the elephant. The story about Ganesh's birth is that he was born while his father, Shiva, was absent; when Shiva returned home, he saw a young man at the doorway and not knowing he had a son became jealous and cut off his head (castration). Immediately, he learned that the young man was his son and clapped the head of an elephant on him. The trunk of the elephant head is a phallic symbol giving the lie to castration. But Ganesh had only one tusk, a double symbol of castration equivalent to being crippled as was Oedipus, and to having a tooth pulled (castration). The one tusk also represents oneness, or unity, which in real life cannot exist because existence implies relations or multiplicity with other living beings. These contradictions regarding the symbolism of Ganesh are bridged by the elephant head representing divinity and the body of Ganesh representing human beings. Since men cannot be divine, the joining of divinity with humanness provides a relationship or multiplicity. The oneness of

the tusk also indicates the beginning of existence so that Ganesh is worshiped at the beginning of every enterprise, particularly at birth, initiation, and marriage samskaras. With regard to the multiplicity of castration symbols, doubling or multiplying castration symbols negates castration, that is, implies the opposite (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 291–293; Freud, 1967, pp. 389, 392, 414).

Savitri went on a journey in search of a husband; then as husband and wife the two go into the forest. Satyavan travels to the land of death, and Savitri follows. Journeys symbolize death, but since there were a number of them, the outcome would be just the opposite. During Savitri's journey to beseech Yama for Satyavan's life, she became as thin as a dry stick, symbolizing wood which represents the female form, even though Savitri sublimated her femininity and was learning to control desire. She no longer wore red clothing, representative of her married state, but put on saffron clothing, indicative of her celibate state. Through all this devotion and holiness she restored the vision and kingdom of her parents-in-law and her husband's fertility. The phrase, 100 sons, can be equated to the restoration of fertility through the life of her husband (Dowson, 1950, p. 291; Freud, 1962, pp. 163–164, 169).

Throughout the story of Satyavan and Savitri, there is a play on words regarding sight or vision. Manu is a seer; he prophesied that Satyavan had one year to live. Kashyapa is Vision; the transposition of Kashyapa is *pashyaka* (seer). Kashyapa is essential for procreation and to ascend a throne, according to Hindu belief. Thus, the restoration of vision to Satyavan's parents is central to the story. Further, the name Manu refers to Manu, the brother of Yama, to the first Lawgiver, also named Manu, and to fourteen other Manus, who are symbolic of divisions of time as well as the basic syllables or thought-forms of Hinduism. In Hindu mythology, the first Manu creates the father of Vision (Kashyapa), which may be interpreted as the ability to prophesy or to judge. Kashyapa, in true Hindu fashion, then gave birth to Visavat (the Sun), who in turn gave birth to the Lawgiver and ancestor of man, Manu. Again, Yama is intertwined with Manu, for he too is the first ancestor. Therefore, the contradictions in the story regarding Manu's prophesy and Yama's refusal to grant Savitri the boon of her husband's life are resolved, first, by the doubling of the attitudes toward Satyavan's death; second, by both Manu and Yama symbolizing procreation; and finally by the pervasive theme of vision as being necessary for birth. Although Manu had prophesied Satyavan's death within one year, Yama allowed Savitri three boons, provided her wish was not for the life of her husband. Whether Yama's actions showed an attempt to make up for Satyavan's death or to test Savitri, the end result was the restoration of the fertility of both of them, symbolized by the number three, for the masculine principle. Manu/Yama joined into one symbol as progenitors of human beings and their laws allowed Savitri to bear sons. Although the conflict in the story is between procreation and castration, the end result is procreation, a highly desirable aim in Shanti Nagar, and certainly the aim of marriage rites (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 132–133, 236, 324, 326–327, 334).

Finally, for the singers who understood the meanings behind the terms Yama, Manu, Savitri, and Satyavan the end result was known. Not only is Manu, a seer, central to the plot, but his brother Yama, as Daniélou (1964, p. 132) noted "is . . . amenable to pity." Satyavan means the possessor of existence (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 36–37); it also means the possessor of truth, but truth is always veiled. Savitri was the daughter of Prajapati, the lord of progeny, a fertility symbol; she is also known as She-of-the-Hundred forms, is the solar hymn (Gayatri), and the Goddess of Speech. As the latter, she and her father created Manu, the progenitor of man, the same as Manu, the seer. Because Hindu myths recount numerous creations with names for deities appended to different familial roles as mother, daughter, father, son, brother, sister, etc., and because villagers believe not only in rebirth but in the possibility of their being reborn into the same family but sometimes in different roles vis-a-vis the members of a family, Savitri could be

the mother of Manu, and later the granddaughter. The names of mythological beings, such as Savitri, Satyavan, Chandrama, and Surajmal take on different attributes and provide stimulus for thought-forms whenever they occur, but mainly they are identified with creation. These symbols indicate the extraordinary range of symbols within the limits of a simple folk song, symbols that reiterate the same points numerous times (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 260–261).

PART 3: LAMENT OF A MODERN SITA

Last night I dreamed; hear me my friends.
I used to live with my husband, but he has left me alone.
What shall I tell you my friends.
I was a devoted wife and had a very good husband.
What shall I tell you my friends. He deceived me and went away.
My father-in-law wept bitterly; he sent three of us into the forest.
What shall I tell you, my friends.
Ravan, the sinner, had a chance and took Sita away in five minutes.
He disembarked Sita in Lanka straightaway.
What shall I tell you my friends.
Ram Chandra was very powerful; he took a big army with him.
Now he will fight in the battlefield.
Oh what shall I tell you.
When Ram flew back home from Lanka, there was a lot of festivity in every house.
Hanuman, too, was very powerful. We married sisters all praise him.
All fought very bravely.
What shall I tell you, my friends.

The lament of a married woman uses Ram Chandra, Sita, and Ravan of the Ramayana as a parable to illustrate her plight. When Ram, Sita, and Lakshman, Ram's brother, were banished to the forest, Sita was left alone and admonished not to step out of a magic circle which protected her. Ravan tempted her outside of the circle, lifted her into his flying chariot, and flew her to his kingdom in Lanka, the land of the Rakshasas (demons). There he tried to induce her to succumb to his charms. But fate, in the form of Ram (an incarnation of Vishnu placed on earth to kill Ravan so that he would be restored to the deities from whom he had fallen), defeated and killed Ravan. Ram as a deity was able to fly back from Lanka with Sita accompanied by his lieutenant Hanuman, the demigod, half-man half-monkey. Even though Sita's behavior was chaste and she had not been seduced or tempted by Ravan, still she had stepped outside the magic circle and been carried off by him. As a result, Sita was suspect and Ram was jealous, so he banished her although she proved her innocence through an ordeal by fire. When some fifteen years later, Ram and Sita's twin sons, having the mark of royal paternity about them, made themselves known to Ram, he recalled Sita and forgave her. But it was too late for forgiveness and Sita preferred to go back into the earth from which she sprang (Sita means furrow and the myth of her origin is that she sprang from the earth) (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 172–175; Dowson, 1950, pp. 256–261, 294–296). The reference to Sita is necessary to the song because she represents the ideal wife and mother and is the alter ego of the singer.

Although the lament of the married woman draws parallels to the story of Ram and Sita, the parallels allude to a similar ending but a different interpretation, for within the village of Shanti Nagar, many villagers believed, as did the people in Ram's kingdom, that it would have been impossible for Sita to have remained innocent. In the song the woman formerly had a good husband and was a devoted wife, but her husband deceived her and went away, probably into the army because of the reference to Ram's army and battle with Ravan in the Ramayana. The father-in-law wept bitterly. The tears-water-birth symbolism is negated by the word "bitterly," implying he had no grandchildren.

Being sent to the forest evokes concepts of celibacy, meditation, and learning to control one's senses; but while learning one meets many temptations. A forest, jungle, or thicket symbolizes pubic hair of both sexes (Freud, 1962, pp. 163–164), and the number three represents procreation as well as the masculine principle. Together the forest and the number three indicate temptation of the senses and sexual union. The lamenting

woman is tempted by a man who is called Ravan, a king (implying power), a demon, and a seducer. The two instances of flying (aerial car of Ravan, flight of Ram) indicate sexual excitement, the male sexual organs, and activities resulting therefrom. These activities are re-emphasized by the powers of the returning Ram and Hanuman, who possess the attributes of leaping and flying. In the case of the tempter, Ravan, the sexual implications in the song are re-emphasized by Ravan's taking Sita away in five minutes. Five minutes indicate the culmination of sexual excitation because in Hinduism the number five is equivalent to the five arrows of the god of love which reach the five senses, of the arrow itself (a universal male symbol), and of the vulva and male organ. Also, five refers to Shiva and his consort, Parvati, The Lady of the Mountain, a configuration similar to a triangle. Two joined triangles—one with the apex upward, male; the other, downward, female—when joined together in a six-pointed star (double three) represent union (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 210, 256, 260–261, 309, 314–315, 352, 353–354; Freud, 1962, pp. 162–164).

There are at least two interpretations of the song. One is that the lamenting woman was led astray in her husband's absence and believed that she would meet Sita's fate. Her husband would not believe her. The second interpretation, based on the multiplicity of symbols indicating sexual excitation and union and the return of Ram, his lieutenant, and his army imply the opposite. The woman was true to her husband regardless of what he may have done and despite her own sexual desires; but regardless of her chaste behavior, she would always be suspect, as was Sita in the Ramayana. The ambiguity about the possible outcome characterizes the male attitude toward a female that in neither case will she be believed.

PART 4: RETALIATION OF A MODERN SAVITRI

The fourth part of this song starts with a young married woman (identified below as 1) about to set forth in a bullock cart for her husband's parental home. Another young woman (identified below as 2) gives her advice. Then there is an exchange between the daughter-in-law (1) and the mother-in-law (identified as 3).

1: Sister, the cloth on my shoulder is red.
My headcloth is full of stars, it won't get torn in the bullock cart.

2: Sister, the driver of your bullock cart is an old man.
Your husband is not with you.
Sister, tell me the truth.

1: My mother-in-law is very quarrelsome. She is after money.
She has sent my husband to the war.

2: I will tell you some tricks.
Don't touch the widow's feet.
You should call a spade a spade.

1: Oh, my mother-in-law, send your own old man into the army.
Get your son's name off the list and back from the army.

3: Daughter-in-law! He flies airplanes. He is far away flying over many seas.
He flies the airplane high up in the sky.

1: The airplane will fall down; he will fall
Then my mother-in-law will be without a son.

This part of the song is a good example of a *sithani*. The abuse is mild but it is opposite to the customary forms of exemplary behavior. It provides a socially accepted means of catharsis between the two sides in a marriage. For example, the daughter-in-law is instructed to be disrespectful by not touching the widow's feet. "Calling a spade a spade," not only means that one should speak out frankly, which is not customary for a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law, but also links the expression with the term widow, a term of abuse as also is mother-in-law. The adviser goes further and names the mother-in-law as the equivalent of the Queen of Spades, a symbol of castration and bad action as well as death and misfortune. Widows, in fact, were considered unlucky as possible possessors of the evil eye. The nature of the mother-in-law is such that she has sent her own son to war, where he may be

killed because "She is after money." In Freudian symbolism money is equivalent to faeces (dirt) and in this context conveys the idea of a disordered world, one where the young man (the son) may die, and the old man (the father) will live (Douglas, 1970, p. 12; Freud, 1967, pp. 420, 439, 657; 1962, pp. 169, 171–172). The daughter-in-law threatens the mother-in-law with widowhood and expresses the wish that the situations of father and son be reversed. The journey in the bullock cart to the parents-in-law is symbolic of anxiety about the husband's potential death and should result in the opposite (his life) and in birth, for the wife and husband will be together.

The daughter-in-law wears red cloth and a headcloth symbolic of her having attained her menses and being ready for sexual intercourse. The headcloth also indicates an opposition, that is, she wears the cloth on her head but it symbolizes her genitals and readiness for mating. The bullock cart in which she travels to her husband's home represents herself (a cart is a vessel or container, symbolic of a woman and was in former times in Shanti Nagar the vehicle in which the bride was transported to her husband). Bullocks are castrated bulls, thus sexually harmless; they are a negative symbol of procreation, for the bull symbolizes virility and procreation. The master of the bullocks or the one who rides or drives them controls lust and is an old man, also symbolic of castration, indicated by his age and the statement that the headcloth with stars will not be torn in the bullock cart. Because of the triple castration symbols (old man and two bullocks) the wife will mate with her husband. The stars symbolize Tara, the wife of Brihaspati, who is the Master of Astronomy and Astrology, implying that the stars determining the fate of the young wife will protect her (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 93, 101, 108, 220, 274–277; Freud, 1967, pp. 80, 152, 391, 447–448).

This part of the song expresses what a wife should not do: abuse her mother-in-law by calling her one and also calling her a widow, treat her mother-in-law disrespectfully, say what she thinks, tempt fate by saying that her husband will die, and say that her mother-in-law is greedy for money. By breaking all the rules of social etiquette, the song brings about the opposite, that is, good fortune for the marriage and all the relatives. It is believed that this abuse will prolong the life of all the conjugal affines, including the husband. In effect, all of the oppositions to customary behavior because of their multiplicity cancel each other so that the young wife hopes to have a long and happy life with her husband and with her in-laws. By using words expressing the opposite of proper wifely behavior, the song is expected to aid in the achievement of a happy and prolific marriage (Freud, 1967, pp. 447–448).

PART 5: CHAMELI (WHITE FLOWER)

Daughter-in-law, your name is Chameli.
Whose beloved are you?
Daughter-in-law, you used to be very chaste.
Mother-in-law, I went to draw water.
In the garden, a British army was camped.
Oh Mother-in-law, your son was among them.
He had a rod in his hand; he was moving the rod quite fast.
Mother-in-law, his ship is sunk.
Many sons have died, but our lion has saved his life.
Mother-in-law, what will you ask about me?
He has taken away my everything.
The brightness of my face too.

The use of mildly abusive terms, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, indicates that the outcome will be good rather than bad. The girl's name, Chameli, represents a white flower (either a gardenia or a jasmine), a symbol of chastity, or just the opposite if the flower is tinged with pink or red. The double entendre follows from the statement, "You used to be very chaste." The next statement refers to birth, for Chameli went to draw water. In the village, water was drawn from a well, a mother goddess, and its walls are akin to the female birth passage. The garden represents sexual images and pleasure, especially since the British army was camped there and among its members was the son of the woman addressed as mother-in-law in the song.

In Hindu mythology the army is equivalent to the wife of Skanda, also known as Kart-

tikeya and Kumara, the Lord of War. The implication is that Skanda is forever young, single, and possesses the power of chastity. He is married to the army rather than a woman. The myth about his birth is that he was conceived from Shiva's seed without the participation of a female. In spite of the chastity of Skanda, the son in the song holds a rod in his hand and the rod moves quite fast. The rod symbolizes the penis, indicates sexual excitation, erection, and intercourse; the repetition of the word "rod" twice gives the lie to chastity or castration. The next line about the ship being sunk might indicate either that the ship carrying the son and the army was sunk, or that Chameli (a ship or vessel represents the female form) was ruined. "Many sons have died" represents anxiety about the son's dying or about sexual intercourse or both. "Our lion has saved his life," may refer to the son being called Singh (lion, a common second name for males in north India) and having been able to save himself; or it may refer to the lust of the son with Chameli so that she is pregnant. A rescue may indicate a birth. This last would seem to be the case since Chameli says, "He has taken away my everything. The brightness of my face too." The first sentence indicates he has taken her most valuable possession, her chastity; the second sentence indicates that this fate is reflected in her face. It could also mean that the shadows in her face reflect that she will bear a son, a belief in Shanti Nagar (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 298–300; Freud, 1967, pp. 382, 387, 389, 392, 409–412, 435–437, 439, 445; Morris, 1969, pp. 543, 701).

The birth and sexual symbols outnumber the chastity symbols, which could suggest that Chameli is pregnant and disgraced, but the multiplicity of these sets of symbols indicates that the opposite will be the case, i.e., that Chameli will marry, become pregnant, and everyone will be happy, an outcome consistent with the object of *sithani*s.

PART 6: ILLUSION AND DISILLUSION

An innocent boy is playing the flute very melodiously.
The sound of the flute has taken the life out of me.
Look women! How innocent he looks.
I stopped drawing water and stared at him.
His ear is bleeding and his hair is full of blood too.
But still he seems to be innocent.

The Brahman is walking gracefully along the road.
It is almost twelve years so, Oh Brahman,
Now you should decide.
The fields are cropless, Oh Brahman,
So you should put more earth on them.
It is almost twelve years, Oh Brahman,
Now you should decide.

His father died and people came to know.
They say things about his house without any reserve.
Oh girls, first see your husband and then arrange the marriage.
Banwari Lal of Majina is completely ruined.
Still marriage ceremonies take place amidst weeping and joy.

The sixth and final section of the song called Chandrama and Surajmal depicts a female who was in love with Banwari Lal of Majina. The marriage was arranged but postponed for twelve years. During this time the prospective husband's father died, his fields were cropless, and people thought poorly of him and his household. Old women cautioned the singer not to marry him since he was ruined, but her love was true so they were married amid tears and joy.

The first part of the song describes how the singer might be beguiled by the groom-to-be. In fact, a bride-to-be does not see her husband, but she has long heard stories about Ram Chandra and Krishna. Since grooms often bear these names, a young girl romantically associates the description of her future husband with the stories about these two rebirths of Vishnu. In this case, the association is with Krishna, for Krishna is well known for his flute playing when he charmed Radha and the other Gopis (milkmaids). In the song, the flute player bewitches the singer so that she cannot resist him. The sexual symbolism in this part of the song is multiple. A flute is an elongated, wind instrument thus representing the male organ;

and the instrument is played which indicates coitus. The flute is not only associated with Krishna, but also with fakirs, persons with magical powers who with their flutes can charm snakes and also young women. Although the term, innocent, is applied to the flute player, it occurs three times in the song and can be construed as just the opposite. Blood around the ears and hair might be interpreted in connection with innocence as blushing. Instead it should be interpreted as the magical possession of a deity or fakir, for possession is best translated to mean sexual possession for both male and female (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 8, 178, 187; Temple, vol. II, p. xvii, vol. III, pp. xxi, xlvi). The element of the singer drawing water from the well indicates the birth motif again.

The first six lines are based on the Krishna legend. The remainder relates supposedly to what happened thereafter. Thus, the interpretation of the first part is maya, illusion, which is like a veil obstructing perception. The second part might be disillusion or reality, for then the singer is no longer enchanted.

In the second part, the Brahman walks along the road, i.e., traveling but not going to a specific destination, an indication of anxiety. A period of twelve years is a long time for an engagement without a marriage. Twelve is one of the most frequent numbers used in Shanti Nagar, a usage characteristic of this region, and refers to the Sun and the life-giving principle. Twelve by itself and in multiples or parts is considered magical, having special power (Temple, vol. I, p. xxxiii, vol. II, pp. xix–xx, vol. III, p. xliv). Since twelve is a multiple of three, it may represent two threes (union) doubled with the doubling representative of the opposed kinship groups; or it may represent three (the procreative concept or masculine principle) multiplied by four, representative of Vishnu or of Krishna, Vishnu's living representation. A subtle reference ties the sixth and last part of this song to the first part and to the title "Chandrama and Surajmal," for twelve refers to the life-giving solar principle, the sun (Suraj). The union of male and female, whether Surajmal and Chandrama, or the singer and the Brahman in Part 6, is doubled by the reference twice to twelve and to the Brahman, a member of a twice-born class of castes. The fact that this part of the song is the sixth and final part is again a reference to the joining of the two triangles in a star representing the union of male and female as the desirable outcome of all *sithani*s (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 352, 353).

The phrase "the fields are cropless," refers to the barrenness of the singer, thus providing an additional castration/sterility symbol. The implication is that the Brahman by not marrying has neglected his house, which refers to the family unit and its kin extensions rather than a building. The house, however, also represents the female so the neglect is intensified or doubled, thus vitiating the neglect. The instruction to put earth (indicative of the mother and fertility) on the fields adds to this interpretation.

The appelation Banwari Lal of Majina also mocks or denies this barrenness and neglect, for it is an epithet for Lord Krishna, and also means a ruby (jewel, another sexual symbol) and a wealthy person. The term Majina is taken to refer to Medini, the Earth, which is Krishna's dwelling place, another fertility–creation symbol. Devaki, Krishna's mother, is an earthly manifestation of Aditi, who was the most ancient of goddesses and mother of the gods including Vishnu, of whom Krishna is an avatar. Her name also means primordial vastness, the source of abundance, and supporter of earth. Therefore, this symbol of the earth together with the epithet for Krishna completes the contradiction to the lack of fertility of crops, humans, and of ruin of the so-called Brahman bridegroom (Dowson, 1950, pp. 3, 139, 207; Daniélou, 1964, pp. 48, 87–89, 112–114, 353). Indirectly, the references to Krishna's birth and creation as well as to the solar principle bring us full circle to the creation of people, best understood by human beings marrying (union) and giving birth (creation).

At the beginning and throughout all six parts of the song, the vicissitudes of fortune encountered in bringing about a marriage and bearing children recapitulate the creation myths of Hinduism by referring directly or tangentially to supernatural beings and to

creation or birth. The sun and the moon began it all; from them eventually evolved the other deities from whom, in turn, came the earth and human beings. Therefore, the six-part song is entitled Chandrama and Surajmal. Each part of the song presents an illusion of despair based on the occurrence of the worst possible events so that the marriage for which the song is sung will be successful. Thus, in the last part, as in others, what is considered illusion is existence or manifestation on this earth; divinity is what "remains when the reality of all that can be perceived has been denied. It is neither this nor that" (Daniélou, 1964, p. 7). However, the singers in Shanti Nagar prefer to live in their world of illusion and so sing songs of abuse and opposition to avert misfortune, produce a successful marriage, and vent their frustrations.

Although the six-part song contains a number of unhappy events overtly, these events are provided to teach what behavior should be avoided to be married properly and bear children. These examples express themes and values concerning marriage. The first theme is that a father should see that his daughter is properly married. Second, she should be married while she is still young. Parents who do not have their daughters and sons married at a young age have not yet resolved their own attachment to their children and are not performing as responsible adults. The third theme is that the early age of marriage is related to the belief that young males and females cannot control their lust. Young people have not reached the age of enlightenment and so parents, who should be enlightened, must arrange their marriages for them. Although these young couples may have lust for each other, they have not yet learned to love each other. It is only in marriage that they can be protected from their lust and learn to love which is the fourth theme. The marriage bond protects young couples from lust like that of animals and provides them with children, the goal of human beings, deities, and Hinduism which is the fifth and most important theme. However, because of the relative segregation of males and females and the fact that a bride and groom do not see each other until their wedding, they must learn to know and love each other so they can bear children. The devoted wife conquering all difficulties is another theme. A wife can resolve the problems of a young couple by following the path of devotion to her husband; eventually against all odds, she will conquer a host of problems, such as death, unfavorable prophecies, and inauspicious stars. The deities will help when a wife shows such devotion regardless of obstacles. However, the path of devotion may need a little boost in the way of human manipulation.

There are similarities and differences in the behavior patterns of males and females For example, both males and females have the same sexual desires, but it is the woman who must wait, restrain herself, and repeatedly prove her devotion. Even though she is chaste and good, she may not be trusted. In the realm of the sexes there is ambiguity about what should be done, for the roles of the deities (parents) are often marked by contradictions; they may be malevolent or benevolent, submissive or dominant, with no necessary affiliation of a specific characteristic to one sex or the other.

The ambiguity or oppositions which exist in the songs of teasing and abuse are similar to those which exist in the Epics and Puranas so that human beings cannot accept appearances as reality any more than they can accept stories as clearly delineating the path which they should follow. If one path or one way of behavior is to be followed, it may be a good idea to persist in that form of behavior; but it is also a good idea to be prepared to do just the opposite. Therefore, the six-part song of Chandrama and Surajmal relates misfortune and the bad behavior that the two sides in a marriage might demonstrate with the hope that just the opposite will occur. In this way, family life and the social order will be perpetuated.

Jewelry for Bride

Both the father of the groom and of the bride were expected to provide specific kinds of jewelry to be given to the bride during the

wedding days. Since styles changed in jewelry, the fathers had three choices: (1) to order entirely new jewelry; (2) to use jewelry already in the family but to have the gold and silver melted and restyled; or (3) to use the jewelry as it was. In a number of families of all castes, it was customary to restyle the ornaments of older women in the family, in particular grandmothers and widows, in order to save on the cost of jewelry in a wedding. The jewelry that a bride received at the time of marriage was considered to be her property, but practically speaking it eventually became the property of her marriageable daughters and was also refashioned for gifts to new brides in the family at the time of marriage. None of this occurred while a woman was still young and wore her jewelry unless the family was hard pressed for funds, but as a woman grew older she wore jewelry less often, and when she became a widow she seldom wore ornaments, if at all. Both the boy's and the girl's side gave jewelry to the girl in a marriage. Most often the jewelry was made to order so both families planned ahead and allowed sufficient time for the jewelry to be ready for the wedding.

One man said that the goldsmith who refashioned the jewelry always cheated. "He mixes the gold with brass and copper; the silver with iron. And he takes one-fourth when making something. He pretends to charge little but he makes 4 annas for each rupee. If we have ornaments remade four or five times, we will have only iron and brass. The Baniya Merchant and Sonar Goldsmith are never to be trusted."

In one marriage, the father of the groom, noted for his reluctance to spend money, forgot to order the jewelry and only remembered after the wedding party had arrived at the bride's village. Fortunately, for the marriage and the prestige of his family, he had four hours before the presentation of the jewelry was to take place, and rushed to the City of Delhi to purchase the ornaments. In the case of a double wedding in a Jat family, the practice of the family had changed. Instead of giving the daughters ornaments, they gave them saving certificates. A few Jat families made serious efforts to reduce the cost of marriages, especially of ornaments. Nonetheless, daughters in such families received more gifts in a wedding than daughters in other castes because their families were wealthier. Jats received the most valuable presents including jewelry in weddings, Brahmans next, and the lower castes, the least.

The ideal was that a bride should receive glass bangles for her arms and from 15 to 20 gold and silver ornaments at the time of marriage. Some did and some did not. Since a girl's ears and nose were pierced, married women possessed earrings and a nosepin of gold given them by their families.

In the marriage of a Brahman girl, the following nine ornaments were given to her by her father, three of which were gold and the rest silver: *kanthi,* a necklace of gold rings and glass woven together; *chann,* silver arm ornament—one apiece worn on each arm; *bunde,* golden earrings, worn at lobe of ear, one pair; *anguthi* or *guthi,* a finger ring; *paccheli,* an arm ornament of silver worn just back of *churi* (glass bangles); *karule,* silver bangles for wrist, broader than *churi*; *chann kangan,* a silver arm ornament; *gajra,* an arm ornament with gold or silver bells; *hath phul,* this is a combination ring and bracelet, the ring attached to silver filigreed chains running to the bracelet. India (1961, p. 14), for the village of Jhatikra, described a *hath phul* as being "made of five silver rings connected with a beautifully designed *jhallar* (frill) worn on the fingers," with the frill running from the ring to the bracelet over the top of the hand. Our informants considered the *hath phul* and the *tagri* (following) to be family heirlooms. More details on ornaments and their costs may be found in Jacobson (1976) and Freed and Freed (1978, pp. 163–169, 189–192).

In this same marriage, the bride's father-in-law gave her seven ornaments of gold: two *karules* (one for each arm) worn on wrist; *tika* or *borla,* a golden band worn on or across the forehead with filigree (or frill as India, 1961, describes it) that is tied over the ears and fastened at the back of the head in

a lock of the girl's hair; *bunde,* golden earrings; *gulseri* or *galsari,* a golden necklace; *matarmala,* a golden neckpiece—a locket and chain; *anguthi,* a gold ring. In addition, the groom's family gave her seven silver leg ornaments and one *tagri,* a silver chain worn around the waist to hold up and ornament one's skirt.

India (1961, pp. 13–14) provided drawings of ornaments that show how they were worn in Jhatikra. Although one nose-ring depicted in India (1961, p. 13) was not used in Shanti Nagar, the ornaments worn in Jhatikra were generally similar to those in Shanti Nagar. Women of all castes wore gold and silver ornaments. In checking with Chuhra informants, we found that the last time they could remember the Chamar and Chuhra castes wearing base metals (*rang,* usually tin or a kind of pewter) was about 40 years before our fieldwork.

Clothes and Gifts for Weddings

Clothes given in a wedding came from four or more sources: the girl's family; the boy's family; the mother's brothers of both the boy and the girl; and sometimes also from the father's mother's brothers. After the date of marriage had been set, the mother of the bride or groom visited her brothers' village to invite them to the wedding and to discuss with them the gifts of clothes and money that they would bring. When she arrived in her natal village a Sing was held to celebrate the forthcoming marriage, at which she and the women of her lineage were present.

Since many items of clothing did not need to be fitted the mothers easily passed on the requirements. During the months of April, May, and June (the peak marriage months), tailors were so busy that they would not take on any other work. A similar situation held for all the special services required for a marriage so that a family planned ahead and engaged the services they would need as soon as the marriage date was known, sometimes earlier. Other gifts which a girl's family might require for a groom were a bicycle and watch. Some grooms expected a motorcycle rather than a bicycle.

Ceremonies on Day Before Groom's Departure

The last day before the groom and the wedding party traveled from his village to the village of the bride was marked by a flurry of excitement and anxiety that everything be carried out properly. On this day, a series of ceremonies was performed: initiation of a groom of a twice-born caste, the last oil bath of the groom, feasting guests, reception of mother's brothers, financial contributions to marriage expenses, worship of the potter's wheel, symbolic erection of the marriage pavilion, circumabulation of the village and worship at village shrines, ransoming and teasing, taking milk from mother's breast by groom, departure of marriage party, and making auspicious symbols.

Initiation

The only initiation ceremony held in Shanti Nagar was called *Janeu,* or *Upanayan,* at which time Brahman boys, one of the twice-born castes,[2] were given the sacred thread. Initiation was not a marriage ceremony, but it had become incorporated in the series of prenuptial ceremonies. It was usually celebrated in the morning preceding the departure of the groom's wedding party. No Brahman boy could be married without the sacred thread, stated a professional Arya Samaj Brahman Priest who served the village.

Elderly Brahman men said that in olden times the sacred thread was given at a younger age than was currently the case and that

[2]There are three classes of castes in India who are called twice-born. The males in these three classes, called varnas, were formerly initiated or became twice-born at specific ages. The classes, in descending rank order are Brahman (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), and Vaishya (merchant). From the evidence gathered in Shanti Nagar, only the Brahman Priests had an initiation ceremony during the period of fieldwork. The Baniya Merchants had no marriageable sons at that time.

the former practice was proper. During the period that we witnessed Brahman weddings and engagements in Shanti Nagar, the males were between 15 and 22 years of age. In Brahman marriages the tendency was to postpone marriage until at least the groom's late teens in order that he might finish his studies. Six Brahman boys were engaged and five married during the time we were in the village. Table 4 gives their ages at engagement and marriage. None of these Brahmans married or received the sacred thread before their fifteenth birthday.

The old Brahman priest in the village, himself over 90 years of age, said that since he had been performing initiation and marriage ceremonies, the initiation ceremony was carried out immediately preceding the marriage and that this custom was not new. He verified this observation by stating that he had simultaneously given the thread and married a man, who in 1958 was in his eighties. He stated this man was married between 10 and 15 years of age (possibly the most common age range at that time), which would establish the date of the ceremony at about 1890. Although this professional Brahman had never married he had to be given the sacred thread in order to become a professional priest.

Only one of the two Baniya Merchant men in Shanti Nagar was given the sacred thread. The younger Baniya received it at the time of his marriage when he was 20; his older brother never married and never received the thread. The younger brother said that he no longer wore the thread because he was a follower of the Arya Samaj and did not believe in untouchability. Working in the family shop, he constantly came into contact with all castes. Therefore, he did not wear the thread. There was some ambivalence in this statement. To wear the thread, a twice-born man must maintain his ritual purity. He stated he never wore it because he was an Arya Samaji. At the same time, he said that he did not wear it because he came in contact with all castes and therefore could not retain ritual purity. He further stated that according to Arya Samaj tenets every human being could wear the thread, but then limited this right to Brahmans, Jats, Baniyas, and Gujars (Shepherds) and continued by noting that in the village only Brahman Priests wore it.

Stevenson noted that the sacred-thread ceremony for Brahmans at the time that she was gathering data, circa 1920, had already been collapsed from three days to one, and that the investiture of the thread normally preceded marriage. She stated further that "it takes place in the eighth year from conception for a Brahman, the eleventh for a Rajput, (a member of the Kshatriya Varna) and the twelfth for a Vaiśya. If, however, it cannot be performed in those years, special purifications will have to be undergone, and the ceremony postponed till the sixteenth year for a Brahman, the twenty-second for a Rajput, and the twenty-fourth for a Vaiśya" (Stevenson, 1971, pp. xvii, 27–28, 38).

The two *Janeu* ceremonies that we witnessed in Shanti Nagar were much simpler than the sacred-thread ceremony as described by Stevenson. However, since this comparison involves two widely separated regions and because regional differences are common in India, we cannot conclude that the initiation ceremony in Shanti Nagar has changed a great deal from a half-century or so ago. It is of interest, however, that the general atmosphere of the *Janeu* ceremony celebrated in Shanti Nagar seemed to be much less religious than Stevenson's descriptions. In Shanti Nagar, the ceremony was carried out to maintain the caste status of male Brahmans, but there was no undue emphasis on religious belief, nor was ritual purity greatly stressed. The tone of the ceremony was at times matter-of-fact, and at other times, humorous.

The initiation ceremony acted out the drama of the events by which a young initiate in ancient times passed through a series of stages in the life cycle and became marriageable. The performance of the modern ritual reflected the tradition behind the ancient sacred thread ceremony, which required that members of the twice-born castes spend long periods passing through several stages of the life cycle before being born again, marrying, and becoming a householder.

The initiation ceremony described below

was celebrated in the courtyard of the initiate's home. Present were the 18-year-old initiate, his family, male members of his lineage and at least one of his mother's brothers or his father's mother's brother. These males were called upon to help in the ceremony. Brahman males who acted in this capacity obtained a new sacred thread from the priest.

For all Sanatan Dharma fire ceremonies except initiation, it was customary for the priest to draw a large square divided into nine small squares in which symbols of the nine *grahas* were drawn. To one side of this square the priest formed another square within which he drew a seven-pointed star on which the fire burned. For initiation there were four squares, the usual square with the nine *grahas*, and to its side, three smaller squares each containing a seven-pointed star. The earth beneath these squares was freshly plastered with cow dung.

During the initiation ceremony, the initiate went through the following stages. First, he was a Shudra, a member of the fourth class of castes; then he was invested with the thread which raised him to the highest status of the twice-born classes, the Brahman class of castes. However, though of the higher status, he was not yet marriageable. In the next step, he became a disciple of his guru (the Brahman Priest who officiated), begged and gave him the alms he received because the guru was his spiritual teacher. Thus, he learned how to receive alms as a Brahman and how to give alms, both meritorious acts. Next, he received further instructions from his guru, and then went to Kashi (Benares) as a celibate and religious student. When the initiate was symbolically brought back from Kashi by a sister, the Brahman Priest recited mantras, blessed him, and ended the ceremony. The boy was then in a marriageable state.

A separate fire was lit for each episode in the initiation ceremony. In Square II (fig. 11) a fire was lit when the initiate was instructed in the Vedas and donned the sacred thread; when the initiate became a disciple of his guru and begged for him, a fire was lit in Square III, and when the initiate received further instructions from his guru before going to Kashi as a celibate and religious student, there was a fire in Square IV.

During much of the ceremony, the priest sat facing west with his back to the house; the initiate sat opposite him, facing east, the direction of the Sun at the time the ceremony took place, with his back to the doorway of the courtyard, which opened onto the street. The four squares lay between the priest and the initiate. Only the priest, the initiate, and the male kinsmen approached the squares to feed the fire or to worship. Those who had been invited to attend as spectators filed into the courtyard during the preparations and sat around the courtyard but to one side or in back of the initiate. None of the spectators sat behind the priest. Females from the boy's household could be seen working in the house behind the priest; they occasionally came out to give the participants in the ceremony whatever they requested.

The usual substances such as ghee, rice, and sugar were employed in the fire ceremony except that they were used over a longer period and in greater abundance than customary in most other ceremonies. Inside the courtyard a strand of mango leaves was stretched across the top of the gateway leading to the village lane. This strand was called *bandanwar,* meaning anything that is tied, and was particularly auspicious for a marriage or the investiture of the sacred thread of the initiation ceremony, both of which indicated a tying together.

OFFERINGS TO DEITIES

While the guests arrived, the priest prepared the ceremonial squares and twisted three strands of rope knotted in a special way into the ancient or traditional style of sacred thread for the young initiate to wear. A large pot of water was placed by one of the adult males at the left hand corner above Square II. Then the priest took a stone representing the deity, Ganesh, and tied red threads in bifurcating manner around it, as though it were a package, a style used only for the stone representing Ganesh. He placed the stone near Square II. During these preparations, four adult males in the lineage brought

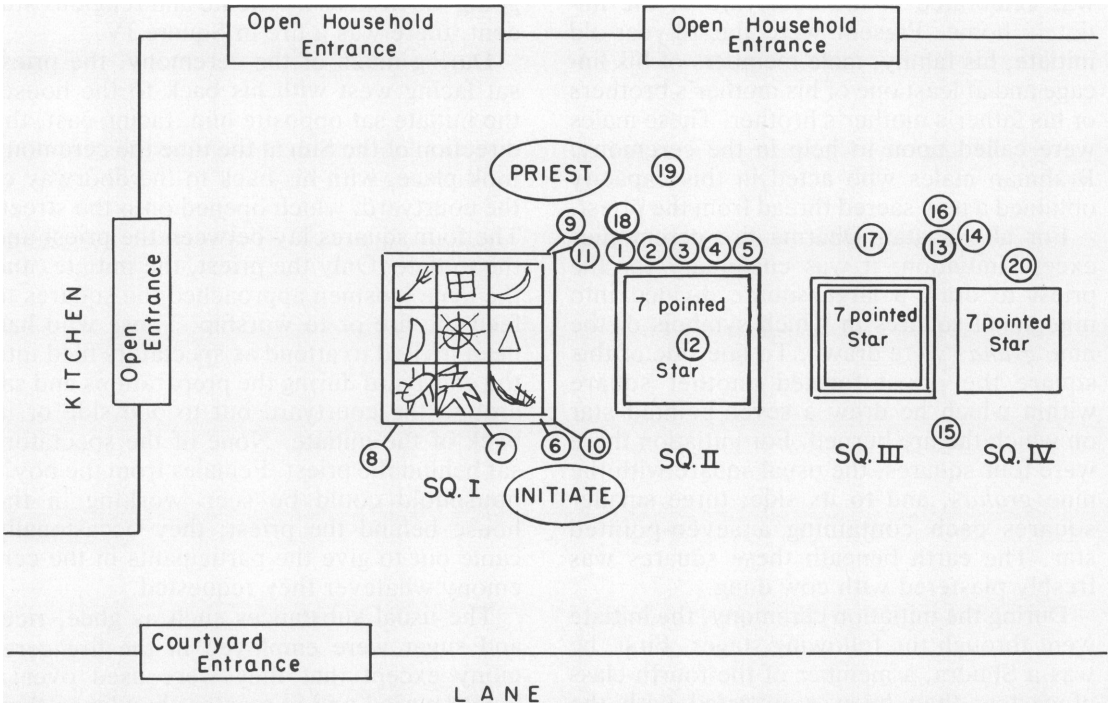

FIG. 11. Diagram of an altar used by a Brahman Priest for the initiation ceremony of a Brahman male. The four squares are drawn on the ground with colored powders.

Square I consists of nine smaller squares each containing a symbol for one of the *grahas*. The symbols, from left to right, are (top row) Jupiter, Venus, the moon; (middle row) Mercury, the sun, Mars; (bottom row) Rahu, Saturn, and Ketu. Five colors are used to prepare this square: yellow, white, red, green, and black. Five colors are one of the requirements in preparing a place of worship (Daniélou, 1964, p. 377).

Squares II, III, and IV each contain a seven-pointed star.

Key to numbers: 1, pot of water; 2, stone tied with red thread to represent Ganesh; 3, dish of turmeric; 4, dish of rice; 5, dish of sugar; 6, line representing Brahma, the Creator; 7, line representing Shankar, Destroyer of the Universe; 8, line representing Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth and Fortune and Mother of the Universe; 9, line representing Omkar, a concept of the Universal Absolute, a shapeless, neuter incorporeal deity who percolates everywhere; 10 and 11, incense; 12, twigs for fire; 13, dish of ghee; 14, dish of ghee with cotton wick; 15, dung and tongs; 16, plate of sandalwood; 17, incense; 18, dish of water; 19, yellow sacred thread; 20, incense.

him whatever was needed in the way of supplies. They, as well as the priest, were barefoot. With one exception, only these four males, the priest, and the initiate touched any of the items in the squares.

The initiate, wrapped in a cotton mantle, entered the courtyard and sat down cross-legged and barefoot on a low wooden stool which had been provided for him. Crushed turmeric and sandalwood paste had been dabbed across his forehead, cheeks, and chin. Upon his entrance, the women guests in the courtyard started singing.

The priest then chanted mantras. The chanting and interaction between the priest and initiate were part of the opening of the ceremony when an offering was made to "all 33 crores of deities," according to the priest. Both the priest and initiate offered to the deities; the priest instructed the initiate in the proper procedures. The priest held rice cupped in his left hand and extended his right

hand with rice in it over Square I, while reciting the names of deities. The initiate then extended his crossed hands over Square I toward the priest, right hand on top, both palms upward. The priest dipped his fingers into a pot filled with water, put some rice kernels and water in the initiate's right hand, and then he and the initiate together sprinkled rice and water on the small central square symbolizing the Sun (Square I).

The priest again chanted mantras with his right hand extended over Square I, and identified the initiate, giving his first name, *gotra* name, and caste. He took both of the initiate's hands which were crossed in the palms-upward position, inserted the fingers of his left hand between the initiate's hands, and, while holding the boy's right hand with his own left hand, he placed turmeric and rice with his right hand on the fingertips of the boy's right hand. Next he tied a red thread around the initiate's right wrist. The initiate then placed a tilak in the center of the priest's forehead. The priest dropped turmeric on the fingertips of the initiate and on the small square for Brihaspat (Jupiter), picked up rice, sugar, and turmeric, and dropped them on each of the nine small squares of Square I, and also on the initiate's fingers. He did this alternately back and forth between the squares and the boy's fingers. These ritual activities provided the main offerings to the deities. To conclude, the priest placed the initiate's palms together, held them in position, and named all the *grahas*. The priest explained that this part of the ceremony was intended to propitiate all the deities so that none would be offended, first the nine *grahas*, then Brahma, the creator of the universe, and Shankar, the destroyer of the universe. Brahma, called the provider, was represented by a line drawn below the small square for Ketu (no. 6 in figure 10), and Shankar by a line drawn below Saturn (no. 7). Other deities were Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and fortune, indicated by a line drawn below Rahu (no. 8), and Omkar, at top right (no. 9), described by the priest as a shapeless or bodiless deity who percolates in everything. In addition, there was worship of fire, water, and earth deities. They were represented by the fires to be lit, by water in a pitcher, and by the earth on which the dung had been plastered to prepare the four squares.

While the above rituals took place, the eldest kinsman of the four assistants to the priest prepared two bags to be used later by the initiate "when he went out into the world to beg." He tied red strings around them. The other three men assembled the substances necessary for starting the fire and keeping it going.

EDUCATION

The priest unwrapped a number of holy books tied in a cloth that he would use to instruct his disciple. He picked up a bunch of kusha grass in his left hand and with his right hand sprinkled rice between Squares I and II, toward the bottom of the squares. Then he placed the grass on the ground, placed a leaf over it, and tied the grass in a knot around it. The priest also tied a red thread around the handle of a tablespoon, which he later used to pour ghee into the fire to feed it. He tipped the tablespoon over the star in Square II for a second, and then prepared the black incense which was burned on auspicious, religious occasions.

While the priest was working, one of the men placed a dish of ghee above Squares III and IV (no. 13). A little ghee was also put into a small dish, and a cotton wick was tucked into it (no. 14). A woman brought out burning dung from the house with tongs and passed the tongs and dung to one of the men who placed it below but centered between Squares III and IV (no. 15). The incense was handed to the priest by one of the men. Then the priest broke up some twigs and gave a large dish and a bag of sandalwood to his eldest assistant, who was his main helper. This man then poured the sandalwood onto the plate and placed it just above the dish of ghee (no. 16), after which he returned the excess sandalwood to the bag for later use.

Meanwhile the priest placed two pieces of burning incense at the lower right hand and upper right hand corners of Square I (nos. 10 and 11). The priest then turned his attention

to Square II, where he formed the twigs into a square and placed some very small twigs in its center (no. 12). By this time, the incense had gone out so the priest relit it.

The father of the initiate placed some burning dung in Square II, lit the wick in the small dish of ghee, and placed it on top of the burning dung in Square II (no. 5). This wick, also, went out so one of the men took it into the house, lighted it, and returned it to its previous position (no. 14). The eldest kinsman picked up a third piece of incense, lighted it and placed it above Square II (no. 17). The large dish of ghee was then placed on the fire to melt; as it melted, the liquid ghee was poured on the large dish of sandalwood. These activities were in preparation for "Education."

When all was readied, the priest tapped the initiate with his right hand on his right shoulder and held his right hand there while reciting mantras. He took the sacred thread which he had previously prepared. The initiate arose, removed his mantle (underneath which he had on shorts and a shirt), stood on his stool, and wrapped a rectangular piece of rough cloth around his hips (over his shorts). This cloth symbolized the loincloth that a Brahman should always wear (cf. Stevenson, 1971, p. 31). To keep the loincloth on, he tied a strand of rope around his waist. The priest then handed him the three strands of twisted rope, the sacred thread, which the initiate put on. He placed it over his left shoulder below the right arm. This thread was said to be the kind worn in ancient times. He was to be given a "modern" thread later.

The assistants were busy during this period adding sandalwood to the smoking fire. Another small dish (no. 18) was placed above the container of water (no. 1). The eldest assistant took the tablespoon which had been used by the priest and from time to time poured ghee on the fire and dropped some into the water. These were offerings to the gods of fire and water, as well as to all the deities. The assistant performed these duties at fixed times in the ceremony when the priest recited mantras. Two of the younger assistants periodically scattered sandalwood and sticks on the fire. They also laid a yellow commercially made modern sacred thread near the priest (no. 19).

When the fire on Square II was burning strongly, the priest held the tablespoon above it, pouring ghee on it periodically and reading mantras from one of his books. These mantras were taken, one each, from each of the four Vedas. Thus, this recitation symbolized instruction in the four Vedas, the most ancient and holy texts of Hinduism. While reading the mantras, the priest wore spectacles—a modern necessity.

The priest then picked up the modern yellow thread, arose, and reached across the squares to hand the thread to the initiate. The four Brahman kinsmen assisting in the ceremony removed the first sacred thread and placed the yellow thread over the groom's head so that it passed over the right shoulder and under the left arm. The ancient thread had been positioned over the left shoulder and under the right arm; the modern position of the yellow thread was just the opposite, from right to left. While the thread was being put on, the women stopped singing and everyone was respectfully silent.

The priest then placed a cloth over the initiate's head and read a series of instructions to him to which he responded. Part of these instructions were read from a "Manual of the Samskaras." The instructions and responses follow:

> Priest: You must offer water to the ancestors every day. Initiate: I will do this. P: You should mind your parents. I: I will do this. P: You should not gamble. I: I will not do this. P: You should not go to bad places. I: I will not do this. P: You should not go out of the house at night when it is dark without reason. I: I will not do this. P: One should not run. This is bad behavior. Nor should one jump or play around wells. I: I will not do this. P: You should not climb trees. I: I will not do this. P: You should not pluck unripe fruit. I: I will not do this. P: Don't go along lonely paths. I: I will not do this. P: Never bathe completely undressed. I: I will not do this. P: Don't sleep after the sun is up or before it has gone down. I: I will not do these things. P: Don't say anything that might hurt someone. I: I will not do this. P: Don't look at the rising or the setting sun. I: I will not do these things. P: Don't look at the sun's shadow. I: I will not do this. P: Don't

look at the sun or your own image in the water. I: I will not do these things. P: Don't go out of the house when it is raining hard. I: I will not do this. P: Don't look at another man's wife improperly. I: I will not do this.

The priest then stood up, put the ceremonial cloth over the initiate's head, and recited the Gayatri mantra in his right ear. He mumbled so no one else could hear. With this ritual, the boy became a disciple. The priest then returned to his seat.

BEGGING

The priest picked up burning dung with the pair of tongs and put it on Square III to start the second fire and the third part of the initiation. A young male Brahman who was in the initiate's lineage and his friend put sandalwood on the fire while the priest recited mantras. The fire on Square II had gone out, but the fire on Square III was burning well.

The initiate stood and put on wooden shoes. Taking one of the bags prepared by his elder kinsman, a small wooden hoe, and a stick from the priest, he began to beg. He begged first from the hostess for the ceremony (his mother's sister), and then approached his mother and the daughters of his hostess. He put what they gave in the bag and presented it to his guru, the priest. Then he took the second bag and begged from the rest of the guests. A few gave a rupee, but young persons who were present gave 2 paise, rice, and sugar as token alms. Everything was put in the bag and given to the priest. The rule was that if you were a relative of the initiate you gave more than nonrelatives, 1 rupee or as much as you wished. At the conclusion of the begging, the mother of the initiate and his mother's sister distributed pieces of brown sugar and white sugar candies to the assembled female guests. The female guests then departed and this marked the end of the begging.

JOURNEY TO KASHI

While a new fire was started on Square IV (the third and final fire), the priest recited mantras and the boy again sat cross-legged on his stool. The preparations for the fire on Square IV were similar to the earlier preparations. The fire on Square III was left to die out. A diversion took place when a small male child and kinsman of the initiate decided to sit with him. Nobody stopped him and he sat for a while before returning to his mother. The intrusion of children was not an uncommon occurrence at ceremonies. Just before the fourth part of the initiation ritual began, a kinsman, arriving late for the ceremony, handed the initiate a rupee, which he in turn passed on to his guru-priest.

For the fourth and last stage, the priest took a wooden writing board and dabbed a design on it with a paste made from turmeric and ghee. The design was "AUM" written in large letters. The priest handed the board, along with the hoe and staff, to the initiate who then arose and acted as though he was annoyed or unhappy. He left the courtyard, starting his long trip to Kashi (Benares) to study to be a celibate and religious student, the brahmacharya stage in his life cycle. He stayed outside the courtyard in the village lane for perhaps five minutes, then his favorite classificatory sister (mother's sister's daughter) said she would bring him back from Benares. She brought him to the doorway and said to him, "Don't go far away. You can study in the local school instead and I'll get you married to my husband's sister." They both came back into the courtyard and the boy sat on his stool again.

While the sister went to fetch her brother, the male kinsmen poured all the remaining twigs, ghee, and sandalwood on the fire so that it burned very brightly for the finale of this ceremony. One of the kinsmen prepared additional sacred threads, replaced his own old worn thread with a new thread, and handed another to the father of the initiate, who was so busy that he slipped it into his pocket. The priest later said, "The initiation ceremony is for the person who does not yet have the thread, but other Brahmans can get a new thread and replace their old one if it is broken or dirty. Any thread gets broken; it's like the death of a person and the whole aspect of the thread is changed. It's a break and becomes impure."

Two male professional Brahman cooks came into the courtyard about this time and

started cooking for the afternoon feast. They worked in the kitchen to the side of the courtyard. Inside the house the women of the family were singing happily. A band could be heard approaching from the distance to play for the reception of the mother's brother and the departure of the wedding party later in the day.

The priest finally intoned in Sanskrit and then translated into Hindi, "All the rivers and all the Gods are Devi [goddess] and you [the initiate] should worship them." He then threw rice over the initiate and said, "*Namaskar*" (meaning, in this context, I bow to the god). The boy arose from the bench and walked into the house; the priest tied up his books; then the ceremony was finished.

This description of initiation was representative of a family that tried to follow every detail of the ceremony as accurately as possible. Everyone enjoyed watching and participating in the ceremony, and the family members were quite pleased with the way in which it turned out. In other families, these ceremonies might be performed more perfunctorily depending on the degree of interest, the family's economic circumstances, the number of people in the family, and whether or not they considered all of the details of importance.

SONGS FOR SACRED THREAD CEREMONY

While the priest and his attendants prepared for the initiation and during lulls in the ceremony, the women in the gathering sang songs for the investiture of the sacred thread.

NUMBER 1

O brother! Accept the sacred thread, it is decorating your neck.
O brother! The duties of a Kshatriya are written in your fate.
O brother! They say there are saints. Who has ever seen a saint?
O brother! The saint is your father sitting in your house.
O brother! You are saying 'Mata, Mata' but who has ever seen a Mata.
O brother! The mother who is sitting in your house is the true Mata.
O brother! You are saying 'Devi, Devi' but who has ever seen a Devi.
O brother! Your wife sitting in your house is the true Devi.
O brother! You are saying, 'Yamuna, Yamuna' but who has ever seen Yamuna.
O brother! Yamuna is your sister who is sitting in your house.

Because formerly at initiation, the initiate went to Kashi to study while a celibate, this song, in effect asked "Why go there to study when everything that can be desired or found there resides in the initiate's house?" This song, which mildly mocks specific traditional beliefs, represents the Arya Samaj point of view that multiple deities do not exist, that saints are not important, and that the members of the family are. Interestingly enough this point of view resembles the Freudian theory that omnipotent beings are often projections of the members of one's family. A few words need explanation: Kshatriya was often used instead of Brahman at initiations although the initiates were always Brahmans; however, the song could be sung at the initiation of any male born into twice-born castes. The word for saint is the Muslim word rather than the Hindu (pir rather than rishi), since Muslim saints prior to the Arya Samaj were worshiped as local godlings; this practice too has been tabooed by the Arya Samaj. The words Mata (Mother Goddess), Devi (Goddess), Yamuna (The River Yamuna, a female goddess and the sister of Yama, god of death) also refer to deities tabooed by the Arya Samaj. However, this song was sung at the initiation of a Brahman male whose family adhered to Sanatan Dharma. Nonetheless, the teachings of the Arya Samaj were pervasive. There is another interpretation to this song which follows all Hindu beliefs. It is that the members of one's family should be revered and respected. Although they are not exactly worshiped, a young Brahman male should show signs of respectful behavior to the members of his household.

NUMBER 2

The head of the bridegroom is decorated with a cloth.

The cloth is decorated with white shining tinsel.
Do not sit on the bicycle, my groom!
Your narrow waist will be twisted.
Do not cast side-long glances, my groom!
Side-long glances will take a twist.
You are a little slim, a little light in the body.
How will you be able to lift the bow?
Oh my groom! You are just like Ram Chandra,
the master of the Raghu family.
What kind of a Sita will you marry?
A necklace adorns the neck of the bridegroom.
The wrist of the groom is enhanced by a watch.
The watch is decorated with *kangna*.
The body of the groom is adorned with a suit.
His mate will add glamor to him.

This song describes the way in which the groom would be dressed when he went with the wedding party to his bride's village. The articles of adornment were brought primarily by his mother's brother. He was expected to look very handsome for the wedding. The headgear worn by a bridegroom, one of the items brought by his mother's brother, was somewhat like a crown. The tinsel decorating it was another kind of thread. In fact, throughout the song there is emphasis on thread, which can serve a purifying and protective function. Mating causes pollution and, moreover, the union with a stranger is dangerous. A further danger to the groom consists of his being adorned very beautifully and looking handsome so that he invites the evil eye. Therefore, *kangna,* red threads to which seven auspicious items are tied, decorate his watch.

Since Ram Chandra and Sita are ideal prototypes for husbands and wives, the groom and his bride are called Ram Chandra and Sita. Ram Chandra won Sita in a contest with a bow and arrow. The bow, too, has threads, the bow strings, for the next step in the life cycle, mating. The bow is the means by which the arrow (the male sex organ) is shot and the act of coitus is implicit in the question "How will you be able to lift the bow?" Riding a bicycle (a substitute for a mare) also signifies coitus.

For the most part, this song is sung in fun and should be so interpreted. Interesting aspects of the song are the combinations of old and new in Hinduism which are so representative of the syncretic process in India. Although this song was sung at initiation, it indicates the close link between initiation and marriage.

Provisions for Wedding Guests

The groom's family provided one prenuptial feast for guests in the village of the groom on the day of departure of the groom for the bride's village. The bride's family was obliged to give four feasts to wedding guests, including the groom and his party, relatives of the bride both from within and beyond the village, and members of many households in the bride's village. A number of guests from other villages might be invited by wealthy families for reasons of prestige and politics. Several relatives, mainly daughters of the bride's family and lineage, came in advance of the wedding to help with the arrangements. They, too, had to be fed, in addition to the guests who received the four feasts.

The reason most marriages occurred in the months of May and June was because this period followed the spring harvest and preceded the monsoon. It was a time when there were more foodstuffs and money available, and there was a relative lull in the agricultural work. This wedding period undoubtedly is ancient and related to the agricultural seasons, for during the period from July to November no marriages occurred because the gods were sleeping and weddings would be inauspicious. The monsoon started in early July and continued into September; travel during this time was difficult and in the past almost impossible, thus preventing weddings. After the awakening of the gods (Dev Uthani Gyas) in Karttik (October–November) marriages resumed (Freed and Freed, 1964, pp. 70, 85–86, 87–88). A few families who wished to save money sometimes scheduled their weddings early in the marriage season because the large number of marriages in May and June increased prices.

Some village families sent printed wedding invitations, but most invitations were verbally given by the male and female Nai Barbers who served the family of either the groom or the bride. The printed announce-

ments were more a matter of prestige, for the guests usually knew well ahead of time when the wedding would occur, and that they would be invited.

The father of the groom indicated at the time of the engagement the probable number of guests that would be in the wedding party. He knew approximately the number of guests that he would feed in his village, for, in addition to the wedding party, these guests were members of his family, his married sisters and daughters, the mother's brothers who would bring part of the wedding gifts for the groom, members of his lineage, the heads of households in his own caste, friends inside and outside of the village, and members of castes within the village with whom he had special economic ties (patron, employee, or employer). Since he had only one wedding feast to provide, the logistics of his planning were simpler than for the bride's father, but he had to plan transportation by bus for the wedding party and he had to put up some guests overnight. He accommodated most overnight guests in his own house, the females in the women's quarters, and the men, in the men's quarters. As a rule, the men's quarters provided more room than did the women's quarters, for they were explicitly designed to accommodate guests. Although the houses of the poorer families and the lowest castes seldom had the space that most of the Jats and Brahmans had, the number of guests invited tended to be proportionally fewer.

These same conditions applied in the village of the bride, but for the wedding days of which there were usually four, the bride's family had to accommodate and feed a far larger number of guests than did the groom's family, in addition to providing a minimum of four meals to each member of the wedding party. The logistics of providing cots, bathing and drinking water, and food for the guests were planned ahead. The men's quarters of the bride's family were used, as well as those of related families which were used for members of the same caste. Other castes provided shelter for their own caste members. Village meeting houses were also used to accommodate guests.

Although the people of Shanti Nagar never erected tents for their guests, on the occasion of the marriage of a boy from Shanti Nagar to a girl from a very urbanized village, tents were erected. This wedding took place in February, so the groom's wedding party was cold and uncomfortable. Some of the visiting Jats tried to lodge with their fellow Jats in the village, but there was a disagreement and for the first few hours nothing could be done to obtain better quarters. Eventually the disagreement was settled and the Jats were put up by their castemates. The Brahmans, almost all of whom were members of the groom's family or lineage, were lodged in houses without any initial attempt to have them accept tents. Perhaps the complaints about the tents on the part of the Jats stemmed from the difference in treatment as Jats were very sensitive about their prestige vis-à-vis Brahmans.

Wedding parties from the groom's village among high castes averaged 60 to 70 persons; a low-caste wedding party might number about 20 persons. Cots were borrowed for the guests. The string cot, the most ubiquitous piece of village furniture, was used for sleeping and for seating guests during the day. The day before a marriage party arrived, men went to nearby villages and borrowed as many costs as they could. It was quite a sight to see the cots being brought from surrounding villages by bullock carts or the one village tractor. These cots were given to the male guests since females guests were few in number and generally stayed in the household in which the marriage occurred. Children who had their own cots or shared a cot customarily relinquished it to guests and slept on the floor. Sometimes adults made a similar sacrifice. Because of such sleeping accommodations, weddings were best held in May and June.

Until about 1955, the Jhinvar Waterman caste fetched drinking water from the wells for the wedding guests, but the guests had bathed at the wells. The Jhinvars had stopped this service which required carrying water for four days because they were not adequately paid. Carrying water for weddings was thereafter contracted for by the

amount of work involved. The village also forbade bathing at wells so that the drinking water would not be polluted. As a result, in weddings after 1955 even more water had to be brought, for the villagers bathed every day and also some of the men rinsed their turbans to keep them looking fresh for the wedding.

The meal provided by the groom's family was served in the afternoon about the time that the mother's brother and his gifts were expected. This feast extended throughout the afternoon as the members of the different households of the village were called and then fed. Although women of the lineage might eat the festal food, they were not formally invited or seated. Only males enjoyed this privilege. Men ate with men, and women ate with women.

Various circumstances unrelated to the family holding a wedding could affect the attendance at the ceremony. For example, at one Brahman wedding, Brahmans, only a few Jats, and the individuals who served the Brahman family were fed. The paucity of Jats was due to a mourning period being observed by the largest Jat lineage, during which they did not attend rites of passage or celebrate festivals. At another Brahman wedding, quite a large number of guests from all castes were fed. Since this feast took place at the height of the marriage season, many Jats came to pay their respects but did not eat. They simply were not able to eat at all the marriages to which they were invited during this season. Often teenage males or small boys were sent to represent a family at a feast or in a marriage party. At a third Brahman wedding, the family was boycotted (although outcasting was illegal) by its lineage; thus, no Brahmans of the village attended nor were any available to help with the wedding preparations. As a result, the affair was a shambles. No Jat, Lohar, Mali, or Jhinvar boy was married during the period of our residence in Shanti Nagar, but males among the Chuhras, Chamars, Kumhars, Bairagis, and Nais were. Because of their financial condition and caste customs regarding the taking of food, the amounts these castes spent on ritual and feasting were less than among Brahmans and Jats.

Among the Chuhras, the food was served by Chuhras. Young girls were fed first, then the older men, the younger men, and finally the women and small children. When guests were few, they could eat inside the house. The Chamar wedding practices were similar. Large weddings were usually celebrated by Jats and occasionally by Brahmans. Feeding large numbers of guests at weddings required space, so they might eat in the courtyard, house, or both; they were fed in groups, usually by caste. At a Jat wedding we attended in a large nearby village, the men were called by the Nais serving the family, and seated by caste on tiered wooden benches borrowed from a nearby school. The more honored guests were seated inside the domicile at tables. For another Jat wedding in Shanti Nagar tables and tablecloths, both urban traits, were used.

For feasting among the high castes in Shanti Nagar, the rule was that the Nai Barber called the guests by caste, respect, and distance. For example, Brahmans and guests who came from the greatest distance were fed first. Although Brahmans and Jats might sit together, the Nais said that they called the Brahmans first as a matter of respect. If there were many facilities and assistants for serving a great many guests at once, these distinctions might not always be followed, for it would be possible to separate different groups so that they would not know when other castes were called and fed and their prestige would not be endangered.

Low-caste men and boys, when invited by the high castes, were served separately. For example, one young Nai Barber boy was invited to a feast because the boys in the Brahman family played with him. He was fed separately. A Brahman or Jat family called the male head of the family of the Chuhra Sweeper woman who served them. He was fed apart from other guests and outside the house. The Nai put leftover food before the Chuhra which he could take home. If the family had a Chamar Leatherworker who worked for them, they treated him similarly. Brahmans and Jats did not eat at the wedding feasts of Bairagis, Jhinvars, Lohars, Malis, and Nais although they attended the wed-

dings as a sign of friendliness or patronage. They also put in an appearance at the wedding events of Gola Potters and Chamar Leatherworkers, if the family served them, but did not eat, nor did any of the middle-ranking castes who attended (cf. Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 103–105, for taking of food and water by castes).

Feasting did not consist of a large group of people eating, drinking, talking, and having a good time together. Guests were served quickly and efficiently; one ate as much as one could, especially of the bread, as a sign of appreciation of the good food. Immediately after finishing the wedding meal, the guests left the dining area, rinsed their mouths with water, and washed their hands with water, soap, and a towel provided by the host.

In the marriage of a Bairagi boy, there were only five Bairagi families in the village and a small number of visiting kinfolk to feed. The feast took place early in the morning after the last oil bath which in this case was held on the occasion of the full moon. Since the day of the full moon is a fast day, only those guests who were not fasting ate. The arrangements were intentional because the family had little money. By scheduling the feast immediately after the oil bath, the feast for the bath and the wedding were combined in one. That the feast could be held on the day of the full moon further reduced expenses. The feast itself was provided by the groom's elder brother. Families that were not well off were quite clever at meeting ritual requirements and yet keeping the costs within their capabilities as did this family.

Services of Ritual Specialists

In addition to providing for the physical needs of wedding guests, the families of the bride and groom planned ahead for the services of the professional priest who would officiate at the marriage, the family priest (*purohit*) who would guard the sweets, the Nai Barbers (usually a husband and wife) who would assist during the many marriage preparations and ceremonies, and professional cooks. The family of the bride engaged the professional priest who would marry the young couple, but sometimes there was a difference with regard to religious practices between the bride's family and that of the groom which resulted in different preferences as to the choice of the priest. In no case did more than one priest officiate at a wedding. In one instance, the same priest officiated at the initiation of the Brahman groom and at the wedding. The two families were close, had known each other previously, and both knew the priest, a government urban worker, through an affinal tie on the bride's side. Once when two Jat sisters were married to grooms who were not related, separate ceremonies occurred on successive days with different priests for each.

The Nai Barber and his wife or any other female in the family were probably the busiest individuals during the marriage season, for they had duties to perform at the prenuptial, nuptial, and postnuptial ceremonies, extended invitations to guests, and carried gifts, messages, and other items back and forth between the two marrying families. In addition, they mixed raw foodstuffs for the wedding feast, removed the plates of the diners, and during lulls in activity filled hookahs for the male guests. The Barber also cut the hair and shaved the male members of the family before they left in the wedding party. When he finished, another Nai cut his hair and shaved him. For one wedding, the father of the groom wanted everything to be exactly right to maintain his prestige so he hired an extra Nai Barber from a nearby village to accompany the wedding party. The two Nais cutting the hair of adult males and small boys and shaving the men in the courtyard while the feasting and other events took place was typical of the diverse, well organized activity at a wedding.

The Nai Barbers were essential specialists, for they had worked in so many weddings by the time they were in their middle years that they knew exactly what to do. They provided the cement which held the whole complex of activities together from the time of the engagement party and thereafter. The head of the household in which the marriage of a daughter took place was equally busy and moreover had the worries

and anxieties of all parents during the trying days of a daughter's marriage. Without the assistance of Nais, he would have found it impossible to have a well organized wedding.

Ritual specialists who served the families of the groom and bride had to be notified well ahead of time because they usually had their regular daily work in addition to their ceremonial roles. For example, one af the professional priests who functioned at Arya Samaj weddings was a higher secondary school teacher. A *purohit* worked in a factory in Delhi. Two of the Nais worked full time as barbers in the City of Delhi. These people had to be advised early in order to take leave from their jobs or to arrange for some other members of the family or lineage to take over the work. Urban employment apparently made it more difficult to plan for weddings, but it was customary to take leave from work for these events.

The girl's family usually employed a professional cook unless the number of guests was very small indeed. In the case of the prenuptial feast in the boy's village, depending on the caste, a professional cook might not be necessary. For large wedding feasts provided by the girl's family, not only one but usually three professional cooks were required. Professional cooks were of a caste from which pukka food (cooked in ghee, oil, or a butter substitute made from vegetable oils) could be taken by those attending the wedding. Often professional cooks were either Brahmans or Baniyas, but some were Jats. These cooks were skilled confectioners. Sweets were considered the real delicacy in the wedding feast. The greater the variety of sweets, the better the feast. Cooks had their own equipment and often brought their own supplies, depending on the arrangements with the families. Cooks came to the groom's village on the day of the departure of the wedding party, and to the bride's village usually the day before the marriage party arrived. They set up their equipment in the courtyard of the family dwelling, or in an open space near it.

Many of the sweets and the puffed bread served at weddings were dipped and fried in a vegetable fat, referred to as Dalda, the trade name for the product. Dalda served as a ghee substitute at weddings. For frying, cooks used deep iron caldrons and long wooden-handled pans, spoons, and dippers of iron. At one wedding, one cook was busily frying puffed bread, while the other two were mixing wheat and lentil flour, water, and ghee to prepare batter for a sweet called *guldana*. The batter was dropped into a large, flat iron pan with small holes in it. The pan was held in a caldron of hot Dalda, and gradually the mixture fried into little balls. Then the balls were transferred to a big metal pot with sugar in it, where they were rolled around in the sugar. Before the *guldana*s were served, real ghee was put on them so that they would have a good smell and taste. "Dalda-ghee," according to the villagers, had faults so when they poured genuine ghee on the *guldana*s, these faults were masked.

Another sweet which was served at weddings was *burfi*, made of coconut, ghee, and sugar and cut into squares somewhat like divinity fudge. Another form of *burfi* was called *koya*; it was made of milk and sugar boiled down until it became very thick. The sweets were decorated with colored paper or edible silver foil, placed on plates, and were served as the first course.

At many weddings the food was very fine indeed. In one wedding, there was an assortment of sweets, a curried vegetable served with a great many pieces of puffed bread, as much as one could eat, and a fine banana chutney. Each of the meals served during the wedding was a little different, in that various sweets, vegetables, and chutneys might be served; the basic menu was sweets first, then the bread with vegetable and chutney. No beverages of any kind, not even water, were served with meals. In poorer families, *ladoos* (sweet coconut balls) might be the principal or only sweet because they could be purchased and no professional cook was then necessary.

Only Chuhra Sweepers cooked meat for wedding feasts. When they had a wedding, they hired professional cooks of the Baniya Merchant caste who prepared all of the sweets. These cooks then ate at the house of a Jat for whom the Chuhra family worked

because they could not accept food from Chuhras. The Chuhras—mainly the males—killed, quartered, and barbecued a pig.

Much of the hard work of mixing and sometimes of cooking was carried out by female relatives of the families of marriage. For example, they mixed and shaped the dough for bread and usually cooked the vegetables and prepared the chutneys. Chutneys were made of pounded and spiced bananas, mangoes, squashes, tomatoes, or other fruit. Banana and mango chutneys were considered the finest delicacies. Much of the preparation of grains for bread prior to cooking was done by the Nai Barber family, usually a male-female team. They did not, however, cook anything because of their caste status.

As the sweets were cooked, they were set aside in a small room and minded by the Brahman *purohit* who served the family. The relationship of specific *purohit*s and patrons was hereditary; such relationships existed between members of the Brahman caste and other middle and high castes, primarily the Jats (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 120–122). At a Brahman wedding any Brahman might guard and serve the sweets. At Chamar, Chuhra, Potter, and Nai weddings, the sweets were stored and dispensed by members of their own caste.

Reception of Mother's Brother and His Gifts (*Bhat*)

The *Bhat* consisted of the ritual presentation of gifts by the mother's brother of both the groom and the bride. The mother's brother of the groom presented his gifts in the groom's village before the departure of the wedding party for the bride's village. Due to somewhat capricious transportation and the demands of city employment, the time at which the mother's brother would appear to present his gifts was to some extent unpredictable. While awaiting the mother's brother, the groom's family might feed its guests. The band to welcome him was scheduled to appear ahead of time so that it played upon his arrival in the village. It was composed of low-caste musicians hired from another village.

With the band heralding his approach to the household, the mother's brother came bearing a number of packages; among them clothing tied in a large cloth, perhaps a suitcase, and a special box, in which the bridegroom's crown was carried. At the entrance to the courtyard of the household, or in the case of the low castes in the center of the caste compound, there was a ceremonial greeting by the family. The women sang. In cases where a groom's mother had several brothers, her eldest brother officiated at the *Bhat*; his brothers might or might not accompany him.

In one greeting, three sisters lived in Shanti Nagar so all three greeted their brothers. However, the senior sister and brother first performed the ritual greeting. She daubed her brother's forehead with a tilak; then the other sisters did likewise for each of the brothers. The eldest sister took the hem of her skirt and touched her eldest brother with it, as a sign of respect and affection. He then gave a rupee to each sister. After a brief period for greetings, the women retired into the household, and the mother's brothers repaired to an open area where villagers could witness the mother's brothers' formal display of the gifts that they had brought. *Bhat,* a ritual and legal transaction, required that the gifts be recorded either by the elder Baniya Merchant, by a Jat who was formerly an accountant in military service, or, in the case of low-caste weddings by a low-caste man who could read and write. The male villagers who gathered were elders who served as witness to the presentation of these gifts. The band played all through the reception and the presentation of the *Bhat.*

A large metal platter was placed on the ground before the mother's brother and the man recording the gifts. It held small amounts of rice and lentils, indicative of the *Bhat,* the mother's brother's wedding gift, for the dictionary definition of *Bhat* is "rice boiled at the ceremony observed at the time of the marriage when the bride's father gives a feast to the party of the bridegroom" (Pathak, 1946, p. 819). Rice was considered a ceremonial food in Shanti Nagar where the main staple was wheat. Lewis (1958, pp. 175,

350) indicated a similar usage as that found in Shanti Nagar in the village of Rampur, which was also in the Union Territory of Delhi. Thus, the gifts given by the mother's brother and the feasting at a wedding, whether in the groom's or bride's village, were coupled by the lentils and rice placed before the mother's brother symbolizing the exchange of gifts for food, and at the same time the fertility (rice) essential to the marriage.

From a practical point of view, it would be difficult to finance marriages without the aid of mother's brothers. The following list of items brought to the groom's family illustrates the extent of such contributions. Headcloths, suits, and handkerchiefs were given to all the women of the family. The headcloths were decorated with silver which was auspicious. One was yellow and three were red. Gifts for the groom were an elaborate paper crown for the wedding, undershirts, shorts, socks, pink cloth for a turban, red material for a sash, shoes, slippers, some striped material, some yellow cloth, a pair of woolen trousers, and a sack of 101 silver rupees together with 200 additional rupee notes. All of these items were put on a platter, counted, and recorded in the family accounts. The women looked over everything, counted each item, and sorted them out for those who would receive them.

After the *Bhat* had been recorded, the mother's brother distributed rupees to all family heads of the groom's lineage and caste who were in attendance, during which time the band ceased to play and sat on the ground at the periphery of the group. The name of each recipient was recorded in the account book of the groom's family. A rupee apiece was given to the *tholladar* and lumberdar (former village officials), and for the Brahman and Jat meeting houses.

One mother's brother brought a bag of coins to be distributed to the lower castes. This offer was completely rejected. The father of the groom at this point said, "I've taken all I will take from you. Now you must decide the rest for yourself." Prior to this statement he had been more willing to accept the donation but when it became obvious that the village, including the Jats who were present, did not want the mother's brother to distribute so much money in opposition to the customs of Shanti Nagar, the groom's father had to decline the offer. The mother's brother, however, went around the village later with the groom's Nai Barber to distribute a rupee apiece to any females who had come from the mother's brother's village and married into Shanti Nagar. This distribution was customary.

Finally, the assembled village men persuaded the mother's brother to desist from giving and abide by village rules. He tried very hard to get them to accept a large charitable contribution for the village; as an argument, he told them that in his village Rs. 400 had been collected for their temple just from the gifts of mother's brothers at marriages. The main reason that the men in Shanti Nagar did not want to accept such amounts was because they would then be under pressure to give equally when they assumed the role of mother's brother. The men in Shanti Nagar had established rules so that these gifts would not escalate.

The personalities of the men were displayed in these discussions. For example, the father of the groom, who was tight-fisted with money and somewhat greedy, at first wanted to accept everything. But elder Jats and Brahmans convinced him and the mother's brother that this was improper. One man said, "This sort of thing goes back and forth for years and increases over time so we must abide by the village rules." The total amount the mother's brother brought to distribute was Rs. 301, of which Rs. 101 was for the groom's family. He retained most of the remainder. Not all mother's brothers brought this much money, nor did they all willingly distribute it as widely. Among the Chuhras and Chamars, the amount to be distributed might come to no more than Rs. 21 to be given only to members of the family and lineage.

For the *Bhat* for a Bairagi boy, there also was considerable difference because the Bairagis did not have much land or wealth, and there were only five Bairagi households. The presents which the mother's brother brought were similar, for there were clothes

for the women in the family and for the groom; but the rupees which were distributed were first to the heads of the Bairagi households, a rupee apiece. The Jats refused to take any rupees; there were four or five present. Three lumberdars said that their amount (a rupee apiece) should be put into the village fund. In addition, the mother's brother had brought one goblet and one small cake of brown sugar for each lumberdar, which they took. He also brought eight small brown sugar cakes, eight pitchers and eight 4-anna coins for the Watermen of eight Mann villages. These were distributed. Then the senior Jat present said, "You have done very well. We are very happy."

At the *Bhat* of two Bairagi boys married at the same time, the mother's brother brought double the usual wedding gifts because there were two grooms. Thus, the cash amounted to Rs. 201 instead of the customary Rs. 101. The other gifts, such as clothing, were also doubled. The groom's father's mother's brother also came with a gift of Rs. 51. His gift was called *Bara Bhat*. The *Bhat,* looked at from the point of view of the donor, was for the marriage of a sister's child (girl or boy); a *Bara Bhat* was for the child of a daughter's or sister's son. *Bara Bhat* might occur beyond these specified relationships, for example, a father's mother's brother's son might continue to give *Bara Bhat* when his father died if he maintained friendly relations with his father's sister's son. We also recorded one occasion when a Chuhra Sweeper gave a *Bhat* to his widowed son-in-law, in order, he said, to maintain good relations with the family.

The mother's brother of the bride brought his gifts to her village the day before the wedding ceremonies. The *Bhat*s for the groom and bride were celebrated at this time in order that the money and gifts might be used by the bride, groom, and other members of the family during the ensuing nuptial ceremonies. Sometimes a mother's brother might not be able to come until the day of the wedding ceremonies, in which case the *Bhat* was celebrated before the major wedding ceremony, the circumambulation of the fire, because the clothing brought for the bride and groom were usually worn at that occasion. There were some exceptions. Both Brahman and Chuhra brides indicated that some of them, at the time of going around the fire, wore the clothing brought by the groom's father. This clothing, however, may have been given to the groom and his family by his mother's brother.

In a Jat marriage, the bride's mother's brother not only gave clothing and Rs. 201, but he also brought a phonograph with a loudspeaker so that the sound of music carried throughout the village. During the four days of the wedding celebration, he played modern records loudly throughout the day until ten o'clock at night. Although the village regularly had a low level of noisc during the daytime, the night was usually quiet. After two days of the musical din, villagers and members of the wedding party became quite irritable. The day after the wedding 90 percent of the villagers had influenza. This is not to say that this epidemic was caused by the loud music since influenza is a contagious disease, but the lack of rest caused by the record player may have contributed to the lack of resistance against the disease. The villagers estimated that 800 guests had been fed at this wedding so it was not surprising that the epidemic spread quickly throughout the village.

The records which the mother's brother played on the phonograph consisted of two types: modern film music and what could be called "country music," that is songs consisting of buffoonery. The latter type was most popular in the village. Phonographs ordinarily were not a part of village life, but visitors to Delhi and large towns attended cinemas, listened to radios, and knew about phonographs. The playing of records at weddings, however, was a new urban influence.

The mother's brother also gave a rupee apiece to family heads of the lineage, the women in the bride's family, and other women from his village who had married into the village of the bride. The person who recorded the gifts received 1 rupee, which he accepted to establish the legality of the receipt

of these gifts. One rupee was paid to the Nai Barber of the family, who was present at the presentation of the *Bhat*.

In a Chuhra wedding, the mother of the groom and her only brother had apparently had a disagreement so that the mother's brother was not invited to the wedding and therefore gave no gift. It made quite a difference in what the groom received. However, he was a widower of 25 and not very concerned about gifts he would receive in the marriage. He said that he had never received any clothing in his first marriage.

During the *Bhat*, women sang songs. The following song was sung a number of times. In it, a woman derides her elder sister-in-law's five brothers who together gave little while her only brother brought a small fortune and was loving in his attitude toward her. This song is consistent with the abuse found in wedding songs. It contrasts right and wrong behavior.

My husband's elder brother's wife has five brothers,
But my mother gave birth to only one son and he is my only brother.
Her five brothers came. They brought 50 rupees.
They brought a shawl which they had borrowed.
My only brother came. He brought a lakh [100,000] of rupees.
He brought a shawl embroidered with gold.
When the *Bhat* was over and the five brothers were ready to go,
They said, "Oh sister, give us back the shawl."
When my brother was ready to go after the *Bhat*,
He said, "Oh sister, wear the shawl for me."

Neota

After the reception of the mother's brothers, *Neota* occurred in both the bride's and the groom's village. The literal meaning of the term, invitation, does not adequately convey the idea behind it. Lewis (1958, p. 354) has translated it to mean a "contribution to a wedding or birth ceremony." At *Neota* many friends of the bride or bridegroom made small loans to their families to assist with meeting wedding expenses. Although each individual loan was small, the total generally amounted to several hundred rupees, a significant amount in the financing of weddings. Every transaction was recorded in three books: the giver's, the receiver's, and the book of the Baniya Merchant or other recorder. The Baniya kept his own record as an impartial witness to the transactions. If a man could not write, the Baniya made entries for him as well. People entered into *Neota* transactions as a matter of respect and prestige. If a man had another kind of debt, he could say, "I don't have the money right now," but for *Neota* he could not defer payment. *Neota* obligations could be enforced in court but we never heard of such a case.

A relationship was initiated when one family lent a sum of money to another at *Neota*. The borrowing family paid back the original loan on the occasion of a wedding in the household of the lending family and added to it an amount equal to the original sum in order to maintain the relationship. For example, the head of Family A lent Rs. 5 to the head of Family B at the wedding of one of the latter's children. Family B celebrated another wedding and Family A lent an additional Rs. 5. When there was a wedding in Family A, Family B had to pay Rs. 15. Of this sum, Rs. 10 represented the repayment of outstanding loans, and Rs. 5, equal to the original loan, was for the purpose of maintaining the relationship. Had Family B desired to terminate the relationship, they would have paid only Rs. 10 to Family A.

A man inherited his father's *Neota* book—both the amount due to him and the amount he had to pay. The *Neota* system went on from generation to generation. One man stated that he had inherited his father's book, had cleared all debts that he and his father owed, and presently had Rs. 300 coming to him. At the marriage of his son within the next few years, he expected to receive a goodly sum at *Neota* and therefore would not have to pay much for the boy's marriage. In addition to the Rs. 300 which was owed him, he calculated that he would receive Rs.

300 or more in the form of payments to maintain existing relationshps or to begin new ones. If a family split into separate families, the heads of the new families decided how the *Neota* accounts were to be divided. They could either divide the people to whom payments were owed and from whom they were expected or they could divide each of the accounts.

Not all castes participated in *Neota* with other castes. The Gola Potters did not enter into *Neota* exchanges with any of the castes in the village other than their own. Neither the Chamar Leatherworker nor Chuhra Sweepers had *Neota* arrangements with the high castes. The Gola Potters, Chamar Leatherworkers, and Chuhra Sweepers established *Neota* relationships with members of their own castes both within and beyond the village, wherever they had friendly caste ties. The system of payment and record keeping was the same for these castes as for the high castes except that the records were kept by caste members rather than by the Baniya Merchant.

Other payments, not a part of *Neota,* occurred during the prenuptials and wedding days. At the investiture of the sacred thread, invited guests usually gave the family Re. 1. For example, three Gola Potters were invited to a Brahman investiture because they had ties to the Brahman family and each of them gave a rupee apiece.

Worship of the Potter's Wheel

The potter's wheel was worshiped by women in the villages of the bride and groom on the afternoon of the day preceding the wedding. All castes worshiped the potter's wheel at the time of marriage. Although it was a worship, the women enjoyed the singing, dancing, and playing of the band that accompanied the procession of women from the house of the bride or groom to the Potters' quarter. Either the mother of the groom or bride or a senior women in the family or lineage was the main actor in this worship. On one occasion when the senior woman wore a white headcloth and sari, other women would not let her proceed until they had covered her with a red headcloth. White was associated with shrouds and death and, therefore, was inauspicious and was not worn for marriage ceremonies; red, associated with marriage and happiness, was auspicious. Women wore white saris only in very hot weather if they were over 40 years of age. This senior woman was accompanied by members of her lineage and caste and friends from other castes, and was assisted by the Nai Barber woman who served her family. The senior woman carried a basket of foodstuffs to the Gola Potters' compound where two Potters each had a potter's wheel. Families had relationships with one or the other of these two Potters.

On arrival at the wheel of one of the Potters, the senior woman put down the tray which she had carried on her head. It contained turmeric, red string, and a pitcher of water. She then tied a red thread around the wheel, poured a little water on it, and drew five swastikas on its circumference. Then she joined her hands, palms, and fingertips together. When asked whether she had prayed at that time, the woman replied that she had not, but rather thought in her mind that just as pots came out of the wheel so the sons in the lineage would have children. This thought verified the worship of the potter's wheel as a fertility rite.

Next the woman proceeded to the house of the Potter at whose wheel she had worshiped. There she poured a little water on both sides of the doorway, and the Nai Barber woman put down the basket of supplies, which the senior woman then gave to the Potter's wife. It was customary for the high castes to give the Potter's wife whole wheat flour, brown sugar, rice, and oil at this time. For this payment, the family received some new pots. Jat and Brahman families gave 2.5 seers of each of the foodstuffs. This exchange of foodstuffs for pots for the marriage ceremonies was carried out by women of all castes at the time of worshiping the potter's wheel. Because the Nai Barber woman did not serve the low castes, the Potter woman carried the pots to their houses where she received some flour and two paise. Once when this occurred at a Chuhra household,

we were told that the Gola Potter woman had eaten a meal there on the occasion of the first oil bath of the groom and that her small son took sugar candy from the hands of the mother of the groom. The food, however, had been cooked by professional cooks of a Baniya Merchant caste.

During the worship and immediately thereafter the women in the procession danced and sang. Formerly, the women sang bawdy songs, but this practice stopped about 20 years ago. Men, women, or children along the route of the procession in the Potters' quarter watched the dancing and enjoyed the music. None of the high-caste men were present at the procession, or interested in the worship of the wheel, for this was an all-female event. In fact, the Arya Samajis and followers of Sanatan Dharma did not approve of their women dancing although they sometimes attended cinemas in which they saw women dancing.

The women from the Brahman and Jat castes carried home two new large pots for water, one of which they immediately decorated with a gold chain, the other with red threads. One of the women marked swastikas in turmeric on both sides of the pots. Seven small pots were placed in the basket in which the food supplies had been carried to the Potter. On returning home, the Nai Barber woman poured water on both sides of all the entrances to the family abode (the courtyard and two doorways) and placed the two large pitchers one on top of the other inside one doorway. These were filled with water, which would not be used until after the wedding when the bride and groom came from the bride's village. Then the couple would drink from these pots.

In the worship of the potter's wheel by low-caste women, the worshipers were generally from one lineage although occasionally women from another caste might accompany them, if they were on particularly friendly terms. Such joint participation was rare. Brahman and Jat women might go together for such a worship accompanied by the Nai Barber woman who served the family as well as any other women with whom they had friendly relations. For the high castes who were represented by only a few families, members of all the families of a caste went to the wheel accompanied by a few Brahman and Jat women. The biggest processions were those of Brahmans and Jats for not only were there more of them, but also members of other castes attended.

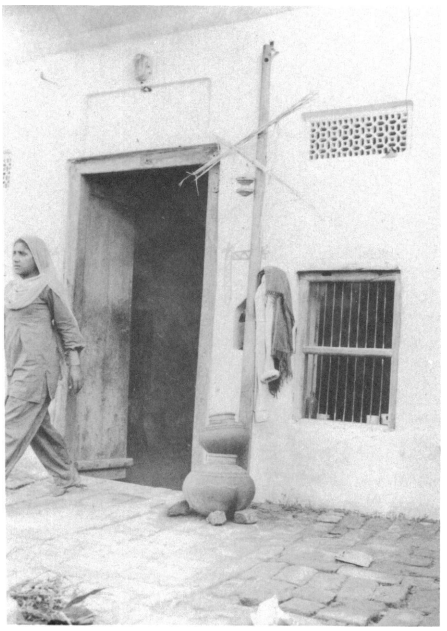

FIG. 12. *Mandap* erected at the marriage of a Brahman Priest bride. The pole is a plow beam. At the top are a triangle of straw and four clay dishes containing bread. At the base are two pots. The creeper design drawn on the wall behind the *mandap* is auspicious. Garments hanging on a peg in the wall are not part of the *mandap*. The woman wears the *kamiz* (shirt)-*silwar* (pants)-*dupatta* (headcloth) costume. Photograph taken in 1978.

MARRIAGE PAVILION (*MANDAP*)

The ceremony of the erection of the marriage pavilion formed a bridge between the worship of the potter's wheel and the wedding ceremony, known as *Pheras* (going around the fire). In the village of the boy it was merely symbolic, for the wedding ceremony took place in the girl's village. It was difficult to determine why it was carried out in the groom's village, other than as a mirror

FIG. 13. *Mandap* erected at the marriage of a Brahman Priest bride. Man removes a brick in courtyard and digs a hole so that the *mandap*, a male symbol, can penetrate the earth, a female symbol. Photograph taken in 1978.

image of the ceremony in the girl's village. None of our informants provided an explanation. Among some of the higher castes, the ceremony was often forgotten, or else a token performance took place. The Chuhra Sweepers had the most detailed ritual.

After the worship of the potter's wheel, the largely symbolic *mandap* in the groom's village was erected in the house or courtyard beside the two pitchers of water. The *mandap* consisted of the beam of a plow set vertically upon which were tied four small clay dishes containing different foodstuffs. Among Brahmans and Jats, the dishes were arranged so that two formed a closed container for coins and rice. Each dish had a hole pierced in the center so that the dishes could be strung on a red thread which was attached to a peg high on the plow beam.

In some Brahman households, a hole was dug by a son-in-law into which the plow beam was fitted and left standing until the bride and groom returned from the bride's village. Other families simply dug a hole and did not bother inserting the beam. The person who dug the hole was paid Rs. 1.25. In some higher caste houses, the *mandap* was no longer erected at the marriage of a boy because they regarded the marriage pavilion as part of the activities of the bride's family in her village. Both Brahmans and Jats, each in their own way, had eliminated a certain amount of what they considered folk beliefs possibly to Sanskritize ceremonies.

The Chuhra caste followed a similar ritual; in the cases we observed, it was slightly more elaborate than that of the Jats and Brahmans, but this variation may have reflected family rather than caste differences. Because Chuhras had no courtyards, a plow beam was erected either inside or outside the doorway as near to the threshold as possible. Two men in the lineage made a square of straws. The straws were tied together at each of the four corners with grass, and three of the sides had grass tied in the center. The four small clay dishes with holes drilled in the center were then threaded on a red string. Sometimes these were threaded so that two were in the center and formed a closed cup, and the other two were at either side of the central two with the curved part of the dish facing away from the center; or two each were cupped. The cupped dishes held either flour, coins, sugar, or rice. What was placed in these dishes depended on what was on hand. The red thread was attached to a stick which fitted into a hole in the beam. Thus, the clay dishes dangled from the thread. The plow beam, the pots, and the earth in which a hole was dug were fertility symbols; the plow, the masculine element; the pots, hole, and earth, the feminine.

The Chuhras used red thread to attach a

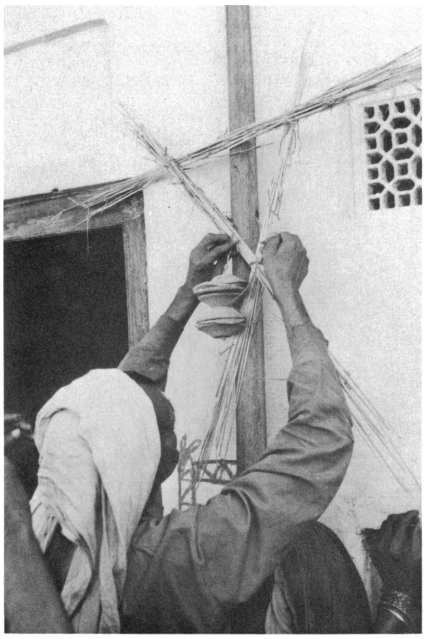

FIG. 14. *Mandap* erected at the marriage of a Brahman Priest bride. Brahman Priest attaches a triangle of straw and clay dishes to the *mandap*. The four dishes are drilled in the center and strung on a cord in pairs. The dishes of each pair are placed opening to opening to form an enclosed space in which are stored, in this case, small flat circular pieces of bread. Photograph taken in 1978.

rectangular, orange wrapping of paper decorated with many multicolored scraps to the top of the beam. The orange wrapping contained a slab of sugar and sawdust, all of which was purchased in a market place in the City of Delhi for four to six annas. Later the symbols for the marriage pavilion were drowned in the pond in a postnuptial ceremony.

When the *mandap* was erected, the head of one Chuhra household folded his hands and mumbled a prayer. Next, four men lifted the square of straw and fastened it around the top of the pole. Then an elder in the lineage said, "Victory to Sita and Ram," the ideal married couple. Not all Chuhra households used the square of straw, but rather followed a more simplified village ritual.

Of the seven clay dishes brought from the potter, four were suspended at the threshold of the houses of both bride and groom during the time of the marriage. The other three dishes were used in the last oil bath, when two were crushed by the groom. The seventh clay dish might be used to hold items for the final oil bath. These seven dishes were not always used in these ways, but the number seven was auspicious and ran through many of the rites for marriage.

The token *mandap* and two pitchers at the threshold of the bride's house symbolized the fireplace for the principal wedding ritual of going around the fire. The fireplace was located in the wedding pavilion which in the bride's village was set up outdoors, usually in an open space in the courtyard or compound. This marriage pavilion was decorated with scarves of many colors, pipal or mango leaves, or was an area marked off by placing pitchers at the four outer corners beyond the fireplace. Some weddings incorporated all of these features. In a few cases a canopy was used as at urban weddings.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE WEDDING PARTY

The mother's brother carried the groom from the last oil bath to be dressed for the final series of the prenuptial rituals in the groom's village before the departure of the marriage party (*barat*). The groom changed his undergarments himself, but the details of his suit, headdress, and auspicious marks were arranged by the Barber woman, a brother-in-law married to one of the seven sisters who participated in the bathing session, and sometimes one or more of his sisters.

One groom was elegantly arrayed with silver shields and a gold patch on his face, since both gold and silver were auspicious and marks of a king. Other grooms had turmeric on their cheeks. The arrangement of the headdress and sash were the tasks of the brother-in-law. The headdress was a gold paper crown; the sash around the waist would later be tied to the bride's clothing when the couple went around the fire for the wedding ceremony. The paper crown was arranged over a turban, which was green, pink, or yellow. First the turban was par-

FIG. 15. *Mandap* erected at the marriage of a Brahman Priest bride. Professional Brahman Priest ties a red thread around the *mandap*. Photograph taken in 1978.

tially twisted on the groom's head with the crown attached by two red strings on top of the turban; the rest of the turban was then twisted around the crown to hold it in position. Later when the groom rode the bus to the girl's village, the entire headdress was removed and carried in a hat box so that it would be fresh for the wedding. The groom wore modern, urban, Indian clothing: a bush shirt and trousers of colored material, a scarf tied around his neck and tucked into his shirt, new shoes, and a garland of gold tinsel around his neck. These items had been brought by his mother's brother. Grooms customarily carried a staff; the high castes, a polo stick; the low castes, an iron measuring-stick (*gaz*) to ward off evil.

Males who attended the wedding feast in the groom's village went as part of the wedding party to the bride's village. Included in the groom's party were the husbands of the groom's seven sisters. In the bride's village, these brothers-in-law attended him. Some of them traveled separately to the bride's village because they went directly from work. Male representatives of the groom's lineage along with the sisters' husbands, friends, members of other castes, and those with whom the family had good relations composed the marriage party. Since there were a number of castes consisting of only a few families and since the Brahmans and Jats only attended their events because of friendship and jajmani ties, these families did not have large wedding parties. Among the Gola Potters, Chamar Leatherworkers, and Chuhra Sweepers, only caste members went in the groom's party. A marriage party was dominantly male, but women were beginning to travel with the party, an index of lessening seclusion and segregation of women. For example, a married daughter, her husband, and their small children went in one party. This change was closer to urban practices.

Of great importance in the bridal party was the Nai Barber, for he had numerous tasks and his knowledge of many of the villages in the region was extensive. His long experience in weddings made him an authority on etiquette and a source of strength when the parents of either the bride or groom forgot an item, did not know how to carry out a ritual, or went to pieces when something went wrong. The other arbiters of custom were the professional priests and the *purohit*s who supervised the sweets. Professional cooks were as essential to these events as were caterers for weddings in America.

GROOM RIDES TO VILLAGE SHRINES

In full marital array, the groom mounted a mare and rode around the village to worship at its shrines, a ceremony known as

FIG. 16. Ceremony during the wedding of a Chamar Leatherworker bridegroom. Elderly Chamar woman, having carried some of the materials used for the *mandap* on a tray to the village pond accompanied by a crowd of women and children, prepares to throw remains into the water. Photograph taken in 1978.

Ghurchari. In the ceremonies we witnessed, only one groom rode a mare, the traditional procedure; the rest rode bicycles. The groom no longer went from his village to that of the bride by mare or bicycle but instead by bus. The purpose of riding the mare, according to villagers, was so that the groom "would ride a horse just like a king." A small boy was expected to ride on the mare with the groom, but a variety of practices occurred. In the case of a double marriage of two brothers, they rode a bicycle together. In two other marriages, a small boy rode with the groom, and in another, a small girl. When a young widower remarried, nobody rode with him because he did not know how to ride a bicycle and had trouble balancing himself. Cyclists and horseback riders often required assistance, given by the brother-in-law, who himself might not be very skilled so that others also helped. Since no one except the Gola Potters rode horses or donkeys, the custom of riding a mare seemed to be waning. The acquisition of a bicycle was a luxury which young men hoped to receive as a gift in a marriage although some of them had not yet learned to cycle. Even though the symbolism of the groom riding a mare denotes coitus, the transference to a bicycle retains similar symbolism. Mounting a horse or vehicle indicates separation, as in this instance, or incorporation, depending on when and where the activity takes place (van Gennep, 1961, p. 23).

The route taken to worship the village shrines began at the Bhumiya shrine to the male ancestor who founded the village, located near the Brahman Priest meeting house. After worshiping at this shrine, the groom's mother who accompanied him poured water over the shrine, pressed her palms together, then left 2 paise. Worship of Bhumiya was for perpetuation of the family line. Thereafter, the party reversed itself returning to the Jat lane from which it started and going to the Jat meeting house where it turned west and proceeded along the main street of the village where chiefly high castes lived. The procession continued a short distance past the western end of the village to a hillock and some underbrush, which was the shrine for the Seven Mother Goddesses of sickness, worshiped for the well-being of children. Adjacent to it was a hillock for five Muslim saints worshiped by the Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers. At the shrine of the goddesses again water was poured and palms pressed together. Then the procession circled the western end of the village and passed along an east-west street

FIG. 17. Route of wedding procession through the village to worship shrines.

through the low-caste section, arriving at the northeast corner of the village. Here two lanes intersected where bricks constituted a shrine for the worship of the Crossroads Mother Goddess, who protected children and in particular offspring born in Shanti Nagar. Persons departing from the village, such as daughters going to their husbands or sons leaving for a marriage, worshiped here. This corner was also the village bus stop from which the wedding party left. The remaining rites for the day of departure took place here. On auspicious occasions such as the departure of a wedding party, the circumambulation of the village was clockwise; on inauspicious occasions, such as the ceremony for exorcising an epidemic of cattle disease, counterclockwise. The circling of the village and its shrines was a magical, protective rite.

Once when the people assembled for *Ghurchari,* one of the women cautioned everyone not to sneeze. Sneezing was inauspicious. A sister of the groom, during the circumambulation, threw rice over him with her hand covered by a handkerchief. Both Brahman and Chuhra informants told us that the hand should always be covered while throwing rice. They considered it correct and auspicious.

Although everyone, male and female, worshiped at the Bhumiya shrine, the circumambulation of the shrines in religious ceremonies was most often carried out by women in Shanti Nagar. As a result, many adult males knew little about the Mother Goddess shrines, but all Chamars and Chuhras worshiped at the shrine of the five Muslim saints. Young males, who were to be married, simply bowed their heads there when their mothers prepared to worship or offer water.

When the Bairagi Beggar caste worshiped at the Bhumiya shrine, they used the term Sayyid (a Muslim term of respect) for the village ancestor. When a Chuhra Sweeper group started its procession, it featured a band of musicians and miming male dancers of its own caste members; all the women of the lineage accompanied the groom on his bicycle. At the Bhumiya shrine, the groom dismounted, put down his iron rod, bowed to the shrine, folded his hands, took up his rod, and continued on his way. When he approached the shrines of the Muslim Saints and Mother Goddesses, he stopped short of the hillock, dismounted, bowed, and folded his hands. He said he worshiped in this way because an ancestor of the Chuhras had been buried on the spot, where there was a small stone memorial for this ancestor. At the Crossroads Mother shrine, he dismounted at a point opposite the shrine and bowed to the pond because he said one should worship the water god and all other gods before marrying. He then bowed in the direction of the shrines for Kali and Kanti, mother goddesses of death and destruction and of typhoid, respectively. When he passed an old Chuhra Sweeper woman, who was not participating in the procession, she bowed her head and folded her hands. When passing the wealthiest Jat households, the Chuhras made a point of slowing down to put on a show. The drums boomed loudly. Some Jat women came out to bless the groom; the Jat men watched.

Because of the heavy schedule of events before the departure of the groom and his party, at the last moment some details might be either forgotten or skimped. For example, one wedding party was scheduled to leave at 3:30 A.M. Instead of all the ceremonies taking place before nightfall, as was customary, the last oil bath, the dressing of the groom, and the circling of the village were held immediately before departure. As a result, everybody had to be awakened about 2:30 A.M. The Nai had to attend all the members of the groom's party and assemble them at the bus stop. The groom took his bath, was dressed by his father's sister's husband, and then proceeded around the village on a bicycle. The father of the groom, who bore total responsibility for all the arrangements, was in a very harried state from trying to remember all the details so that everything would be done correctly if possible. However, he had promised the bus driver that the job would be finished by a specific time. Since bus drivers used their buses for nighttime wedding parties to earn extra money, timing was essential. As a result, when the hour of departure approached, the father of

the groom insisted that the visits to the shrines be reduced and that only Bhumiya be worshiped. Even so, the groom's mother tarried at the Bhumiya shrine for a few minutes with her offering and folded hands.

Accompanied by the nervous father who urged greater haste, the procession arrived at the bus stop where a cloth was spread for the groom to sit upon in preparation for the last ceremony, one of teasing and ransoming, indicative of separation. One of the seven married women, a sister-in-law, put kohl around the groom's eyes. First she drew kohl around one eye, and then teased until the father or mother of the groom promised to pay her the fee she wanted for her services. Usually the fee was from 1 to 10 rupees. In this case, the young woman asked for Rs. 100. Some of the young men standing around joined in the teasing. By then the father of the groom had lost his sense of humor and said, "Daughter, we shouldn't waste our time. Take the 10 rupees offered you," which she did, put kohl on the second eye, and the groom arose. Money was then circled over the groom's head by the seven women attendants. All of this money was put into a pitcher held by the Nai's young daughter, who assisted her father and mother. Then the father of the groom distributed some money; he gave 20 to 30 paise to the female Sweeper who served his family; some money to his Nai; and since at the moment he did not have enough for the seven women attendants, he gave his assurance that he would give them their dues when he returned.

When it was time for the Chuhra groom to have kohl drawn around his eyes and for the women to circle his head with coins, a sister-in-law applied the kohl. A number of women from several castes passed coins around his head and then dropped them in his lap. All of these coins were a gift to him. Brothers-in-law of the groom were paid Re. 1 each for holding the reins of the horse or helping with the bicycle and another rupee for putting on and taking off the groom's headdress. In a Brahman wedding, the son-in-law who held the reins of the mare asked his father-in-law for Rs. 100 for so doing. We were told that his request was honored.

Taking Milk from Mother's Breast (*Johari*)

In the last ritual before the departure of the wedding party, the mother offered her breast to her son. Depending upon the groom's age and the sentiments of the family and boy, the ritual was sometimes just a gesture. But in a number of cases the mother pulled her breast out from her shirt, and the son bent over to suck it. In giving the groom milk from her breast, some mothers followed the ceremony carefully and realistically but first sprinkled the groom with water. At a Bairagi marriage, the groom's mother was given Re. 1 by her elder married son when she gave the groom her breast. At the same time, the groom's mother gave her daughter's husband Re. 1 because he had erected the *mandap* at the groom's house.

Handmarks and Other Auspicious Symbols

At marriage as well as at birth, similar symbols were used to indicate protection, auspiciousness, and fertility. These symbols were handmarks, creepers, swastikas, and various other drawings. They were placed on the doorways of the lineage in which the birth or marriage took place, a practice sometimes extended to families with which the marrying household was friendly. For marriages the elder sister of the groom drew the symbols.

After the first oil bath, a square or a drawing of a goddess (Devi) was drawn on the wall inside the boy's and girl's houses and the prospective spouse pressed his or her palms which had been dipped in henna-colored water within this diagram. At the last oil bath, this action was repeated. Later when the groom was in the bride's house, the couple again made these handmarks, and when the bride came with the groom to his village for the first time, they completed the set of handmarks in his house. These handmarks

were considered auspicious. There was a belief that a mystical power emanated from them which strengthened and protected the marriage. They were made at times of birth and marriage, but never at death, and symbolized the life-giving process.

Summary of Prenuptial Ceremonies

Many of the symbols in the prenuptial ceremonies were similar and even those which were not overtly similar often had similar meanings; their analysis reveals that the main theme behind them was the tying together of the threads of life. As the actors moved on or off a stage, the threads were either tied together or cut, depending on the changes in status and role behavior of the participants in the ceremonies. Movements in space, from village to village, through doors, on horses or vehicles indicated separation or incorporation, depending on the context. The main actors were the prospective spouses; their families and kin were the supporting cast. These people represented the two sides of the marriage who individually and as groups were separated from or integrated into either or both sides.

Even though a ritual was for eventual union or integration, as were all prenuptial, nuptial, and postnuptial ceremonies, still a specific ritual could be separative or it might be both separative and integrative at the same time, depending on the various actors involved. For example, although the engagement party marked the first step in the direction of separation and liminality by the groom in moving from childhood to adulthood and becoming a householder, it also was a step toward the union of the bride and groom and the integration of their respective families. Most of the marriage ceremonies stressed ties that religiously and legally bound both sides to the marriage. As such, they gradually incorporated all the actors into interacting and related kin groups. The opposition of these two sides was the basis for socially predictable role behavior. The marriage songs not only commented on this role behavior but emphasized it by reversals and by indicating the conflicts and problems which arose when roles were not properly observed. The many ceremonies provided occasions for learning and relearning the proper role behavior for males and females in the various kinship roles they would assume through life as a result of being married. Not only did the prospective spouses have this opportunity, but everyone present at these ceremonies, even small children, became cognizant of the expected differences in behavior for individuals representing both sides of the marriage.

Separation and the transitional phase for the prospective spouses started with *Lagan* when the times and numbers of the oil baths were set for the bride and groom. Although from the time of engagement until *Lagan* both the boy and the girl were gradually incorporated with the opposite side, a genuine separation and liminality had not occurred. The *Lagan* ceremony and first oil bath marked this separation and liminality with the tying of the protective and auspicious red threads on the wrists (and in some cases, ankles) of the prospective spouses. Thereafter, both bride and groom were in a state of liminality which was gradually reduced only after the wedding day. During the beginning of this period of liminality, both boy and girl had to be purified for their first encounter with each other, for they were strangers. The purification by lustration (separative and incorporative) made it possible for two people from separate bloodlines to merge. Throughout the period of the baths, there was lineage feasting, a sign of social solidarity indicating that the two principal actors in this life drama were being supported by their kin group and community during the transitional phase.

Many of the prenuptial ceremonies, although taking place essentially in the liminal phase, prepared both bride and groom for their marriage. The worship of the potter's wheel, the erection of the marriage pavilion, the symbols of fertility, and the joking and gestures in addition to the song sessions alluded to the coming sexual roles of bride and groom. In the case of the groom, mounting the mare or bicycle, ransoming and teasing

by his sisters, taking milk from his mother's breast, and worshiping at the village shrines were separative and proclaimed the change from a non-sexual to a sexual role.

The initiation ceremony of a Brahman boy was another case of emphasis on the threads which tie life together, for the investiture of the sacred thread indicated that he had now attained manhood and was, therefore, marriageable and about to become a householder. The three fires at this ceremony symbolized the stages of life which a boy passed through in former times and stressed the changes in role that he underwent with each stage. The ceremony emphasized the separative, liminal, and incorporative phases of each stage as the boy passed successively from child to student of a guru, to beggar, to celibate, and finally to householder. In each of these stages, he acted out the main behavior to be learned for the next stage in his life; throughout the ceremony he learned the proper religious behavior expected of a Brahman. Much of this behavior was imitative; it drew on traditional concepts and content of learning: that one should do exactly what one's guru said, that one should worship all the deities, that one should use five colors in doing so, that the fire ceremony and its substances were purifying, that one should learn the Gayatri mantra and AUM. Changes in status were emphasized by changes of clothing and ceremonial regalia: untying the mantle, and then tying the loincloth with a strand of rope around the waist, placing the sacred thread in a traditional position during the ceremony, and at the end when the initiate had achieved his twice-born status, doffing the first thread and donning a second thread, as he would continue to do throughout his life, and as his kinsmen did along with him in celebrating this ceremony. The thread not only emphasized changes in status and separation, it and the threads of kinsmen incorporated the groom into the world of adult men in his lineage.

The initiation ceremony of a Brahman male in Shanti Nagar was a precondition of marriage and so rightly a marital ritual. It established his position as an adult within his own caste and the social hierarchy of his community. As a marital ceremony, it marked a change from an asexual to a sexual role, as did all marital rituals. Although among Brahmans the ritual behavior of a married man was of significance, females were ritually ranked as Shudras so there was no initiation for the female. Despite this lack, there was emphasis on the change in status from the asexual to the sexual role through the giving of the metal box to the bride. The sweets, fruit, and cosmetics (sweets for sexual pleasure, fruit for fertility, cosmetics for allure) emphasized her new role.

The reception of the mother's brother and his gifts not only helped with financing the wedding and reaffirmed the ties of kinship on both sides of the marriage, it also depicted the future role behavior that the boy himself would follow when his sisters married. For the girl, the same principle of reciprocal learning existed, for she knew that her brothers would in time serve as mother's brothers bringing money and gifts for the weddings of her children. The large number of financial exchanges reiterated the importance of financial matters in the life of a male householder.

NUPTIAL CEREMONIES

The wedding days were marked by the arrival of the groom and his party in the village of the girl and by a series of events lasting from two to four days beginning with the reception of the groom's party and ending with the departure of the bride and groom for the groom's village. Prior to the arrival of the groom and his party, the family of the bride was expected to have everything in readiness.

Arrival of Groom's Party

Because of the tight scheduling of ceremonies on the wedding day, the groom's party often arrived in the small hours of the morning or when the village was just awakening. This arrangement allowed the wedding party to be settled in its accommodations, to be given tea, and to go through a series of minor rituals preceding the wedding. Sometimes a party arrived too early,

and no one was awake to greet it. One overly anxious groom's father scheduled the departure of the bus for the middle of the night. When the wedding party arrived at the bride's village at 6:15 A.M., the father found that he had left the red carpet behind that he planned to spread for the meeting of the two fathers-in-law and the reception of the groom. Then he and the groom's party sat around for an hour or two in the chilly morning air waiting to be received. The prospective spouses were young and so accustomed to their elders controlling them that they calmly awaited instructions for the next event.

Both fathers could become very upset when something went wrong, especially when it was their own doing, for their prestige and the happiness of their children suffered when rituals were not carried out properly. Who could blame them since these marriages were complicated undertakings! Villagers were quick to criticize improperly conducted ceremonies. In the case of the forgotten red carpet, it was the groom's Nai Barber who found a carpet in the bride's village, smoothed the ruffled feathers of the groom's father, and saw that the reception moved smoothly.

Meeting of Fathers-in-Law (*Milni*)

On the arrival of the wedding party at the bride's village, the Nai for the high castes or a member of the wedding party for the low, informed the father of the bride or one of his elder brothers that the groom's party had arrived. The girl's father or whoever was acting for him then greeted the party and saw that they were comfortably quartered. The father of the bride at this time gave the groom's father from 1 to 5 rupees; in general, the bride's family gave gifts to the groom's family rather than the reverse, for in marriage, the bride's family had a status inferior to that of the groom's family. The term, *Milni,* was applied to this meeting as it had been used every time that the two fathers-in-law met from the time of the engagement to the time of the wedding. At each meeting, the bride's father had presented the groom's father with a rupee or two. Lewis (1958, pp. 158, 179, 353) has used *Milni* in a more limited way, apparently reserving it for the reception of the wedding party and the meeting of the fathers of the bride and groom with the presentation of rupees to the groom's father.

With this ceremony concluded, the host provided accommodation and supplies for the groom's party: a fire, water, towels, and soap. Around 7:30 A.M. tea and coconut sweets were served. The wedding party then settled down to waiting: some members played cards, hookahs were filled and smoked, and wise old men who had attended many a wedding slept.

Ceremonial Greeting of Groom's Party (*Barat Lena*)

Meanwhile a place was arranged for a ceremony for the groom. A carpet was laid down and a sheet placed over it where the groom sat cross-legged waiting for the formal reception by his father-in-law. Sometimes this reception took place in a village meeting house if there was one for the caste in which the wedding occurred. For high castes, *Barat Lena* was conducted by a Brahman although in one Jat marriage a swami officiated.

The bridegroom, the priest, and several male members of the girl's family participated in the ceremony. The priest dabbed a tilak on the boy's forehead, sprinkled him with water, and recited mantras. These rituals acknowledged the sacred state of the groom, purified him for the coming wedding, and at the same time indicated integration into the kinship fold of his bride. The girl's father gave Rs. 101 to the priest who in turn presented the money to the boy, who passed it along to his father. At the same time, the father of the girl provided two brass pots filled with sweets. They cost approximately Rs. 15–20, and were tied with the ubiquitous, auspicious red thread. The pots were part of the dowry of household goods and symbolic of the sexual and nourishing roles of the wife. When the ceremony was performed by the swami for a Jat marriage, the swami piled three cloths on the boy's lap, a coconut, Rs.

101, and a fruit-flavored sweet. He recited the traditional eight mantras and otherwise conducted the ceremony as would a professional Brahman priest.

In a double Chuhra wedding, the bridegrooms did not arrive together because one worked in the city and came straight from work. The ceremonial exchange was enacted between the two fathers-in-law, but there was no formal reception of the marriage party. The grooms were fed separately from the marriage party, at least for the first meal before the wedding ceremony, as a groom should not enter a bride's household until after the wedding. The rule was customary for all castes. The bride's family, in the case of the Brahman caste, fasted before the wedding because they said, "We think so much of the girl," The father, father's brothers, father's father, father's mother, mother, and mother's brothers and sisters, all on the girl's side, fasted until the circling of the fire in the wedding ceremony had taken place. As a matter of fact, in all weddings, the parents of the girl were so busy that we never saw them or other members of the family or lineage sitting or eating.

Ceremonial Welcome of Groom by Bride (*Barauthi*)

At the conclusion of the reception of the wedding party, the groom in full regalia mounted a mare or bicycle and, accompanied by his male attendants, rode to the bride's house for *Barauthi*. He was escorted by the band which played loudly, as it continued to do intermittently throughout the day. Rites carried out at a threshold or gateway are transition rites (van Gennep, 1961, p. 20).

The *Barauthi*, the ceremonial greeting of the groom by the bride (cf. Lewis, 1958, pp. 158, 180, 349), was the first time the two saw each other. As the approaching party was heralded by the sound of the band, the women in the bride's house began to sing.

You have come here beating drums at our place for marriage.
You have left your boundary now and have entered our boundary.
You have left your mother and sister and have come to our place for marriage.
You have come here beating drums at our place for marriage.
I sent for fair people, but all the dark complexioned people came.
They were so fat they weighed five seers each.
I called for young males but all the old men weighing 2½ seers each came.
All those who weighed 2½ seers sat on the shoulders of those who weighed five seers and came to our place.
I sent for curly-haired people, but all those who were bald-headed came.
I called for an English band but all the dumb [silent] came.
I called for those who wear sandals but all who came were barefooted.

This song mildly and humorously teased the opposite side. Everything in the song is just the opposite of what it should be. Although the oppositions were to avert misfortune, they emphasized what was least desirable. Van Gennep (1961, p. 19) uses the concept of boundary lines between strangers, as do the villagers, to demarcate the difference between the strangers who form the two sides of a marriage.

When the groom arrived at the courtyard gate, the female members of the bride's family had already gathered there. Sometimes a sheet was spread on the ground or a stool placed at the doorway for the groom to sit upon. Two men from the bride's house held a dhoti or white sheet in front of the bride. Thus, the doorway and interior of courtyard and house were barred to the groom who could not enter until after the wedding. On the groom's approach, the bride threw a handful of rice over his head from behind the sheet indicating fertility and perpetuation of the groom's lineage; then she came out and draped a garland of flowers (procreative) over her bridegroom's headdress, resting it on his shoulders. Taking nim leaves in her right hand and dipping them in a pot of water held by one of the seven sisters attending her, she sprinkled and tapped the groom three times with the leaves. She said nothing but was supposed to think of God. The purpose of the ritual was to prevent anyone from "playing magic" on the groom. Informants

said it was an old custom and that there were protective powers in the water and nim leaves. One man said that if this ritual was carried out, the groom had more strength in his body, could resist sickness, and in his next birth would again be a human being. It was also a form of ceremonial blessing, indicating another step in the integration of the groom into the kinship network of the bride and her family. However, the barrier sheet indicated that the groom was still partially a stranger. The protective rites were as much protection for the girl and her family as for the groom.

When the bride finished her part in the ceremony, she immediately ran back into the house. She was dressed nicely for this event for the first time since she began her oil baths. She again put on her old, dirty clothes, and wore them until after her last oil bath, to be taken just before the wedding.

Next, one of the seven sisters who attended the bride rotated a tray with lighted candles before the groom. This ceremony was called *Arati* and was usually performed in the worship of a deity. The groom was being honored as though he were a little god and king.

Last Minute Activities

A time of intense activity began in order to complete all the details and minor rituals before the wedding ceremony. The groom and his attendants were fed. The girl took her last oil bath and was arrayed in her wedding finery, the marriage pavilion was erected, and the priest prepared the fireplace and the squares on the ground within the pavilion for the wedding. All of these events as well as *Chunri, Neota,* and part of *Kanyadan* took place concurrently.

Father of Groom Presents Ornaments to Bride (*Chunri*)

The groom's father was expected to give jewelry and a full set of clothing to the father of the bride for the girl. In one Brahman wedding, the boy's family gave the bride five sets of silver ornaments for her ankles and legs, a silver neck ornament, two gold wrist bangles, earrings, and other additional gold jewelry; the total cost was Rs. 1500. Brahman families gave two sets of clothing: the first set before the day of the wedding, and the second set with the jewelry at the time of the wedding. There were conflicting ideas regarding which sets of clothing should be worn at weddings to the point that the matter was discussed openly. The groom was expected to wear what his mother's brother brought, the traditional set of clothing, but gifts from the girl's side or in his own family, if the family was well off, might tempt him to wear a different scarf or shirt. Most informants indicated that brides, too, should wear what their mothers' brothers had given; but in Brahman and Jat families they might wear what the father of the groom had brought. In Chuhra weddings the groom's family customarily gave the ornaments and clothing which the bride wore.

Along with *Chunri* at Brahman weddings *Rang* took place when the groom's father presented the metal box of cosmetics, dried fruit, sweets, and red threads used to tie the braids of the bride. These threads, always given in the marriages of Brahmans and Baniyas, indicated the twice-born status of the girls, and the tying of all the threads of life together, a Sanskritic emphasis. The threads as well as the cosmetics used only by a married woman and the fruit and sweets for fertility and sexual pleasure, not only forecast the future married status of the young woman, but also marked her integration into the family of her husband-to-be.

THREE WEDDING MODELS

We present three models for weddings, that of Sanatan Dharma, the orthodox model; that of the Arya Samaj, the reform cult of Hinduism; and that of the Chuhra Sweeper caste. In the first two, a professional Brahman priest performed the ceremonies; in the third, a Chuhra Sweeper conducted the ceremony. All three ceremonies had a fire which the boy and girl circled, an act that resulted in marriage in the eyes of the community.

The degree to which Sanskritic ceremo-

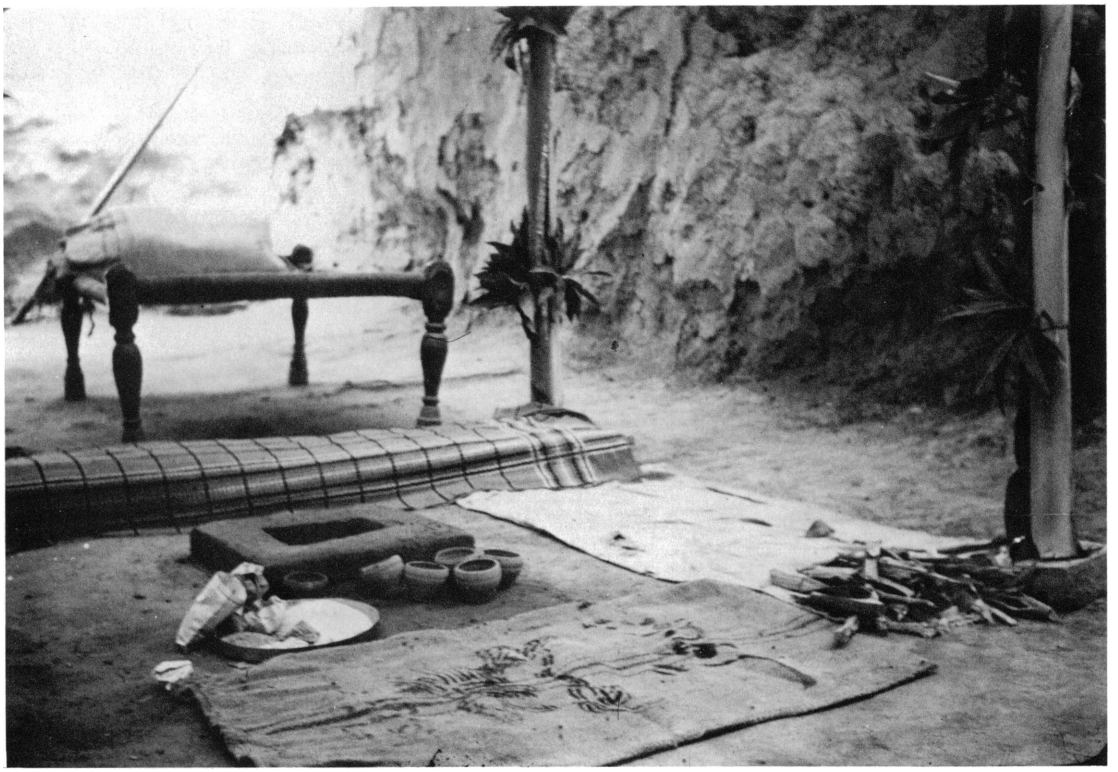

FIG. 18. Marriage pavilion and *havan kund* for a Jat wedding.

nies and rituals were celebrated depended upon the caste, the wealth of the families, and individual preferences in the two households. Every marriage differed to some degree from another, but basically each ceremony generally conformed to one of the three models. Even though there were three identifiable models, they had many similar features; thus, in practice there was a continuum from the Brahman to the Chuhra model. Each ceremony displayed Sanskritic characteristics and the influences of literacy and urbanization. For Brahman Sanatan Dharma and Arya Samaj Jat weddings, the presiding priests were educated Brahmans who had gone to higher secondary school or beyond. The Arya Samaj priest who officiated in Shanti Nagar had received his B.A. with honors in Sanskrit, taught Sanskrit in a higher secondary school, and was well informed about the samskaras and modern changes regarding priestly practices. For example, he noted, "Today, a family can call anybody as a priest. Formerly, there was a fixed priest for every family. This system died out about 20 years ago."

All the priests were extremely helpful to us in explaining what they did and why they did it. They were so cooperative that wedding guests sometimes complained because they delayed the start of the ceremony or because they conducted a longer and more complete ceremony than was essential. The Arya Samaj priest gave the equivalent of marriage sermons to the bride and groom and to the assembled wedding guests, which was customary among followers of the Arya Samaj but which may have lasted longer than usual because of our presence. The priest in a Chuhra wedding was a member of the Chuhra caste who read Hindi. He could not read Sanskrit, nor was he very familiar with

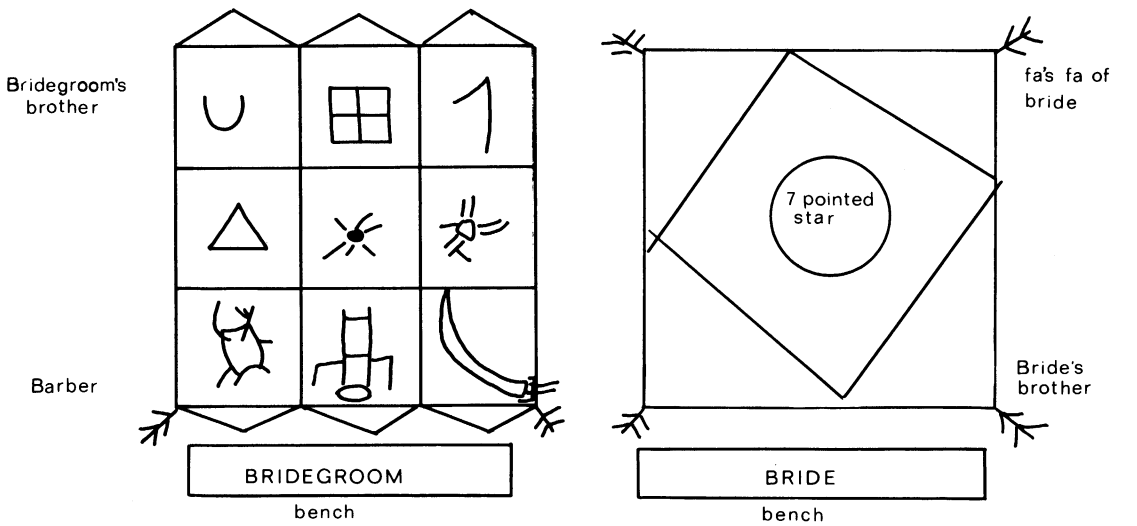

FIG. 19. Diagram of an altar used by a Brahman Priest for a Brahman wedding. The nine *grahas* are represented on the left square. Comparison of the symbols for the *grahas* with figures 6 and 11 indicates some differences, which depend on the artistry of the officiating professional Brahman Priest. The fire is on the right square.

Sanskritic tradition. In all cases, the father of the bride paid the priest for conducting the marriage. The sum differed from family to family and caste to caste.

Stevenson (1971, p. 82) for the period before 1920 stated that only 10 ceremonies were considered essential in a wedding: washing the groom's feet, sipping honey, rice-throwing, date-naming (setting an auspicious time for the wedding), present-making, clothes-donning, bride-giving, oath-taking, seven steps, and feeding. Her descriptions included more events in much greater detail than any weddings that we witnessed. Of the 10 rituals she listed, the only one which was eliminated from the rites of marriage at Brahman weddings was clothes-donning. At one time clothes given in marriage were donned during the ceremony, but Stevenson (1971, p. 79) indicated that even in her time the young couple put them on beforehand because to do so during the wedding was inconvenient.

WHERE WEDDINGS TOOK PLACE

Weddings took place either in the courtyard of the dwelling place of the bride or in a compound or yard immediately adjacent to the bride's dwelling, rarely inside a house. A marriage pavilion was erected in part of the area so that guests sat in the courtyard outside the pavilion. The pavilion was reserved for those participating actively in the wedding rites.

THE FIREPLACE (*HAVAN KUND* OR *VEDI*)

The terms *havan kund* or *vedi* were used interchangeably for the fireplace or square where the fire burned during the wedding ceremony. *Havan kund* was a general term used for a fire burned during a samskara. *Vedi* was used only for the wedding fire. Shortly before the wedding ceremony, women in the family prepared the area for the fire by plastering it with cow dung in preparation for the priest's ritual diagrams. There were three different styles of drawing depending on the officiating priest and the specific caste in which the wedding occurred. Among Brahmans, a professional Brahman priest officiated who was a follower of Sanatan Dharma. He drew two squares: a large square divided into nine small squares representing the nine *grahas* to his right, and another smaller square to his left on which a seven-pointed star within a circle was

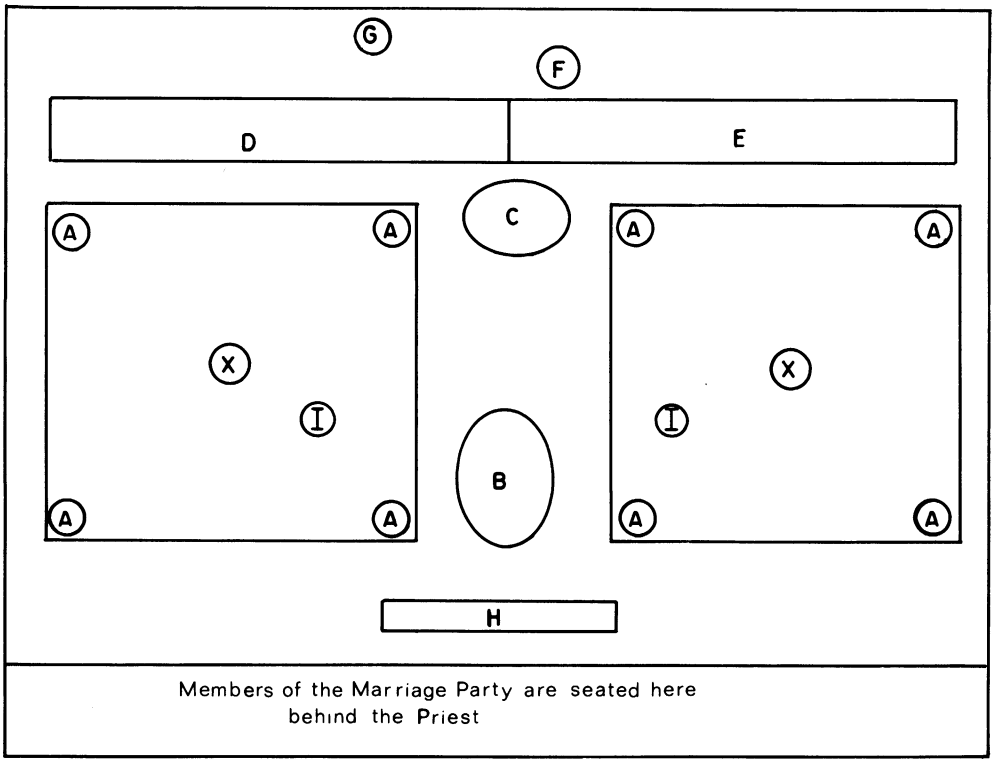

FIG. 20. Diagram of altar and seating arrangements for a Chuhra Sweeper double wedding. In each square, one for each couple, is a multicolored design. Key: A, peg around which red thread is wound; B, ghee and wicks in an aluminum cup; C, sandalwood; D, two string seats for one couple; E, two wooden benches for other couple; F, two pitchers brought from the worship of the potter's wheel; G, *mandap*; H, bench for priest; I, stone around which red thread is tied to represent Ganesh; X, half of a coconut shell containing oil and four wicks.

drawn for the fire. When an Arya Samaj professional Brahman priest officiated at Jat weddings, he drew only one square with a five-pointed star, consistent with Arya Samaj practices.

For a double Chuhra wedding, there was a square with no star for each couple. Instead of a star, a coconut shell with four wicks in it was centered on the square to hold the fire, and some drawings were traced around it. There were pegs at the four corners of each square around which red threads were wound. Further, small earthen cups were placed at each corner. In the center between the two squares were placed a container with sandalwood powder, another with clarified butter, and additional wicks. For the Chuhra Sweeper wedding all the preparations were in the hands of the women of the household. A priest was not involved in the preparations.

BRAHMAN MODEL

The drawings of the two squares in a Brahman wedding were similar to those prepared for initiation. Additional preparations for the wedding ceremony could be quite elaborate. For the fire itself, there were ghee and sandalwood, dishes containing rice, honey and curd mixed together, sugar, and water. The priest placed glasses holding flowers and pieces of incense around the fireplace and nine *grahas*. A stone representing Ganesh was placed at the priest's right hand above the square with the nine *grahas*. All the

pitchers and little dishes filled with ceremonial substances had red threads tied around them. Leaves and orange petals floated in the containers of water. Mango leaves were strung across the doorways of the household of the bride and two adjacent households to form a marriage bower as part of the pavilion.

The priest, explaining the symbolism of the paraphernalia used in conjunction with the fire, said: "The string is tied on the spoon so God will take care of the boy and girl just as a brother ties a string on his sister's wrist at Rakhi Bandhan [a festival for expressing the bonds of affection between brother and sister]. There is a large stone to which the bride and groom touch their feet; it is similar to a mountain which is firm so that the husband and wife will be firm." The priest indicated that one glass was filled with water from the Ganges River, and that there were three small clay dishes—one filled with flowers, two with water. Another clay dish filled with honey and curd was so that the relationship between husband and wife might be sweet and pleasant.

About to begin the ceremony, the priest instructed the wedding guests to sit cross-legged on the ground, explaining that by so doing they would be nearer the deities. Some had been sitting in chairs, and were told that they should not sit in high places when near the deities. The inference was that the deities ranked higher than humans, who should behave accordingly.

Then the priest filled small clay saucers with sandalwood and kusha grass, four on each side of the square for the fire, and placed kusha grass on the two small squares representing the sun and the moon. He arranged an assortment of leaves—*jamun*, mango, and pipal, all auspicious, and flowers in a pitcher of water which represented the ancient Vedic deity the priest identified as Varuna, who is considered to be the "universal encompasser, the all-embracer," and "a personification of the all-investing sky, the maker and upholder of heaven and earth," often associated with water and flowers (Dowson, 1950, pp. 336, 338).

The coming of the groom was announced by the playing of the band in the distance. When he entered in his finery, young girls seated around the marriage pavilion sang, "You have come here beating drums at our place for marriage," sung earlier when the bride greeted the groom.

Ganesh Worship

The first part of the wedding ceremony opened with the worship of Ganesh. (Stevenson, 1971, p. 75, described a lengthy ceremony from which this worship may have derived.) According to the priest who performed the ritual, Ganesh worship is first in the wedding ceremony because once a god challenged the rest of the gods to a race. Since Ganesh won, his worship is first in a wedding, consistent with the emphasis on good fortune and fertility, the foci of a wedding.

In the wedding most illustrative of the Brahman model, the father's father of the bride assisted the priest. The ritual began with the priest handing rice to the old man to throw into the fire while he himself sprinkled Ganges water around the marriage pavilion to purify it and everyone present. This scattering of water around the marriage pavilion and particularly the groom was said to be a substitute for washing the feet of the groom, a former custom. The Brahmans said they had given up this practice because it was demeaning.

Next, the priest recited mantras while holding rice in his right hand, which he then threw on the stone representing Ganesh. He followed these acts by pouring Ganges water into the grandfather's cupped hands (right over left), which the old man sipped. The grandfather promised his son's daughter to the groom and the groom reciprocated by receiving rice from the priest in his cupped right hand and promising to take the bride. He reaffirmed the fertility-fortune symbolism by throwing rice and water on the Ganesh stone. The priest terminated the worship by asking the groom to pour some of the Ganges water on the pitcher representing Varuna.

Sun Worship

This worship was to the solar diety. The Nai Barber attending the groom lifted the strands

of the headdress shielding his face so that the young man might lift his face to see the Sun. (In one wedding ceremony, this worship occurred at night.) The groom then looked at the symbol of the Sun in the center square and at the squares representing each of the other eight heavenly bodies as the priest named them one by one, after which the bridegroom scattered rice on all the squares, the priest, the flowers, and his grandfather.

After completing the worship of Ganesh, the priest told a little story to explain Rahu and Ketu, the ascending and descending nodes of the moon. He said, "When the god Vishnu gave holy water to all of the gods, a ghost appeared. By mistake Vishnu gave him water. The Sun and the Moon complained so Vishnu cut off the head of the ghost. The head is Rahu and the lower part or tail is Ketu" (Dowson, 1950, pp. 252, 253; Daniélou, 1964, p. 316).

Purification, Fertility, and Sweetening the Marriage

In preparation for the rituals to come, the priest tied red thread around the grandfather's right wrist and gave him additional thread to tie around the groom's right wrist, together with a garland for the groom's neck. A local schoolmaster and relative of the family assisted the grandfather. A series of items were passed from priest to grandfather to groom: Ganges water, a dish of kusha grass, flowers in water, and rice. The priest instructed the groom to drop some of the rice on each of the squares for the nine *grahas*. On instructions from the priest, the groom lifted the container of Ganges water with his right hand and sipped it for purification and fertility. The priest handed the dish of honey and curd to the grandfather and told him to show the groom how to lift it in his left hand so that no dirt would fall into it. The groom did so and was instructed by the priest to turn his thumb into it three times and drink from it three times, after which he placed it above the square with the nine *grahas*. These actions of the groom were supposed to ascertain that no insects were attracted to the honey, for it would be most inauspicious to eat one by accident at this time. The mixture of honey and curd was to sweeten the marriage. The priest passed a glass of Ganges water to the groom, instructing him to wash his hands. He tossed some red string to the groom who was told to fold his hands around the string and then pass it over his chin, eyes, ears, nose, knees, and shoulders (for taking on his essence) after which the string was returned to the priest for use in a later ceremony. The brother of the groom started to pour more ghee on the fire, but the priest told him to wait and allow the fire to burn down.

After finishing this part of the ceremony, while awaiting the bride, the father's father of the bride presented the groom with Rs. 1.25, which the groom passed to his brother, who passed it to the elder brother of the girl's father to hold until the end of the ceremony. The Nai Barber helped bring items and substances needed for the next part of the ceremony: a plate of burning dung to add to the fire, more sandalwood, rice, and red string. The priest asked him for a cloth. Then the priest took the crown to be worn by the bride, a piece of white paper decorated by cutouts, and attached red strings to it. The priest drew a swastika with turmeric paste in one corner of it.

Entrance of Bride Carried by Mother's Brother

As was customary, the bride's mother's brother carried her wrapped in a large white mantle, part of her wedding outfit showing below it, and seated her to the right of the groom on her own bench. On the right side of the bride between her and the priest sat her brother and then her father's father. To the left of the groom sat his brother and his Nai Barber, both of whom assisted in the ceremony when needed.

Blessing and Crowning Bride

After the bride was seated, the priest placed rice in her cupped right hand to throw on the square with the nine heavenly bodies.

He passed turmeric to her grandfather so that he might place a tilak on the bride's forehead, and then a garland to be passed over her head. The paper crown was handed to the girl's brother to tie on her head.

Fixing Bride and Groom in Position

The priest placed four red strings in a dish and handed the dish to the groom, who gave two strings to the girl's brother, put the third string on the bride's left knee, and the fourth string on his own knee. This ritual was to ensure that the bride and groom remained in place. It was symbolic of a past custom when small children were married. Stevenson (1971, p. 82) described a somewhat similar custom where lengths of string were wound around the groom's and bride's forearms and necks like a chain: ". . . the priest is supposed to look at them when they are seated, measure with his eye the distance they are from each other, and then make the thread exactly the requisite length." But in Stevenson's day and in Shanti Nagar, the bride and groom moved back and forth as was necessary.

Viewing Each Other

Having positioned the couple, the priest instructed them to look into each others' faces, which they did although the bride's face was completely covered and the groom's had masking strands hanging from his headdress. In ancient times the couple was allowed to view one another; if they did not like what they saw, they could call off the wedding (Stevenson, 1971, p. 79).

Tying Together

The grandfather placed rice and flowers in the hands of the couple while the groom's brother united them by tying the traditional sash worn by the groom to the mantle of the bride. (In one wedding, neither bride nor groom wore these sashes so the headcloth of the girl and the neckscarf of the boy were tied together with red threads.) Then the priest handed flowers to the brother of the girl asking him to recite mantras along with him, after which the priest removed the four restraining red strings so that the bride and groom could move. At this point, a man in the audience fired a gun, a usual occurrence in all weddings, and obviously non-Sanskritic.

Although Stevenson indicated that one of the 10 essential rites was naming the date and the auspicious signs for the time of marriage, in both Jat and Brahman weddings the genealogy of those to be married was recited instead. In this model of a Brahman wedding, the Nai Barber requested this information from the grandfather of the girl—an old-fashioned touch from the time when Nais arranged marriages. The grandfather named both the boy's and the girl's *gotra,* then the names of their fathers, and then the names of the bride and groom themselves. This was only a token genealogy to symbolize the legitimacy of the marriage.

Children who were present at the wedding ceremony became restless, and the priest admonished them to be quiet.

Thumb and Cow Rituals

The priest asked the grandfather to touch the girl's right thumb to the boy's right thumb. This done, a male relative of the groom handed 1 rupee to the grandfather of the bride. The touching of thumbs was said to ensure the fertility of the wife. The rupee was a token payment for a cow, namely, the girl; the transaction was also a fertility ritual. This sum was passed to a relative standing nearby who kept a record of the gifts given to the bride or to her father during the wedding ceremony. This ritual giving, which was called *Kanyadan,* consisted of a series of presentations begun by the thumb and cow rituals. The payment of 1 rupee for the girl indicated that she had passed as a property from her natal family to her family of marriage.

Kanyadan

Kanyadan has a twofold meaning: the act of bestowing the bride in marriage, and the

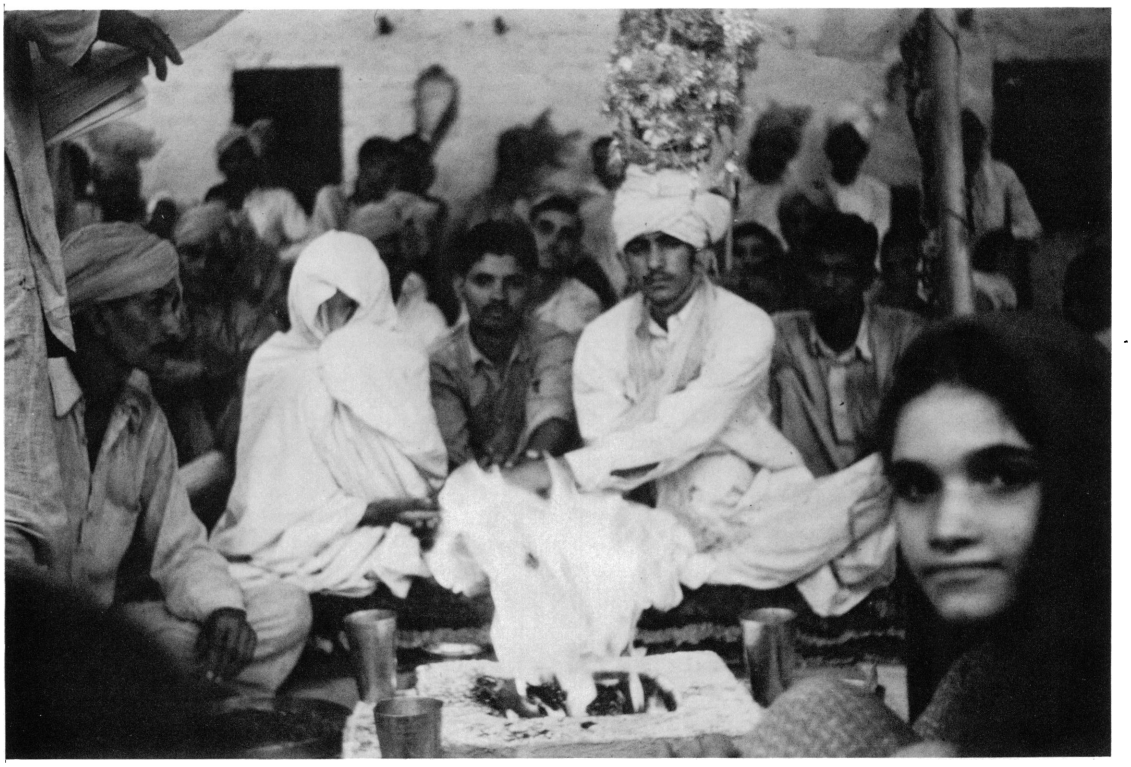

FIG. 21. A Jat wedding just before the bride and groom circumambulate the sacred fire.

giving of gifts to her and her father. In the Brahman model, a chaotic session of gift-giving ensued during which relatives, lineage, and caste members of the bride's family donated jewelry and money to her and cash donations to her father. Relatives identified as donors were mother's brothers, sisters, brothers, both real and classificatory, neighbors, and friends. In addition, the girl's grandfather presented her with a necklace and ring. The man recording the gifts called out the names of the donors and described the gifts. Later a full record was entered on the books of the family.

At *Kanyadan,* generally, one gave whatever one liked or was able to give. For those people not directly related to the bride's family through blood, marriage, or friendship among the high castes, it was customary to give 1 rupee. Among the poorer castes excessive giving was discouraged if the members of the family knew that in time they might have to reciprocate.

A Brahman discussing *Kanyadan* said that a person contributed 1 rupee in *Kanyadan* and then ate 2 rupees worth at the wedding feast so that *Kanyadan* was useless. He spoke from experience, having recently provided an expensive wedding for his daughter. He added that if a friend wished to help at the time of a marriage, he would donate Rs. 100; however, such a sum eventually had to be reciprocated. Although *Kanyadan* was said to be a religious act and did not have to be repaid, the pressure to return a gift was ever present in a society where one's prestige was at stake. The people of Shanti Nagar understood only too well Mauss's theory of the gift, that there was always pressure on the recipient to return the gift (Mauss, 1967, pp. 1, 54–55, 58).

A wealthy Jat's sister's daughter was mar-

ried and a man from another caste donated Rs. 11. When the donor's daughter was later married, the wealthy Jat attended the wedding and gave Rs. 51. He explained that in *Kanyadan,* he could give anything he wanted to give and that his larger gift was determined by his higher status, wealth, and prestige.

Kanyadan had many possibilities. Relatives might give a variety of gifts including a cow. All that was given by the girl's father and her relatives went to the bride; all the money given by villagers went to the father of the girl to help with the wedding expenses. The bride's father might himself donate a cow. This presentation was either by promising a cow or presenting the amount, in which case, the father of the groom was obliged to buy a cow with the money; he could not use it for anything else. The gift of a cow occurred more often in Brahman weddings for it was considered an act of religious merit. In the *Kanyadan*s of Brahmans, relatives circled the head of the bride before presenting gifts of money. Circling is always a protective ritual. In this case, it occurred because the girl was being separated from her natal family and would gradually be incorporated into her family of marriage.

Taking the Rounds (*Pheras*)

The priest and his assistants took advantage of the ceremonial pause provided by *Kanyadan* to build and light a fire, using sandalwood and ghee, on the designated square in preparation for the most important part and climax of the wedding rituals. As usual, the priest also chanted mantras, which added to the din created by *Kanyadan.*

When the fire burned brightly, the priest instructed the young couple to stand; then a large reddish pink headcloth, similar to the white sheet which separated the bride and groom at their first short meeting, was held briefly in front of the couple. The couple was instructed to look at each other. This ritual, a tradition from the past, was a propitiation of the God of Death, Yama. Stevenson (1971, p. 86) indicated that before circumambulating the fire an offering formerly was made to Yama and that it was carried out by the priest behind a curtain—the idea being to hide or cover anything inauspicious at the time of a wedding. The people of Shanti Nagar adhered to the same principle.

Four boys stood at each corner of the fireplace to ensure the safety of the girl as she walked around the fire since she was practically blindfolded by her mantle. Before starting the circumambulation, the priest again added ghee and sandalwood to the fire, placed rice in the hand of the girl's mother, which she threw into the fire three times, and instructed her from time to time to pour ghee on it. This was the first and only instance of participation by the bride's mother; it did not occur in Jat or other weddings.

The boy and girl started the rounds with the girl in front. At the beginning of each round, the groom's brother placed the left foot of the bride and groom on the stone that represented a mountain. A young boy held an open fan horizontally with rice on it and extended it at the beginning of each circumambulation so that the couple could take some rice and throw it into the fire on each round. The girl preceded the boy for three rounds; then the boy went in front for the last four rounds. After taking the rounds, they again sat on their benches. Until the couple took the seven rounds, they were not married.

The boy holding the fan of rice poured the balance into the fire, and the priest dropped his remaining rice on the square symbolizing the sun. The priest then read the following series of pledges as proxy for the bride and groom, indicating for each pledge for whom he was speaking. He first announced that all the sweets were for the relatives and guests. Then speaking through the priest, the boy promised that he would not let the girl go by herself in lonely places; he also promised that she could visit her parents if she first asked him. The girl promised not to go where there were many roads and people and to do all the work without hesitation that her husband requested her to do. After making these

promises, the bride said, "If you accept my promises, I'll accept yours." She asked him to promise that if he went on a pilgrimage, he would take her; if he did religious work, she wanted him to do so with her; if he did all these things, she would live happily with her relatives-in-law and serve them properly. She claimed the right to ask her husband his income and how he spent it. If he should help build any holy place, he should ask her to build it in his company; and if he took a job, he should first tell her for how long, then he could leave. The girl then said, "We'll act according to our problems, and we'll both receive moksha [release from the round of rebirths]." She concluded "If you'll agree to my promises, I'm ready to agree to yours." All this was said by the priest, with the boy or girl responding, "I will or will not do so," as appropriate.

Changing Places: Symbolic of Married State

The bride and groom then changed places so that the bride was to the left of the groom. This spatial movement marked the time the bride and groom became husband and wife. The priest said this change showed that they were both equal and one was not on a higher level than the other. The priest, acting for the girl, said he saw Druv, the polestar. Just as it is firm so shall be the relationship between the bride and groom. Stevenson (1971, p. 91) stated that if a marriage takes place in the daytime, the new husband asks his wife to look at the sun; if in the evening, the polestar. "The Sanskrit word for polestar means 'firmly fixed' or 'faithful,' so it would be unlucky for the bride to say that she could not see it; accordingly, whether she had distinguished it or not, she says that she sees it" Stevenson (1971, p. 91).

The priest asked the boy to say, "Our hearts, characters, tongues, ways of speaking are the same, and we both will become one." After this the priest said, "The girl is leaving her *gotra* and going to the boy's." He passed flowers and rice to the people around him to throw on the couple, recited more mantras, and then himself threw rice and flowers on the newly married couple. The priest gave the rest of the ghee and sandalwood to the young attendant to throw in the fire and asked the groom's father to throw in two paise. Two shots were fired. A bowl of water was turned over the fire to extinguish it. The young couple went into the bride's house, and the guests proceeded to the wedding feast.

Comparison of Brahman and Jat Wedding Models

Rather than describe the Jat Arya Samaj model in detail, table 5 identifies similar rituals, those that were different, and rituals that took place in one model but not in the other. The Arya Samaj ceremonial model contained no stories, reference to multiple deities or other supernatural beings, fewer mantras, and less traditional rituals. The Brahman model provided greater participation of bride and groom and more attention to the bride than did the Jat. The Jat model, as did much of Jat behavior, stressed male dominance. The Brahman model was more equitable. The Arya Samaj basis of the Jat model was, also, sermonizing. But many elements in these two models were similar.

Throughout both wedding ceremonies, the priests guided, and instructed the participants. The priests chanted mantras between the different stages of the wedding: at beginning and end, before bride and groom entered, before the sermonizing, when building and lighting the fire, while taking the rounds, and before the final vows. The chanting rose to a climax when the bride and groom entered, took the rounds, and left.

The sermonizing, responses, and vows in the Jat ceremonies differed somewhat in tone and affect from the Brahman. Some of the differences have been indicated in table 5, but specific examples follow. At the beginning of the Jat marriage ceremony when the groom entered, the priest announced:

> All the samskaras are to civilize a person. Animals just breed, but people have samskaras. This is the difference between animals and humans.

The priest instructed the brother of the bride to keep the fire burning continuously with

sandalwood, and told the groom to pour ghee on it every time he pronounced the word "*Bhum,*" at the end of a mantra.

During the circling of the fire, the girls sang a roundelay naming the different relationships of the bride to her lineage. The same song appears in Lewis (1958, p. 181). As the couple took the rounds, the girls in the audience sang so loudly that the priest told them to keep still and himself sang in Sanskrit. Then the priest said "Until the bride comes on the left side of the groom, she is a maiden." The priest, speaking for the bride said, "Let me come on your left side. You must do one fire ceremony [*yagya*—an offering], and I'll take part in it because without a wife a fire ceremony cannot be complete. I should take part in everything you do for strength. I must know all of our accounts. I must participate in everything in family life." This part was similar to the Brahman ceremony.

The priest then continued with this line of thought as a kind of sermon, saying: "According to every season you should perform *yagya*s. Don't be a miser when eating and take care of your health. Nice people, if they walk seven steps together, become friends; but bad people never become friends. The girl should say that our companionship should be like the shadow of the moon which increases as time passes; as we grow old, our love should increase and should not be like the shadow of the morning which decreases. The wife should always obey the husband. In a house where the husband and wife love each other and respect their parents, it is like heaven; and where it is the opposite, it is like hell. We should follow the religious laws."

Chuhra Model

A double wedding ceremony among the Chuhra Sweepers was characterized by less ritual than the wedding ceremonies of the Brahmans and Jats. This observation may reflect the poverty of the Chuhras and, principally, the fact that the priest who performed the wedding was less learned than professional Brahman priests. However, relatively unlearned priests were in all probability normal at Chuhra Sweeper weddings because the Chuhras were not served by professional Brahman priests. It is reasonable, therefore, to present the Chuhra wedding that we observed as typical of this caste.

The wedding took place on the festival of Dev Uthani Gyas, Gods Awakening Eleventh, the beginning of the marriage season. It was unusual to have a wedding the first day of the marriage season. The father of the brides requested this date because it was the only time he could obtain leave from his job in Bombay. Because of his absence from the village, many of the wedding arrangements had been left to his wife. The search for bridegrooms and the engagement had been managed by an intermediary, who found two brothers to marry the two sisters of Shanti Nagar.

On the day before the wedding, the usual activities occurred: the professional cooks came and prepared the sweets, the potter's wheel was worshiped, and instead of a marriage pavilion a plow beam and two pitchers were placed beside the door of the wedding household. On the day of the wedding, two marriage squares were drawn on the ground and seating arrangements for both brides and grooms were provided. There were no poles for a marriage pavilion. To one side of the squares, a small canopy was erected for dancing after the wedding.

The band, composed of members of the grooms' wedding party, played to announce the arrival of the two grooms. When they entered, all four of the wicks in the center of each square had been lit and were burning brightly. There were two sets of benches, one for each couple. The grooms were each seated in front of a square. The priest sat on a bench on the opposite side of the two squares so that he faced both couples.

As soon as the bridegrooms were seated, the priest added sandalwood and ghee to the coconut shells on the squares. One man assisted the priest by bringing him supplies to keep the fire going for the ceremony. The priest added sugar to the fire and placed a stone for Ganesh in each square.

At the start of the ceremony, the grooms' party handed some coins to the priest who, in turn, returned them to the grooms. The

TABLE 5
Comparison of Brahman and Jat Wedding Models

Brahman	Jat
Marriage pavilion.	Similar.
The fireplace or firepit: two squares, one with nine *grahas*; one for fire with seven-pointed star.	Had only one square with five-pointed star, on which fire burnt. No heavenly bodies and no offerings to them or deities during the ceremony.
Brahmans had more auspicious substances and symbols; a number of grasses and leaves, flowers, honey and curd, in additon to rice, water, ghee, sandalwood, dung, and incense.	No flowers or grasses; no honey or curd.
Instructions to guests to sit cross-legged on ground so as not to sit above deities.	Instructions to sit cross-legged out of respect. Told not to smoke.
Pitcher of flowers and water for Varuna.	Not done.
Gracious seating of groom by father of bride.	Similar.
Attendants: bride's brother, father, or father's father; groom's brother; Nai of groom.	Similar but the relatives differed from marriage to marriage depending on each family and lineage. Usually for both Brahman and Jat weddings the father and brothers from both sides were present. No Nai of groom at Jat wedding.
Singing of young females.	Similar.
Seating of guests: males with males; females with females; by age-grades. Low castes sometimes watched at distance.	Similar.
Scattering of Ganges water as purification and as substitute for washing feet of groom.	No Ganges water sprinkled, but see below for washing feet.
Ganesh worship.	Not done.
Surı worship.	Not done.
Story of Ketu and Rahu.	Not told.
Sweetening marriage, straining honey, purification with Ganges water.	Not done but bride's father dropped water on groom's feet as token washing and gave him water to wash his face and to drink, using three separate bowls for each action.
Use of red threads for auspiciousness on implements, bride and groom. Emphasis on samskaras as threads and the idea of threads tying everything together.	Much of this tying not done, but bride and groom in all castes wore red threads tied around their wrists beginning with oil baths.
Payment by father of bride to groom of Re. 1 or Rs. 1.25. Part of payments from bride's to groom's side symbolizing the relationship between affines.	Same except limited to Re. 1.
Priest prepared crown for bride.	Not done.
Bride carried in and seated on right side of groom by mother's brother. All participants in fire ceremony without shoes.	Same.
Placing paper crown and garland on bride.	Not done.
Fixing bride and groom in position with red strings.	Not done.
Bride and groom looked at each other as sign of acceptance.	Only groom looked at bride.

TABLE 5—(*Continued*)

Brahman	Jat
Tying bride and groom together.	Same.
Red strings, positioning them in place and later removed.	Not done.
Firing gun.	Same.
Genealogy.	Similar but no Nai Barber. The bride participated in this ceremony using her right hand. Since she was muffled, her brother placed a spoon of ghee in her hand and guided it to the fire so she could drop the ghee in the fire. The father of the girl then guided her hand containing a rupee and water for the fire, while he recited the *gotra*s.
Thumb and cow ritual, starting *Kanyadan*. Payment of Re. 1 to bride's father by groom's side.	Same but no donations from guests at this time. The father, still holding the right hand of the girl after reciting the *gotra*s said, "I am giving you this girl as your wife." (The donation of the girl.)
Kanyadan—the donations from the wedding guests.	Held away from the marriage pavilion, either before or after the fire ceremony.
Taking the Rounds: Pink Curtain. Couple looks at each other. Bride's mother throws rice in fire three times. Boy holds fan with rice on it, etc. Bride and groom touch foot to stone at each round. Bride in front for first three rounds. Groom in front for last four rounds.	All of these rituals were followed by Jats except for the couple looking at each other and the bride's mother throwing rice in the fire three times.
Responses of bride and groom read by priest.	Somewhat similar, but somewhat different text.
Bride seated to left of groom indicating married status of both.	Same.
Story of Druv, the polestar.	Not done.
Final vows.	Similar but sermon added.
Gun fired twice.	Same.
Bride and groom enter bride's house.	Same

priest then stated that he did not know a great deal about mantras but that he would use what he knew. He proceeded to recite the Gayatri mantra. Since we did not record the mantra, we do not know whether it was the Brahma Gayatri, which may be uttered by anyone, or the Gayatri whispered into the ear of a Brahman male at initiation and recited three times a day by twice-born men (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 126, 261, 345–346). At the end of each mantra recited by the priest, everyone at the ceremony joined the priest in saying, "*Svaha.*" Stevenson (1971, pp. 85, 347), Daniélou (1964, pp. 77, 88, 321) and Dowson (1950, p. 314) indicate that *Svaha* is used in offering sacrifices to the fire, particularly at the point when butter is poured on the fire, and that the word is identified as "Offering." Daniélou (1964, p. 345) provides examples of mantras ending in *Svaha*. This

ritual was Sanskritic. With each of the mantras, the sacred ingredients were dropped into the fire by the two grooms, the elder first. Ghee was poured into the fire with a plastic spoon.

When the priest finished with the mantras and the offerings to the fire, he sang a little song and told a story about married life in a sing-song chant. Then he threw rice on the bridegrooms and asked the father of the brides to place tilaks on the foreheads of the grooms.

The next step, in preparation for the brides' entrance, was to attach red strings to their paper crowns. The brides' father marked AUM in Devanagari script with turmeric paste on each crown. The priest then asked that the brides be brought out and told both grooms to look in back of them toward the *mandap* and doorway out of which the brides were carried by their mother's brothers heralded by a bandsman blowing on a flute and the women singing.

The brides and grooms wore their wedding finery. Both girls, dressed identically, were each swathed in a large white sheet. They were crying as they entered, and sat to the right of the grooms on their respective benches. The priest threw rice over them and began to recite mantras. Then he asked the brides' family for 2 rupees, laughed, and said "It is time for me to get some loot." But instead he picked up and pretended to attach the girls' headcloths and the grooms' scarves, jokingly saying that the couples were thus married. After his little joke, he threw rice on the couples and again asked for 2 rupees. When they were not forthcoming, he announced that the family could pay later. After he had tied the paper crowns to the brides' heads and recited more mantras, the girls' father handed him the rupees.

At this point, the parents of the girls said that they wanted to start *Kanyadan*. The father's father of the brides then gave the priest 1 rupee on behalf of the family and thanked him. The priest took an additional rupee from a young girl. The mother then gave two silver ornaments to each of the brides. A number of people began to contribute money. A relative of the brides' family kept a record of what was given. Every time a donation was presented, the priest named the donor, amount, and then said, "We thank him or her." All in all Rs. 72 were collected, of which the priest placed Rs. 5 apiece in each girl's hands and then placed the grooms' hands over their respective brides' hands. The priest again started to tell a story, but a man interrupted and said "Hurry up, Panditji," so he then took the rupees given to the brides and gave them to the boys' father.

At this moment, the priest instructed two men to hold up a sheet between the couples. The elder couple was to be married first. The bugler in the band blew a call for a song, beginning, "Hurry up, the day is ending," which the women sang. The older couple then went around the square four times. The women's singing continued throughout the round. The couple then sat down with a shift in position, the bride on the left. With the second couple the same procedure was followed. During this time, the sheet was held in position, but it was dropped and spread out again while the elder couple took three more rounds and then went into the house. The younger couple performed the rounds in the same manner, after which the couples were considered married.

The priest jokingly complained that he had only been paid 2 rupees and asked for more money. During the wedding, some upper-caste boys and girls watched the ceremony, but none of the upper-caste heads of families was present.

Summary for Brahman, Jat, and Chuhra Models

The comparison of the three models illustrates the process Srinivas labeled "Sanskritization," even for the Jats for, in effect, Swami Dayanand said that the rites of the twice-born castes, namely, the samskaras, should be for everyone. The wedding ceremony of the Chuhras appears to be a more likely candidate for increased Sanskritic ritual than that of the Jats, because as increasing literacy produces more literate Chuhra priests, they will in all probability increase

the amount of ritual in weddings. For this purpose, they will have to use as a model the ceremonies performed by a professional Brahman priest. Because the Chuhras have not been influenced by the Arya Samaj to the extent of the Jats, an increase in ritual, symbolism, and multiple deities in their wedding ritual should encounter little opposition.

Comparison of the three models suggests that the priest, who was selected by the family of the bride, set the tone of the marriage and reflected the customs of the bride's family and caste, in particular with regard to religious orientation. Brahmans, who followed Sanatan Dharma, held wedding ceremonies which emphasized multiple deities and linked them with the nine *grahas*, carried out the most traditional rituals, provided stories within the context of the rituals, recited the greatest number of mantras, and displayed more religious symbols. The participation of a male and female representative of the bride's family was essential to the wedding. Although Swami Dayanand's teachings emphasized the participation of husbands and wives in fire ceremonies, the Jats, unlike the Brahmans, minimized female roles in the wedding ceremony. Only in the Brahman model was moksha mentioned, as Arya Samaj tenets did not foster the belief in release from the round of rebirths, any more than they encouraged the belief in many deities or the use of images to represent deities. Only the Arya Samaj weddings were characterized by sermons. The descriptions of the three models indicate that none of the brides or grooms were sufficiently familiar with the details of the wedding rituals to be able to carry out the rituals without the guidance of the priests.

The Chuhra ceremony, which contained the least ritual and little that was religious or moralizing, required next to no participation by the brides and grooms other than their presence for circling the fire. The ceremony appeared to satisfy the participants and spectators except when they discouraged the priest from sermonizing and telling stories. The Chuhra wedding exemplified the borrowing of some overt forms from high-caste wedding rituals without taking over the complete sequence of rituals or the more subtle symbolic forms, contributing to ignorance of meaning except that going around the fire signified that a couple was married in the eyes of the community.

Kanyadan differed in all the models. In both the Brahman and Jat weddings the price of 1 rupee was paid for the girl. Immediately thereafter in the Brahman wedding, *Kanyadan* took place. In the Jat marriage, this gift-giving took place away from the marriage pavilion and was an orderly, serious affair; the Jats did not seem to enjoy themselves at *Kanyadan* as did the Brahmans and Chuhras. Family and spectators at the Chuhra wedding were more interested in *Kanyadan* than in the rituals.

Removing Groom's Headdress (*Mor Khulai*)

At the close of the high-caste wedding ceremonies, the bride was carried into her house by her mother's brother. The groom picked up his stick or rod (symbolic of his male role) and followed the bride. *Mor Khulai,* a ceremony where the headdress of the groom was removed by the girl's mother, followed. The bride's mother and seven attendants each circled a rupee over the boy's head and gave it to him. This ritual, called *Parphera,* was protective, incorporative, and a worship of the boy because he was likened to a god who had come to the girl's house. The headdress was stored by the bride's mother, except in the case of Chuhras who said that their headdresses were kept by a Kumhar family from whom they bought pots. Keeping the headdress has sexual connotations if the concept of opposites applies, the idea being that it would be kept until the groom provided his bride with children and her mother with grandchildren.

Becoming Acquainted

After the *Parphera* ritual, a session of riddling, joking, and horseplay occurred. Joking and horseplay not only allowed the bride and groom to become acquainted, they were also a means of averting danger. This session var-

ied from marriage to marriage. In Brahman marriages it was formerly the custom to have a session where the females asked the groom to tell riddles. He would say, "I'll tell you this if you give me a mare or an elephant," or whatever he wanted. This custom had changed; he no longer asked for such gifts. Instead the women presented him with up to 5 rupees. The session was known in ancient times as *Chand* because the groom was given pearls which were said to be worth crores (crore = 10 million) of rupees. The comparison here was with an ornament similar in beauty to the moon (*chand*), such as pearls. A story was related that a merchant called Tara Chand, who was a resident of Delhi, married. At his wedding, the female relatives of the bride presented him with beautiful pearls. The symbolism of this ritual, named after the moon, repeats the moon analogy of the bride exemplified in the six-part song of Chandrama and Surajmal. Moon, pearls, and jewels symbolize the feminine principle, a watery substance or birth, and sexual pleasure. The simplest of stories carried oft repeated symbols.

One of our informants, over 40 years old, said that he had seen some people give a mare to a groom. The last time he saw such an event was 20 years previously. The gift was presented in the marriage of a wealthy merchant family. The idea was that a bridegroom should have a mare to ride because he was like a king and only kings rode mares. Mares were also ridden a good deal more in the 1930s. In 1958 the ambitious groom hoped for a motorbike, but more often received a bicycle. Riding, whether a mare, motorbike, or bicycle, symbolizes coitus.

In the Chuhra wedding, there was a "roughhouse session" instead of *Parphera*. The bride's female attendants playfully beat the bridegrooms (averting evil). Then, the two couples were seated facing the wall inside the house, and one of the attendants took a coconut candy, broke it in half, and gave one-half to each member of the older couple (sharing sexual pleasure). They played a game where the halves were shuffled back and forth between the female attendant and the couple, apparently to accustom the couple to each other and make them less shy. The same game was then played with the second couple. All during the play session, one of the women teased the couples. About 20 women and children watched them. When this session finished, the grooms retired to the accommodations for the wedding party until the wedding feast was served.

At the time of the first oil baths of the two sisters in this Chuhra wedding a frame had been drawn on the wall within which they each made their handmarks. After the wedding, a series of handmarks was added by the two couples. The handmarks were made by putting a mixture of water and henna powder on the hands and pressing them on the wall. Similar handmarks were made by all castes after a wedding.

Day of Departure (*Bida*)

The ceremonies scheduled for the last day were *Isnan Samskara* (a ritual bath for a Brahman groom), *Dan* (the giving of wealth, which included the dowry of the bride), *Pundan* (a donation to charity) and in the case of Chuhras, gifts to the intermediary; *Bida* included *God* and *Rang,* rites of fertility and femininity. For brides who were old enough to go to their husbands immediately, there was a ceremony called the exchange of stools (*Patra Phera*). Often all of these except *Isnan Samskara* were lumped by informants under the term *Bida* (departure) for they were oriented toward the departure of the young couple for the groom's village. After going around the fire, although the bride and groom were married, they were never left alone. The night of the fire ceremony the groom slept in the same quarters as his male attendants.

Ritual Bath for a Brahman Groom (*Isnan Samskara*)

Although a ritual bath for a Brahman groom was rarely observed in the bride's house, the family of one bride asked that this ritual be carried out. The ceremony was performed the day after circling the fire. The

boy bathed in the girl's house early in the morning, and his loincloth was given to the Nai Barber serving the bride's family. The bride's father then gave the groom a complete new outfit to wear. Our informant said that some people only gave the loincloth when this ceremony was observed, but that they should give a whole outfit if they could afford it. Although this ceremony was going out of style, it had been performed for two bridegrooms in recent years. After it, the groom and his party ate a meal.

Feasting

For those castes not celebrating *Isnan Samskara,* the first event of the final day in the bride's village was feasting. Generally, there were two feasts a day, around noon and in the late afternoon. Between meals guests from outside the village were served tea and sweets; they sat around smoking the hookah and talking, when not participating in ceremonies.

Bida

Although the term "*dan*" literally means wealth, it most often referred to the dowry. Before the departure of the bride and groom, all exchanges were settled that were required by the contractual arrangements for the marriage. The boy's father presented the balance of the jewelry and ornaments for the girl. The girl's family presented another installment of the dowry. *Dan* was paid in installments, the occasions for which varied somewhat from wedding to wedding. Often the first was given at the engagement, a second installment at *Lagan,* another payment at *Barat Lena,* another portion was given at *Bida,* and the remaining amount would be paid when the bride went to her husband for consummation, her second visit to her husband's home. If the bride went immediately after the wedding to her husband's family for consummation, then the remaining dowry was paid at *Bida.*

At one Jat wedding, *Bida* took place in the men's sitting room where most legal transactions occurred. All the male guests were seated on cots. The groom sat on a stool facing four old men, responsible persons acting as witnesses from Shanti Nagar and two adjacent villages, leaders in their communities. Present were leading men from the Jat and Brahman lineages, the elder Baniya Merchant, one Bairagi, and three Nai Barbers, one serving the bride's family, one from the groom's side, and one from an adjacent village to help serve *lassi,* a mixture of curd, water, and sugar, a cooling hot-weather drink.

The groom's father opened a metal box and a male representative of the girl asked the groom's father to give them some color. From the box, the father drew forth henna powder, oil, and kohl, later to be given to the bride. Then a tilak was placed on the forehead of the boy and 1 rupee put in his hand by a classificatory father's father of the bride from a nearby village. He had been called upon to officiate because of close ties with the family and because he was a highly respected person. He counted out the sum of money that the girl's parents gave to the boy's family. The total sum was Rs. 384, of which Rs. 100 came from *Kanyadan* and were for the girl; Rs. 200 were for the boy's family; and Rs. 21 for *Gauna,* the time when the girl would go to her husband's house for her second visit for the consummation of the marriage. On this occasion because the girl was older and the marriage was to be consummated on the first visit to her husband's home, the money normally paid at *Gauna* was paid at *Bida.* A balance of Rs. 63 was for half the bus fare, for in a wedding the cost of transporting the wedding party to and from the girl's village was borne equally by the boy's and the girl's families.

Another distribution of 1-rupee notes followed for each son-in-law from both families. The Nai Barber passed out these rupees, which had been contributed by the fathers-in-law for their sons-in-law present. Then the father of the girl paid his Nai Barber one rupee, which was customary on ritual occasions.

After the money had been dispensed, the Nai Barber told the groom to go inside the room where the women and bride were gath-

ered. The bride's brother escorted him there. The mother-in-law of the groom with her face properly covered placed a tilak on the groom's forehead and gave him a sweet. Each of the young women then placed a tilak on him, circled his head with a rupee, and gave it to him.

In another Jat wedding, where two sisters were married to two unrelated grooms, the fire ceremonies occurring one day apart, the amounts of dowry differed. The first ceremony was for the elder of the two sisters. At *Bida,* the bride's mother's brother officiated. The bride's family gave Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 to the bridegroom who handed the money to his father. Part of the money was for a suit of clothes for the bridegroom; part was for the bride's second visit to the groom. In this case, too, the brides were old enough to mate with their husbands so that the installment of the dowry for the second visit was given at the time of *Bida.* In former times, this payment was made two, three, or more years after marriage when the bride went for consummation of the union. Going for consummation immediately after marriage and paying the balance of the dowry and other expenditures at the time of the wedding were new. These changes were due to a rise in the girls' age at marriage.

The father of the bride presented 1 rupee, a cloth, and a metal goblet to each of the 165 members of the marriage party. Some fathers gave members of the wedding party other gifts in addition to cash. One Brahman Priest not only gave a rupee, but also a towel, soap, a metal goblet, and a small folding seat.

In this Jat marriage, the elder bridegroom was angry and disappointed although his family received 1000 rupees in cash. However, he had wanted a larger sum of money and also a motorcycle instead of the bicycle that he received. The bridegroom of the second sister received less but was content, or at least said nothing to indicate otherwise. He was younger and had not gone as far in school as the first groom. In the dowry, he and his family received about Rs. 700, a watch, bicycle, clothes, and a sewing machine, which was for his bride's use, which machine had recently become fashionable in dowries. With the introduction of sewing machines in families, they need no longer pay to have women's and children's clothes made by a village tailor. At one *Bida,* there was an argument as to whether the bride's father should give from 500 to 1000 rupees for a Jat school. The elders from Shanti Nagar and representatives from two nearby villages explained that a three-village panchayat had decided to discontinue this practice.

Rang, Sirgundi, and *God*

Rang was presented in Jat weddings at the time of departure. For Brahman weddings it was presented four times: at *Lagan*; going around the fire for the wedding; at departure (*Bida*) for the groom's village; and when the bride was in the groom's village for *Sirgundi* (winding thread in hair).

For Brahman weddings, *Sirgundi,* the winding of threads in the bride's hair, was correlated with *Rang,* as the henna and threads for her hair were among the items in the metal box. Both of these ceremonies occurred while the bride was dressed for her departure by her bridal attendants. *God* (lap), a fertility ceremony, took place after *Rang* and *Sirgundi.* The bride was seated while her father-in-law placed in her lap a whole coconut shell containing 1 rupee and wrapped in a red cloth, or a half coconut shell with two paise in it similarly wrapped. The coconut, a container, symbolized the womb; the money in the coconut, the filling of the womb or pregnancy. In village parlance filling the lap was a euphemism for the pregnancy. During this ceremony, the father-in-law was dignified and restrained, customary behavior with a daughter-in-law. The senior women in the bride's lineage laughed, joked, and mimed gestures alluding to the bride's lap and future pregnancies.

Charity (*Pundan*)

If the bride's father was a well-off landlord and man of prestige, he gave charity (*Pundan*) by donating as much as he could afford to a school or temple. Jats in Shanti Nagar no longer followed this practice. However,

when a Brahman Priest groom from Shanti Nagar was married, the bride's father gave Rs. 25 to a school because there was no prohibition against such contributions in his village as there was among some castes in Shanti Nagar.

Exchange of Stools (*Patre* or *Patra Phera*)

When a new bride had already reached the age for mating at the time of the wedding, then a ceremony called *Patre* or *Patra Phera,* the exchange of stools, occurred at *Bida*. This ceremony was a substitution for the ceremonies which the girl would otherwise undergo at the time of *Gauna,* when the marriage would be consummated. By holding the exchange of stools, symbolizing the fire ceremony and the change in seating of bride and groom after taking the rounds, the consummation of the marriage on the occasion of the first visit of the bride to her groom's household was publicly decreed. Both Brahmans and Jats performed this ceremony, but in most marriages the ages of brides did not warrant immediate consummation of the marriage.

For *Patra Phera,* the professional priest carried a tray of turmeric, sugar, a little stone for Ganesh, a pitcher of water with red thread tied around it, and nine piles of rice in three by three parallel rows formed into a square representing the square for the nine *graha*s. These paraphernalia were primary symbols for a wedding. The band played in the background while the bridegroom and priest chanted a chain of mantras together and the groom threw rice on the *graha*s nine times to summon the 33 crores of deities to bless the union. The bride's mother's brother carried the bride into the room and seated her on one of the two stools next to the one on which the groom was already ensconced. Stalks of grain had been tied into a bundle with red thread to symbolize the final dowry payment. Attending women wound red threads in the bride's hair. These rituals simulated a wedding ceremony to take the place of *Gauna*.

At one wedding, some of the women teased the priest, who was the husband of one of the Brahman Priest daughters in the bride's lineage. They also teased the groom and one of his attending young brothers-in-law. The brother-in-law, who by this time was exhausted from the days of ceremony asked them to keep quiet. Then the bride's mother's brother told him. "That's right! You've got to be firm with the women here." He replied, "I know it."

When the priest told the couple to rise, attendants changed the position of the two stools so that the stool on the right was now on the left and vice versa. The couple then sat down and the priest tied a long sheet with two knots in it around the bride's neck. There were a few more mantras and the bride gave the priest one rupee to conclude the ceremony. Afterward, the bride and groom placed their handmarks on the wall. Each put two handmarks for each hand. The girl's father gave his daughter some money to give to her mother-in-law to hold for her use whenever ceremonies took place at her husband's house. The band played, the groom took up the dangling end of the sheet, and his wife followed after him in traditional Indian fashion. The mock drama depicted the husband with "his cow" tied behind him proceeding to his own village, a ritual not performed in all departures. Men and women of the village followed the bride and groom to the bus as they and the groom's sister-in-law entered the waiting bus and sat together in the front seat.

Thapa

The final ritual, known as *Thapa* (handprint), took place just as the bride, groom, and members of the groom's party prepared to board the bus. The bride's mother smeared her hand with henna and then rather forcefully struck the shirt-front of the groom's father, leaving a prominent handmark. She then gave him 1 rupee. People in the bus asked him how much he had been given for "putting the hand" and considered 1 rupee to be the correct amount.

Before the bus left, members of the bride's and groom's families asked each other's for-

giveness for any mistakes which had occurred, a practice which was considered to be good etiquette and was regularly done. The women of the village sang as the bus departed. The songs were practically identical with those given by Lewis (1958, pp. 183–184). The groom and bride were dressed in their new clothes, the bride wearing what her father-in-law had given her. The wedding ceremonies had been spread over two days so that the groom's party had been provided four wedding feasts.

Chuhra Differences

Chuhra wedding events differed from those of the other castes in a number of respects. Two days before the fire ceremony, Chuhra Sweeper women and children, dressed in their fancy clothes and taking turns to show their skill, danced to the drumbeat of Sweeper men. Among the dancers were quite old women and daughters-in-law with their faces covered. Wheat and millet grains in a metal vessel were circled around the heads of the dancers and then placed in a cloth. At the end of the dancing the grain was given to the drummers, and the hostess distributed parched gram to children.

The second day was principally devoted to preparations, worshiping the potter's wheel, and erecting the *mandap*. Events of the third day were the reception and feeding of the groom's party and going around the fire, the actual wedding. That evening the Chuhras barbecued two pigs. On the fourth day, in the late forenoon, the bridal party and all other guests partook of a meal of barbecued pork, rice cooked in salt and turmeric, sweets, puffed bread, and vegetables. The band that had accompanied the groom's party escorted it to each event, including the feasts.

In the late afternoon of the fourth day, after the second meal, there was dancing again in the Sweeper compound. The groom's party, seated on a cloth spread under the marriage canopy, watched the dancers. There were two drummers. One dancer was dressed as a horse. Two men, one each from the bride's and groom's side, dressed in women's clothing with their faces covered, danced energetically and at times with lewd or sexual gestures. This was a long session. Spectators among the Chuhras joined the dancing from time to time and some of them pinned cash on the dancers—anywhere from Rs. 20 to Rs. 100. Watchers made blatant gestures of sexual invitation to the "female impersonators." One of the impersonators with a 100 rupee note pinned to "her breast" carried a plate in each hand for donations of small change. Rupee notes were pinned to the two transvestite dancers by members of both the bride's and groom's side and were retrieved later to be kept or added to the dowry for the girl. People from a number of castes came to watch: almost all the Chamars, who considered themselves quite skilled dancers; the young son of the Baniya Merchant family; some Jats, all men; the elder Lohar Blacksmith. Eventually the Chamars joined in the dancing.

At the conclusion of the dancing, an elderly respected Chuhra man from a nearby village, identified as a chief, acted as the representative of the brides' family in the final settlement of dowry and distribution of rupees to various relatives and caste members. After these payments had been made, the chief apologized for any mistakes and asked forgiveness. Equally politely, the grooms' father said that nothing had gone wrong and thanked the brides' family for the accommodations and service. They then acted as though one last item had been forgotten. The grooms' father said, "There is something we have to ask you," at which the brides' father's brother sat down to listen. The grooms' father asked, "Who is the go-between who arranged the marriage?" The go-between, the father-in-law of the oldest daughter in the brides' family, stepped forward. He said, "I'm for both of you, but if you have another point him out." The grooms' father asked if there was another man from the brides' side. When the answer was negative, his status was established. The grooms' father then gave him cloth for a turban, Rs. 5, and a ring. All of this seemed to be a little show, for both sides were ready with their gifts. The brides' father then gave

the intermediary Rs. 10, so the grooms' father gave him another Rs. 10. Then the brides' father gave Rs. 10 and a turban to the priest.

When the grooms arose to depart, they found someone had hidden their shoes. The brides' elder married sister said that she would return them if the grooms paid her Rs. 10. The grooms were too tired to play the game and simply wandered off to their sleeping accommodations without shoes. The game of hiding shoes also occurred in high-caste weddings.

The dancing continued for some time after the departure of the grooms. Later that night the band and the dancers gave a performance at the two Jat households which the mother of the two brides served. Although it was dark, the band played and the female impersonators danced for almost half an hour. Each of the heads of these households gave gifts to the brides' mother. Spectators gave her a rupee.

On the fifth day, early in the morning, the brides were carried to the bus by their two mother's brothers. There was continuous singing by the women and crying by the two brides. The party boarded the bus, which proceeded to the grooms' village where the new brides would be greeted and inspected by their affines.

In the Chuhra marriages, there was a greater element of gaiety, no doubt due to the dancing and to the dearth of ritual and sermons. In addition, far less money changed hands. The amount given by the girls' family in this wedding was less than the amount spent by the boys'. The relationship between the two sides appears to have been one of greater equality than with the Jats and Brahmans.

Pancakes (*Suhalis*)

On the day the wedding took place in the bride's village, the seven sisters and women of the groom's family and lineage prepared sweet pancakes (*suhalis*) in his natal village. Other women guests were present. While some of the women mixed, kneaded, and rolled the dough on boards with rolling pins, the seven married sisters carried out a humorous skit. Two women took the roles of a bangle seller and buyer. The two bargained back and forth, and finally the buyer offered 2 paise. The seller pretended to place the bangles on the buyer's wrists but then began to beat her with two staffs. Thereafter, each of the seven sisters went through this skit of being a bangle seller and buyer and then beating the guests. The belief was that beating wards off demons, other kinds of evil, and misfortune. To conclude the occasion, a recent bride in a pink sari and wearing silver arm and ankle bracelets with bells performed a brief dance while the other women sang marriage songs. This was solely a gathering of females.

Sweet pancakes were cooked and distributed after the wedding to lineage members both in the bride's and groom's villages. The word *suhali* (or *sohali*) may be related to *sohagin* referring to "a woman whose husband is alive" (Pathak, 1946, p. 1118; Lewis 1958, p. 355). *Sohag* or *sohagi* refers to the glass bangles of a married woman as well as vermilion, myrtle, etc., which were sent to the bride (Pathak, 1946, p. 1118; Lewis, 1958, p. 355) in the metal box called *rang*. The pancakes were sweet and symbolic of long life for both husband and wife, especially the husband, for women generally dreaded becoming widows. This ceremony of making pancakes and performing a humorous skit was assiduously observed by Brahman women. Married women of other castes also cooked sweet pancakes at this time since none of them wanted the bride or themselves to be widowed, and also because they were a wedding delicacy. These rituals helped to pass the time while the mother of the groom awaited the arrival of the bride the following day.

POSTNUPTIAL CEREMONIES

The postnuptial ceremonies consisted of a series of rituals performed during a two- to three-day period in the groom's village and the second visit of the bride to her husband's house, which was determined by the occurrence of her first menses.

BRIDE'S VISIT TO GROOM'S VILLAGE

The girl journeyed to the groom's village in the bus with the groom's party and her brother as chaperon, or she came by bus or taxi separately with her brother in attendance. A few of the oldest women in the village remembered coming in a *rut,* a cart pulled by bullocks and bedecked to celebrate the marriage. Because bus transportation had come to Shanti Nagar relatively recently, many of the older wives had first come to the village in the *rut* or in a tonga, depending on what was available at the time. Riding from village to village in a *rut* had disappeared as had the custom of the groom's riding to the bride's village on a mare. When the wedding party arrived, the bride and groom waited at the bus stop until a singing troop of females from the groom's house and lineage came to escort them from the bus stop.

A number of rituals to welcome the bride followed, the first of which was performed by the mother-in-law. Before the doorway of the house of the groom's family, a low bathing stool was placed in front of an auspicious square drawn on the ground. The bride knelt on the stool while she pressed her mother-in-law's legs and those of any senior women in the family and lineage. She gave each of these women one rupee. The mother-in-law then honored her by dabbing her with her petticoat and blessed her with a tilak.

BLOCKING THE DOORWAY

After this formal greeting, the bride tried to enter the courtyard, but a sister of her husband blocked the doorway and demanded payment for letting her enter. The mother or father of the groom paid the sister a few rupees, and the bride then entered. Some families omitted this ritual as they considered it impolite. The token blocking of the doorway indicated the close tie between brother and sister, which the villagers said was stronger than the tie between husband and wife and parents and children; at the same time it provided another illustration of the separation of the new bride from the family of the groom, as she was still a stranger and only a partial member of her new family. The following song was sung by the women of the household on this occasion.

Oh, mother-in-law, why do you strut about?
Why do you strut about with your hair rolled on your head?
I will not leave my palanquin unless you give me a separate stove for cooking.
Oh, father-in-law, why do you strut about with your bag of money?
I will not leave my palanquin unless you build a separate new house for me.
Oh, mother-in-law, why do you strut about with your hands on your hips?
I will not leave my palanquin unless you give me a separate fireplace for cooking.
How funny! The mother-in-law is short and the daughter-in-law is tall.
The mother-in-law goes to fetch water while the daughter-in-law eats all the freshly made brown sugar.
She eats all the cooled cakes, but leaves those which are hot.

This mildly abusive song lists points of conflict between a married woman and her conjugal affines in their house: living in the same house with her husband's family, cooking on the same stove, and subordination to the mother-in-law. In the song contrary to correct behavior, the daughter-in-law made fun of her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Role reversal, prominent in the song, calls attention to correct behavior. In ancient times being carried on a palanquin was a sign of royalty, so the daughter-in-law in this song acted as though she was a queen when she

properly should be submissive and inconspicuous. For her to eat the brown sugar while her mother-in-law fetched water (the daughter-in-law's task) was unheard of. Traditionally, the daughter-in-law was given only what the mother-in-law wanted her to have. Lewis (1958, p. 186) provided a shorter version of this song from Rampur.

Display of Dowry

Next the dowry was displayed while women of the village gathered to look, comment, and count. One dowry contained: 31 brass vessels, 30 items of clothing, a marriage bed with fancy painted headboard, 10 gold and 5 silver ornaments, Rs. 500, and for the groom, a bicycle, ring, wristwatch, and suit.

Showing the Bride's Face (*Muh Dikhai*)

The ceremony of "Showing the Bride's Face" took place during the initial two-day visit of the bride to her husband's family. The bride wore the traditional head and face covering of the married woman; she covered her face before her husband's senior male relatives and when walking about the village. For "showing her face," the bride wore her best clothes and decorated her eyes with kohl. The ritual was brief and simple. At the time of seeing the display of gifts brought by the bride, married women who wished to see the bride's face asked to do so. The bride unveiled, providing a brief glimpse of her face, and then again covered her face. The visitor paid her 1 rupee for the privilege. After she had been viewed by several women, they discussed her appearance, generally remarking that the bride was beautiful. The chief characteristic of beauty appeared to be fairness of skin. Showing her face provided an opportunity for the bride to know the females with whom she would have the greatest interaction in her husband's village and emphasized her new status and role behavior as a wife who kept her face covered under specific circumstances.

God, Rang, and *Sirgundi* Again

Another *God* ceremony of fertility took place among the women of the groom's family and lineage. The senior woman of the household placed a half coconut shell with a few coins in a red cloth on the bride's lap together with a small tray containing red threads, sugar, sweets, one paisa, henna powder, almonds, and ripe fruit, making seven piles. If the ceremony took place in a Brahman family, then these items were passed to the bride in the metal box for the final repetition of *Rang*. Subsequently, *Sirgundi,* the thread winding ceremony, was repeated. Thereafter, throughout the first year of marriage at all festivals whether the bride was in her natal or husband's village, in Brahman families, the thread winding ceremony was repeated.

The seven married sisters of the bridegroom, the senior woman of the household, and the Nai Barber woman who served the groom's family enacted these ceremonies with the bride. The repetition of the ceremonies of *God, Rang,* and *Sirgundi* reiterated the change of status of the bride and constituted rituals of incorporation. At these ceremonies, the bride paid respect to the senior women of the lineage by pressing their feet and giving each one a rupee. At the end of the *Sirgundi* ceremony, the seven sisters circled the bride's head with one paisa and gave it to the Barber woman. The bride paid the seven sisters a rupee apiece. The payment indicated her lower status and marked one of the means by which she would pave her way among her conjugal affines during her married life. Her presentation of the proper gifts sustained the prestige of her natal family and helped to insure her good treatment by her husband's family.

Through these ceremonies, the bride enacted the status and role behavior of a married woman, which she had often witnessed growing up in her natal village. One such activity took place when she returned to her husband's village after visiting her parents: her first duty and greeting was to press the legs of her mother-in-law and respected se-

nior women in the household, lineage, and immediate community. Later in privacy she greeted her husband.

Two songs for *Sirgundi* follow; neither was abusive and both were repetitive in form.

The bride goes to her grandfather to seek his blessing for her husband's good fortune.
Rama will bless you with good fortune.
May the couple live nicely.
The bride goes to her father's elder brother to seek his blessing for her husband's good fortune.
Rama will bless you with good fortune.
May the couple live nicely.

The roundelay repeats these lines substituting the names of different relatives.

The second song itemized the characteristics of the bride:

The husband asks his dear bride how she got such big eyes.
(She replies) It is my good fortune that I have big eyes, Oh bridegroom!
The groom asks his dear bride how she got such long hair.
(She replies) Oh bridegroom, My mother washed my hair with unboiled milk so I have long hair.
It is my good fortune.
The bridegroom asks his dear wife where she got the quality of being so dear and tender.
(She replies) I was dear to my mother, Oh bridegroom, so I am dear to you.
It is my good fortune that made me so.

This song added any number of complimentary qualities about the bride; roles also could be reversed with the bride asking the questions and the groom answering.

String Playing (*Kangna Khelna*)

Early in the morning of the second day of the bride's stay in her husband's village, she arose before her mother-in-law, as would be her practice in the years to come, for she would be expected to start the early morning chores. The first ceremony of the day was *Kangna Khelna* (string playing), in which the bride, groom, his mother, his elder brother's wife, and his favorite sister's small son, together with the Nai Barber woman, participated. Relatives and neighbors gathered to watch the fun.

The groom sat patiently on a stool while his elder brother's wife placed a tray before him containing pieces of kusha grass (considered holy and auspicious), turmeric, and rice. Next she handed him a red string tied into seven knots, which she and he proceeded to untie alternately. Once when the groom inadvertently broke the thread, the Barber woman slapped his face to counteract the bad luck that might ensue from the break. During the untying of the knots, the women in the audience sang a teasing song, except on one occasion when the women in a Brahman household objected to teasing the groom. However, an adult male in the household began to sing the song to introduce the next part of the ceremony, in which the bride and groom each attempt to show who will rule the house.

For this game, the elder brother's wife placed a pan filled with milk and marked on the outside with swastikas in front of bride and groom, and then dropped the red thread and a silver ring into it. The bride and groom then tried to find these two items and keep them to show the winner would rule. In most cases, by subterfuge or other manipulations the groom won. On one occasion, the bride found the silver ring first, but the groom forced her fist open and took the ring from her, thus proving that he would be master. Next they each untied the red strings which had been tied around their wrists at the time of *Lagan,* for with the postnuptial ceremonies, the dangers of the liminal stage no longer existed.

In the last event of the ritual, the groom's mother had him sit on her lap with the bride sitting on his lap, and the small son of the groom's favorite sister sitting on the bride's lap, another fertility ritual. Lewis (1958, p. 186) described this ritual with more sexual overtones than were displayed in Shanti Nagar. There was a tendency in Arya Samaj and Brahman families to reduce sexual suggestion so as not to embarrass the young couple. The ritual also served to integrate the bride into the family.

After the game-playing, a senior woman in

the household paid the Nai Barber woman for her services; the father of the groom paid the husband's elder brother's wife Rs. 5 for hers. The young sister's son asked for sweets (symbolizing sexual pleasure which in the minds of the villagers was linked with having children) from the bride and groom before he would allow them to enter the house for the worship of the goddess Savitri. This payment of sweets is also comparable to paying the sister who blocked the doorway as both she and her son had strong ties of affection to the groom which might be displaced by the marriage.

Inside the house was the sketch of the goddess on the wall, to which the young couple applied the final set of their palm prints, the first set of which had been made in their own homes with the first oil bath. The bride, groom, groom's mother, and groom's favorite sister stood in front of the goddess and worshiped together as a family. As they worshiped, they threw rice (an offering and a fertility symbol) at the image. After this ritual, the young groom presented his favorite sister with 2 rupees which he stipulated were for the purchase of four sweets for her son who had participated in the lap-fertility ceremony. In so doing, the groom was assuming his adult role of mother's brother, because as a married man and householder, it was his responsibility to provide gifts for his married sister and her children.

In these postnuptial ceremonies, the mock competitions between various females for the affections of the groom and the obvious role playing by members of the kin group with different statuses conditioned the new member of the family, the bride, to recognize her husband's relatives and their statuses, as well as her own vis-à-vis them, and to act accordingly.

Worship at Village Shrines

In the afternoon, the bride and groom, accompanied by the seven female attendants and anyone else who wished to join them worshiped at the village shrines. The main worship was at the Bhumiya shrine where the bride and groom beat each other with sticks. This play warded off evil spirits, especially those causing sickness; the worship of Bhumiya was for the perpetuation of the male line and the health of offspring (Freed and Freed, 1962, pp. 265–267). Offerings were left at the shrine. The worship of the other village shrines was similar to the activities of the groom when he circumambulated the village before departing for the bride's village and the nuptial ceremonies.

Pond Ceremony

In the evening of the second day, the plow beam used in the *mandap* and the two pitchers which were brought from the potters at the time of worshiping the potter's wheel were taken to the village pond. The beam was sunk into the muddy shore of the pond. The two pitchers with holes pierced in them and burning wicks inside floated on the pond until they sank. This ceremony was the last to be performed during the bride's first visit to her husband's house; early the next morning her brother escorted her back to her parents' village. The male and female significance of the two pitchers and the plow beam were discussed earlier. The perforation of the pots represented the end of girlhood and the beginning of womanhood, even though consummation had not yet occurred.

Gauna

In general, the term *Gauna* means the second visit of the bride to her husband, but it had wider implications. At this second visit, the final installment of the dowry was brought by the girl, and the marriage was consummated.

In earlier times, girls went to their husband's family before consummation and final vesting of dowry for various reasons. Sometimes an older sister was married into the same village as a younger, and she would ask if the younger sister, who had not yet gone to her in-laws, might visit or stay with her when she was lonely. Sometimes a death or a marriage might occur in the husband's family and they would request the temporary

presence of a pre-pubescent wife for these ceremonial occasions. Both of these possibilities occurred during our study.

In the past, a young child might visit her conjugal affines to become acquainted with the groom and his family if a long span of seven or more years was to intervene before *Gauna*. In some cases, according to older female informants, the grooms became anxious or impatient and they had sexual union with their immature wives. More often a girl was sent early because there was a shortage of female labor in the family so that the groom's family pressured the bride's family to send her.

At the engagement panchayat, a girl began to vest as property in her husband's family; the supposedly final change to marital status was at the time of going around the fire. However, the fact that the final installment of the dowry and consummation occurred at *Gauna* indicated that the transfer of the bride to the groom's family was not completed until that time. The girl's family continued to exercise some influence over her fate and welfare throughout her life; but from the time of the circumambulation of the fire, the girl's family deferred to the boy's family with regard to what might be done with her. Despite this vesting of the girl as property in the boy's family, the parents of daughters attempted to keep them with them as long as they could for a number of reasons: a growing idea that it was better for the girls to postpone sexual union as long as possible, that it might be better for them not to bear children until they were at least 18, the real affection the parents had for their daughters, and the realization that daughters were an economic asset in the household and fields.

When a girl approached 15 years of age, her husband's parents put pressure on her parents to send her to them. In the case of two girls whose marriages occurred later than age 15, they went to their conjugal affines immediately after the wedding ceremony, at which time the couple went through the Exchange of Stools ceremony.

One factor that could contribute to a delay in the consummation of a marriage was that the bride's parents had to send the balance of the dowry at this time. Parents sometimes could not meet this obligation so they postponed sending their daughter to her husband as long as possible. This economic factor together with a limited number of workers in a family might contribute to a delay both for the wedding and *Gauna*. A case where a daughter became pregnant before she had gone to her husband for consummation was partially due to the poor economic condition of her parents and the fact that she was the oldest child and the only one upon whom her father and mother could depend for labor (R. Freed, 1971, pp. 423–435).

Since it was deemed proper that a female marry before menarche and go to her husband for consummation on the occasion of menarche, parents of daughters would, when necessary, lie about the ages of their daughters. Mothers kept the occasion of their daughter's first menses secret, and young girls were too shy to mention the event. Because of this secrecy and the inaccuracy of ages of females, parents could delay a wedding and *Gauna* without being considered to flaunt the value placed on an early marriage and consummation at *Gauna*.

Even though a marriage was usually consummated at *Gauna*, afterward the wife did not necessarily stay permanently with her husband's family. If her husband's family made no objection, she could visit back and forth between her natal and husband's families until she became pregnant. At her first pregnancy, she was expected to stay with her husband's family more or less permanently. This system of going back and forth after the wedding allowed a gradual period of adjustment for the young couple and for the bride in her new roles vis-à-vis her husband's relatives.

PREPARATION FOR CONSUMMATION IN THE BRIDE'S VILLAGE

Before *Gauna*, the parents of the girl assembled the presents that she would take to her husband's house. Together with items of furniture, cooking pots and utensils, clothes

and ornaments for herself, she also brought clothing for the groom and her conjugal affines. The amount, quality, and modernity of the goods were determined by the economic status of the family although families might borrow to provide everything considered necessary for this final installment of the dowry. When the date of departure drew near, the bride's family displayed the presents so that kin and neighbors would see that the family had provided well for their daughter. These displays were far more prominent among the Brahmans and Jats than they were among other castes because of the differences in economic standing. The displays were held in the afternoon of the day before the bride's departure with the articles spread out on cots and strung on lines in the family's courtyard. Large, wealthy Jat families sometimes displayed the goods by invitation in an inner part of the women's quarters. Among the Chamars and Chuhras, visitors were generally castemates; the display received little notice from other castes. In the evening, women of the lineage and friends from other castes joined in a song session.

CEREMONIAL WEEPING FOR DEPARTURE

On the following day, the girl, her mother, sisters, women friends, and neighbors accompanied the bride to the bus stop where her brother waited to chaperon her on the bus as she traveled to her husband's village. If brother and sister were from a prestigious and wealthy family, they sometimes would travel by taxi.

On the way to the bus stop, the mother and daughter wept. The younger women sang. Although grooms were glorified in story and song, brides from early childhood heard their conjugal affines vilified and described as making life difficult for a wife. A bride's unhappy existence in her husband's house was contrasted with her pleasant life in her natal household, a contrast that provoked the ceremonial weeping. The custom of weeping at the departure of the bride would continue to take place for a number of years whenever she left her natal village, gradually diminishing as she grew older. Despite the tradition of weeping, some young wives were not really unhappy at this time. The mood depended on the personality of a young wife, the way in which husband's relatives treated her at the first visit, and her feelings about her new husband.

EVENTS IN THE GROOM'S VILLAGE

When the female members of the groom's family welcomed his wife at *Gauna,* they were not as exuberant as they were on the first visit immediately after the wedding. As at many wedding rituals where behavior of adult males and females was matter-of-fact, contained, and repressed, no one hugged or kissed the new bride when she arrived for *Gauna,* not even the groom. Demonstrations of affection never occurred publicly except when an adult kissed a very small child. Rather than affection, the characteristic behavior between affines was respect, as when the new wife pressed the legs of her mother-in-law and other senior ladies as a demonstration of their relationship. The husband and wife were shy with one another when in the presence of others and often when they were by themselves.

At the time of *Gauna,* the new wife was expected to participate in the work of the household. Under her mother-in-law's tutelage, she learned the ways in which the family liked their bread and vegetables cooked, where the family's fields were, and what work was expected of her daily. This step into the mundane life of her new home meant that she had fully emerged from the sacred state which ended with the immediate postnuptial ceremonies in her husband's village.

First mating took place between bride and groom on either the first or second night. The couple was expected to have sexual relations for two or three nights in a row; then the bride returned to her family. For this period, most families, no matter how crowded their living quarters, attempted to set aside a place in which the young couple could sleep alone. If the bride brought a marriage bed, it was set up at the time of her second visit. In one-

room houses, the simplest expedient was to partition a small section with sheets or quilts to provide the couple with some privacy. In two or three very large, wealthy houses, each couple had a private room.

One Chamar Leatherworker family was building a new house and arranged for their son and his new bride to sleep in it, although the doors and roof had not yet been installed. Since the weather was warm and dry, sleeping in the unfinished building was comfortable and provided more privacy than was customary in the poorer castes and families. Even though this young couple were afforded more privacy and better quarters than usual for their first mating, the bride's problems at consummation, typical of some new brides, were revealed in an interview:

> Daya [the bride] says that she is terrified of her husband when he comes in the night, but that he is quite gentle and tells her not to be afraid. He says he will do whatever she likes; he won't even touch her. She has become less frightened than she was at first. Her mother-in-law and the wife of her husband's older brother are no help to her when she is afraid. She says she learned about sexual relations from listening to her older married friends, that is, girls from her village who had married and returned home for a visit. They told her what would happen to her and that she would become annoyed and start crying. When she came to her husband's house, her husband's older brother's wife explained sexual relations to her. She says that she was afraid and told her husband's older brother's wife that she would sleep only with her. The husband's older brother's wife merely said that, when her husband joined her, she must be quiet and not scream—that it is only natural and is how her mother and father had children. Nevertheless, she slept with her husband's older brother's wife, who, however, moved away during the night; when Daya awoke in the morning, she found her husband had joined her (S. Freed and R. Freed, 1964, p. 159).

Daya, a young girl of 15, shortly after consummation was afflicted with spirit possession, which more often affected females than males in Shanti Nagar. Her possession was related to the problems that a young wife encountered in passing from her family of birth to her family of marriage. These problems involved adjusting to changes in status, role behavior, and a totally new sexual role. Not all young wives experienced spirit possession, but the example of Daya emphasizes the problems involved in the transition from unmarried daughter to married woman.

The roles of the young groom and his elder brother's wife are essential for understanding these final postnuptial events. The elder brother's wife and her husband's younger brother had a warm joking relationship with sexual overtones. Should the woman's husband die, the younger brother had levirate rights to the widow. Jokes and songs about a man and his elder brother's wife often hinted at sexual relations between them in the husband's absence. Generally, therefore, an older brother's wife was the ideal person verbally to instruct the groom in sexual relations before marriage. It would have been embarassing and incorrect behavior for the mother or father of the groom to attempt such instruction. The ideal pattern was to show respect for mother and mother-in-law. In addition, a feeling of shyness regarding any sexual subjects existed between mother and son. Fathers did not enter into intimate discussions with their offspring, male or female, because such discussions might lead to a breakdown in respect and authority.

DISPLAY OF DOWRY

The presents which a young bride brought at *Gauna* were publicly displayed by her husband's family, an event which was also the occasion for a reception of the bride by women of the village community, thus enlarging the bride's integration in her husband's life. Women of all ages attended dressed in their best clothing. Some of the younger women wore lipstick and colored nail polish for this occasion, a relatively recent urban influence. A few Jat families served tea. Among the presents were sewing machines and household furniture, which had been purchased in urban marketplaces, a sign of increasing urbanization. Some of the young brides accompanied their fathers when these purchases were made so that

they could select the items that they wanted, another innovation.

A wealthy Jat bride brought the following items at *Gauna*: 18 brass utensils, two stools, one table, one chair, one bed, three mirrors, miscellaneous small pieces of furniture, one spinning wheel, four sets of bedding (each set included a woven bed mat, sheets, pillows, and a quilt), 65 outfits of clothing for the bride, 23 outfits for women in the husband's household.

The senior woman of the household distributed these gifts to the appropriate relatives. For example, three of the sets of bedding were given to the most important male relatives of the husband. The 23 suits for the female relatives were divided among the eldest woman in the household, the wife of the head of the family, married daughters, and women of the groom's father's brother's family. Because a sister of the new wife was also married into the village, the bride brought a suit of clothing for her. She also brought two suits for a Gola Potter woman, because both of them came from the same natal village, and one suit for the Nai Barber woman because she served her husband's family and would, thus, serve her.

Ramifications of Marriage Network

The economic, social, and political networks related to the marriage system were complex. Marriage perpetuated family, lineage, clan, and caste. In a society where numbers of close relatives and wealth helped to maintain one's status, preferred marriage alliances were made with wealthy families who had respectable reputations and ties to numerous influential individuals, especially in various large governmental departments. Small castes with little land or wealth were hard put to form such alliances. They established them to the extent they could and endeavored to maintain ties to patrons who had wealth, power, and prestige. In a country where "access" (knowing the right person) was often helpful and sometimes necessary to obtain a job or an important favor, the network of relationships which was built up through marriage was exceptionally important.

A marriage presented ample opportunity to demonstrate the status of a family. However, only the Brahmans and Jats had adequate resources to finance weddings that were ritually and economically prestigious. The Jats, despite their declarations that they did not believe in more than modest spending on weddings and their attempts to curb expenses, had the largest number of wedding guests, spent the most money, and were most zealous about having an Arya Samaj professional Brahman priest. The Brahmans, even though they did not spend as much as the Jats, had the most elaborate ceremonial, thereby demonstrating their position as Brahmans.

For other castes, one of the satisfactions of weddings was to win the approval of Jats and Brahmans for the way in which they conducted their weddings. For their part, wealthy Jats and occasionally Brahmans provided loans to help finance a more prestigious wedding than a family might otherwise be able to afford. Among the Chamars and Chuhras, there was an attempt to follow Hindu ritual. Because they lacked land and other assets and were only beginning to enter occupations through education, they could not vie with Jats and Brahmans in their wedding ceremonies. Of greater significance from the point of view of their prestige and future economic well-being, the men whom low-caste families could invite to attend the main wedding functions were members of their own caste and generally not particularly influential individuals outside their own caste community. Although a Jat for whom a low-caste family worked might observe some of the events for a short time, he would not sit, smoke, or eat with low-caste persons, acts that emphasized his superior status and the social distance he intended to maintain. However, he would provide an appropriate gift.

A wedding was an occasion for forming new kinship ties, strengthening old ones, and for reaffirming friendships with persons of other castes and villages, all in a context where the prestige and wealth of the princi-

pal participants were on display. A wedding, usually, presented people at their best. Relatives of both bride and groom could believe that the new alliance had increased their ability to cope with a difficult world where kinsmen, patrons, and friends were one of the few bases of security. The world in which the people in Shanti Nagar interacted was not just the village of Shanti Nagar but a large region with a network of relationships based primarily on ties of consanguinity and affinity. With greater education and occupational mobility, such ties were being extended to other parts of India.

Woman's Place in Network

A woman's rank traditionally was based on ritual purity, that is, due to menses and childbearing, she was impure; as a result, she could not perform certain religious functions. The characteristics designated as impure were those biologically necessary for the most important focus of the social system, the perpetuation of the family and lineage. By stigmatizing female physiology as impure, males gained ascendancy over females. A similar hierarchical ideology was invoked with regard to the economic and familial roles of women; considered inferior and subordinate, a woman was thought to require a male to take care of her because she was unable to fend for herself without a husband or male head of the household and authority figure. One result of this ideology was that the father of a girl looked for a groom rather than vice versa, bargained in terms of the elaborateness of the wedding and the size of the dowry, and was obsequious in wrenching a marriage agreement from the father of the boy. The basis upon which the society classified its members and restricted the social roles which they played focused on rank, prestige, and segregation, attributes that defined women as being of lower rank and therefore subordinate to men because of purity-pollution ideology.

To balance these cultural disparities of males and females, it was essential to bind a couple together in an harmonious working union. To this end, the wedding ceremony contained a series of pronouncements regarding the reciprocal duties of wife and husband stressing the wife's obedience and the husband's obligation to care for her. Although this system was not as stringent among the Chamars and Chuhras, the low castes tended to emulate the high castes as a matter of prestige. Women ranked below men in all castes.

Although females were definitely an economic asset, to allow them to convert their value to social and ritual prestige would have upset the hierarchy and authority structure which was based on kinship and which was reinforced by landownership. Land traditionally was inherited patrilineally. Therefore authority vested in males. To perpetuate a system where females would not inherit, a complex system of gift exchange existed whereby the family of a bride paid a considerable dowry at the time of marriage and continued to send gifts to her throughout her life, an obligation assumed by a woman's brother when her father died. These ceremonial gifts or payments validated the inferior position of the female and were made in order that she would be well treated by her conjugal affines. In this system, the husband never completely supported his wife and children since a substantial amount of clothing and money came from the wife's family; at the same time, most of her work was performed for her husband's family and it was a major contribution to the family's economic functioning.

Since 1947 Indian inheritance laws have changed so that daughters and widows can inherit; however, male heads of families in Shanti Nagar put pressure on them to relinquish this right. Until women become better educated, understand their right of inheritance, and are able to withstand the pressures of the males, the traditional system of inheritance at the village level should continue. Eventually, changes in inheritance might contribute to changes in the marriage system.

Females, in this system, were treated as though they were plentiful and had little or no economic value, despite their very real economic contributions. Males, on the other

hand, were treated as though they had great economic value and were in short supply, contrary to fact; for in this part of India males have long outnumbered females. The father of the girl paid to have his daughter properly married; the father of the boy gave ornaments and clothing to the girl which were brought back into the groom's family. It would seem from these payments that males were scarce and females plentiful; this effect is primarily a result of the attitudes toward males and females.

Plural and Second Marriages

The typical villager had one marriage for life which was validated by going around the fire. Although relatively rare, polygynous unions occurred, usually the result of two circumstances: a man died and left a widow who then married one of his surviving brothers who already had a wife or who later acquired another one as was usually the case; or a man might marry a second wife if his first one failed to bear children or sons. Of the six polygynous families in Shanti Nagar, two resulted because a man had a childless wife or who bore no sons, and three were formed when a widow married her deceased husband's brother. The sixth polygynous family was formed because, according to the husband, he wanted another wife.

The relative status of wives in polygynous households depended upon whether a fire ceremony had been performed for each wife. When each co-wife had been married with a fire ceremony, they generally had equal status. For example, when a Brahman and his first wife had no sons, he married a second wife. Subsequently, both wives had sons, enjoyed equal status, and lived together amicably. Because leviratic unions were not celebrated with a fire ceremony, the wife of such a union had lesser status than a co-wife, if there was one, who had been married in the customary way. For example, one Jat married his older brother's widow in order that she might be taken care of, but they did not mate or live together because he already had a wife and children, was very urbanized, and seldom was in the village. His second wife lived in quarters by herself in the building of a large Jat family and was generally ignored by her husband and his family. Her status was much inferior to that of her co-wife. The inferior status of a wife who married without the fire ceremony was clearly indicated by the fact that the two highest castes, the Brahmans and Baniyas, generally did not permit widows to remarry.

Among those castes where widows were expected to remarry, the preferred second marriage was to either one's husband's elder or younger brother. Songs and traditions favored the younger brother with whom there already existed a warm joking relationship with sexual overtones as compared to the relationship of avoidance that a woman maintained with her husband's elder brother. If there was no brother to take care of a widow, then a more distant relative might be called. When a Gola Potter died leaving a widow and there was no brother to marry her, the lineage called a man from another village who was related to the deceased husband's family through his mother and who married the widow. In any case, leviratic marriage took place even if the brother nominated or choosing to take the widow was already married. Polygyny was illegal in India but because the levirate was a time-honored, useful custom and because there were no written records of marriage, the legal prohibition had not eliminated the practice.

The general purpose of the levirate was to take care of the widow and to protect the interests of the dead man's close male relatives in his property. A widow had rights to her husband's property during her lifetime, and the male members of her husband's family and patrilineage preferred to control her exercise of these rights to guard against any infringement of their right to the property after her death. Furthermore, the female herself was regarded as the property of her family of marriage as were her children, and they were economic assets.

When a woman was widowed, she had the choice of remarriage or remaining a widow. If she remained a widow, she could live in her husband's household, provided the family could maintain her, or she could return to

her natal home. If she remained in her husband's home, it was difficult to resist the pressure to marry one of her husband's brothers unless she was a Brahman or Baniya. If she wanted to return to her natal family, her parents and brothers usually resisted her wishes and advised her to remarry. People believed that a single woman in her childbearing years should be under the care of a male. If a woman had passed the menopause or was approaching it, there might be little or no pressure to remarry. Marriage to one's husband's brother was preferred to a union with a relative outside the immediate family. This attitude was no doubt related to the belief that the female became the property of her family of marriage which did not like to lose their vested interest in her and her children.

The remarriage of a widow involved little ceremony. It was usually referred to as "taking (or giving) the *orhna* (headcloth)" or "giving the bangles." Glass bangles were always worn by a married woman; when her husband died, they were broken. The headcloth was worn by a married woman to cover her face, a feature of purdah. One year after a husband's death, an elderly man of his family or lineage acted as intermediary for the brother who decided to give the *orhna* to the widow. The intermediary discussed the situation with the widow to learn whether she would accept the candidate; then there was a meeting in the widow's household with members of her family, lineage, caste, and women friends present. At this time, the brother offered the headcloth to the widow. When she accepted, he placed it on her head and put bangles on her wrists. A leviratic wife was known as an *orhna* wife. Even after her remarriage, she was referred to as the widow of her dead husband rather than as the wife of her second husband.

A widow in her fifties with two grown sons described the meeting to discuss her remarriage. After the final mourning ceremony was observed, women gathered in her household to see if she would accept the *orhna* from a man of her lineage. (The deceased husband had no real brothers.) The proposal came from the oldest man in the lineage. The proceedings were held only as a matter of form because everyone knew that the widow had no intention of remarrying. She said that women did not gather in as large numbers as was customary when a widow was expected to remarry because they knew that she was old and would not accept the offer.

Attitudes toward the remarriage of men and women differed; males could be remarried with a fire ceremony and therefore suffered no loss of prestige as did women. If a man's wife died when he was under fifty years of age with children who needed the care of a mother, he usually remarried although the older he was, the less probability there was of his remarrying. If the man belonged to a joint family with enough women to take care of the household and his children, then he might not remarry even if he was quite a bit younger than fifty.

Another option available to a widower who needed an adult woman to care for his household was to marry a son to a somewhat older woman. For example, the head of a nuclear family lost his wife while he was in his early forties and still had young children who needed the care of a mother. As a result, his children were neglected after their mother's death. Three related adult women—two married daughters and an older married sister—at different times stayed with him temporarily until such time as he could find a better solution. His options were to marry again or to find an older woman to marry his 12-year-old son. If he remarried, his wife would most probably be considerably younger than he and he would go through the fire ceremony, which to him seemed somewhat ridiculous. Therefore, his preference was to arrange a marriage for his young son.

There was one known case of the sororate. A Brahman was married to a woman whose younger sister visited her frequently. The wife died without having borne any children, and shortly thereafter the man married her sister, a wedding that was celebrated by going around the fire as was customary for the first marriage of a woman.

When a man was a widower, especially if he was a young man, a girl's family would look carefully into the death of the first wife

because some men who did not care for their wives killed them. Prudent fathers, concerned for the safety and happiness of their daughters, kept this possibility in mind and refused to contract a marriage with a widower whose wife had died under suspicious circumstances.

Although the arrangements for a second marriage of a man to a young woman who had never married were similar to those in a first marriage, the dowry might be smaller, although not necessarily. In Jat families, a girl who was married for the first time to a widower or to a man with a leviratic wife would have as much fanfare and dowry as in any other marriage. In families where males took leviratic wives and then married "real" wives, an important incentive might be the new wife's dowry, especially since the money, furniture, and equipment were for the use of the whole family. In addition, the leviratic wife sometimes was five to 10 years older than her second husband and in time he might prefer a younger wife. Two wives increased the possibility of having sons, especially if the leviratic wife had borne only daughters.

Marriage by Purchase

To purchase a bride was mentioned scornfully in the village. Only one case had occurred in recent times. A young girl, who was described as very beautiful but odd, was married to a much older man, a widower of about 70 or so. According to the gossip, he was supposed to have given the girl's mother a great deal of money. However, if she had received any money, she either spent or lost it, or it was not very much, because she was not well off. Her own story was that she married her daughter to this man because he said he would see that she was cured. The young girl both before and after marriage was described as having wandered around and people protected her so that she would not hurt herself. They said that she could hear an airplane from a long distance before anyone else heard it. But the clearest descriptions of her malady indicated that she was epileptic. In any case, she died in her early teens shortly after her marriage. No matter what really happened, the villagers believed that her mother was a reprehensible character for selling her daughter.

Irregular Unions

There were two irregular unions, both in Brahman households. In one case, a man who was working in Delhi had gone insane and simply wandered off. His wife remained in the village in the household of her husband's younger brother who was a widower. She had a number of children of whom only the oldest boy was the child of her husband; the rest were children she had with her husband's brother. The woman and her children were looked down on and ostracized by most of the Brahmans. She also had a terrible temper which did not help her situation. Her mate managed to get along well with the men in the village and was not generally ostracized, but neither he nor the woman were seen at ceremonial functions. They had little land and were in financial difficulty as well.

The second case was that of a young childless widow. According to Brahman custom, she should have remained a widow with the choice of living in Shanti Nagar supported by income from her husband's property until she died or returning to her natal village. The village attitude was that she should have lived as a widow in her husband's house. However, she chose to take as a husband a distant unmarried kinsman in her husband's lineage. As a result, her interest in her husband's property was annulled and rights reverted to the closest male heirs of her husband. Had she remained a widow, she would have had to live under the control of her husband's kinsmen in their household, a potentially unpleasant situation especially since she had no children. She would have benefited very little from the property under such circumstances. She and her new husband left the village, for he was an urban worker. In due time, they had children. During our fieldwork, he visited his family once, but she never did. Women gossiped about both of these families. Jat men liked to cite these cases to show that even the Brahmans currently re-

married and so everyone was living in the dark age, implying that the times were such that all kinds of behavior went on that formerly were not countenanced.

Divorce

A divorce occurred in Shanti Nagar just before the period of our fieldwork. A young Jat woman who had recently been married told her husband at *Gauna* that she wanted a divorce in order to become a holy woman. Apparently, her parents agreed with her reason for wanting a divorce and procured it for her. The villagers were aghast. Comments ran as follows: "No woman can live alone." "No woman can be a holy woman." "She'll come begging him to take her back." They said that they could understand a man's divorcing a woman, but they could not understand a woman's divorcing a man. About a year later, the man remarried. The marriage was celebrated quietly because two deaths had occurred in the family of his father's brother, but perhaps, too, due to the divorce.

A young Brahman girl was divorced after we left the village. She had been married some years earlier but had not gone permanently to her husband because he was still in school. The husband had been a poor choice. He had irrational temper tantrums and beat his wife severely. It was later discovered that he had burned his first wife to death in a fit of unwarranted jealousy. When the father of the girl learned these facts, he quietly arranged a divorce and a remarriage to an older, urban Brahman. The divorce and remarriage were a departure from Brahmanical custom.

CHANGE AND STABILITY IN MARRIAGE PRACTICES

Although the ceremonies of marriage for the most part provided a conservative and traditional picture of marriage, there were indices of change in marriage patterns. The first index is that marriages and matings primarily occurred in the teenage period rather than earlier, and that males and females in most marriages were more nearly the same age. The second feature of change is that polygyny by itself and as a result of the levirate was infrequent compared to the number of monogamous marriages, and that monogamous marriage for life provided a higher status. The third index is that although irregular unions were frowned upon, among the women of all castes there was considerable empathy for widows and a tendency to want to alleviate their lot. The more essential index of change was the two divorces which occurred in the village. As long as marriages were arranged by the parents of the girls, they would continue to follow the rules of marriage and to perpetuate the customs regarding endogamy and exogamy; they would try to continue the rules of property and inheritance of land. However, the attitudes toward inheritance may change along with the laws. If females are educated to earn a living in an occupation outside of the household, then marriage customs and property inheritance may change.

There is sufficient evidence from the past to indicate that there will be change in the age at marriage of both males and females, principally because of education and urban occupations. As females become better educated along with males, there should be an increase in the age at marriage; in time the age at marriage and the age at consummation will be the same or at least occur relatively close together. When this happens, some of the rites associated with the different ages of marriage may be collapsed and celebrated over a shorter period, or will be dropped. So, too, the number of years it takes to effect and consummate a marriage will be reduced. A few marriages in Shanti Nagar in 1958 and 1959 had already reduced their time span from six or more years to one-and-a-half to two years beginning with the time the father of the bride started the search for a groom.

It is not possible to predict the trend with regard to arranged marriages, in spite of changes at the urban upper and middle class levels allowing young people to see their prospective spouses before marriage and a greater incidence of marriages out of caste. However, when young people attain advanced educations and sever their home ties

by going away to school, the opportunities for males and females to meet each other and become acquainted as well as to learn about courtship and marriage practices around the world should contribute to changes regarding arranged marriages. At the present, at the urban level, the great majority of marriages are still arranged although there are some accommodations for marrying out of caste when the boy and girl are in relatively equally ranking castes or when they come from the same educational and class levels with no great disparities in caste status. It should take some time for these changes to percolate to the village level.

As long as parents are able to control the education and occupations of their children, it will be difficult to change marriage practices radically. The parents under the present economic and family system, not to mention the value system of the community, have the advantage of controlling their offspring regarding the time they choose to see that they are married. If the parents, for various reasons, should marry their offspring at even older ages, then the offspring may be more apt to negotiate marriages of their own choice. Both education and occupation would be contributing factors to this possibility.

As long as there is a dowry in a marriage and the bride's side ranks lower than the groom's, marriages will continue to be contractual affairs starting with the engagement. Because the father of a daughter is expected to look for a husband for his daughter and because a boy inherits but a girl does not, this complex of behavior will perpetuate contractual engagements. However, the inheritance laws in India have changed and allow daughters as well as sons to inherit. At the time of this study, the villagers were doing everything they could to prevent daughters from inheriting, not only because it would bring changes to which they were unaccustomed, but also because the whole structure of marriage, family, lineage, and caste was related to these inheritance laws. The chances are that eventually these new inheritance laws will cause changes in all of the interrelated complex of customs; but it is also possible that the villagers may be able to delay their intended effect sufficiently long for them to make adjustments within and to the law without destroying the network of marriage relations.

One of the aspects of the marriage system in Shanti Nagar which all villagers shared was that there were no written records to indicate that young couples were married and had been married by priests. Some families saved the letters of marriage and *Lagan*; and wealthy families had begun to send out printed invitations to those people living at a distance. These were written evidence of intent to marry. The village watchman in Shanti Nagar was not required to report marriages as he did births and deaths to the district police station. How then did people prove that they were married? The answer to this question devolved upon the matrix of their lives which was essentially within the folds of family, kin, and village community. Everyone who mattered to them knew they were married; no one questioned it. However, as villagers move out of the village and away from their kin permanently, then the need for proof of marriage in the form of writing may arise.

With the advent some 20 years earlier of priests who were engaged specifically to perform the wedding and with growing geographic mobility, the time may come when it will be difficult to prove that one is married. The change from a permanent family priest to a priest who serves only once at a wedding was an urbanizing change. This priest after a while may not be able to remember the couples whom he married. As long as professional priests remain a part of the network of consanguineal and affinal relations and practice within a region where they are well known, then the problem of proving marriages may not arise. But with population movements of the priests and the spouses, written evidence of marriages may be required.

The change from a family priest to a professional priest who operates on a purely commercial basis may also reduce the knowledge of the rules applicable to marriages and the ceremonies to be celebrated.

The possibility of the latter change would be augmented if the Nai Barbers for any reason gave up their hereditary serving relationships in the village and pursued different occupations as a result of education. Their experience, knowledge, and ubiquitousness at marital rituals were essential to carrying out marriages.

The rules of endogamy and exogamy at different times in the history of India have probably changed since there is a great deal of variability throughout India regarding them. Even within villages there is no great consistency between castes regarding these practices. However, in Shanti Nagar, patrilineage and clan exogamy were usually upheld. The further degrees of prohibition of marriages between the various clans knit together by blood and marriage seem to have been flexible in the past and may continue to be so in the future. This flexibility, however, depended on seeing that one's daughter was married, a more important rule apparently than maintaining all degrees of exogamy. The Chamar and Chuhra castes were less apt to know and adhere to these rules due to their history of mobility and not always having been regarded as Hindus. The ability to move freely from place to place has generally allowed for less stringent adherence to marriage rules. Free movement around India and beyond might lead to greater relaxation of these rules for all castes, but it might also set up different rules based on hierarchy as to whom to marry under such conditions.

To hold weddings in the village with large numbers of assistants and relatives may prove difficult as more and more villagers take on urban occupations, migrate to jobs throughout India and beyond, and with the continuing trend for a reduction of hereditary serving occupations (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 120–135). Weddings, therefore, may either be less elaborate, or they may depend on commercial assistants in addition to the professional cooks and priests. If so, the ceremonies may well become more standardized regardless of caste and cult.

Due to the introduction of phonographs, radios, television, and cinema in the world view of the people of Shanti Nagar, new elements may be added to weddings, such as dancing, films, music, and popular recordings, which may supplant other events, for example, the evening song sessions. The loss of the Sing would be unfortunate since it serves the purposes of catharsis, averting misfortune, entertainment, and was educational in bridging the gap between old and new statuses. Other ceremonies may disappear due to economic conditions.

DEATH

"... life is a disease with a bad prognosis because its outcome is always fatal."
(C. G. Jung, 1958, p. 290).

Death, the last rite of passage, tied all the threads of life and death together and emphasized ideology rather than ceremonies and rituals. As in all three rites of passage, the duration of the death rite was relatively long. The liminal period for each rite of passage was the longest, but separation and incorporation took place in various contexts at the beginning, end, and throughout the transitional periods. At death, van Gennep (1961, pp. 146–147) considered the rituals for separation to be few in number and simple, those for incorporation to be elaborate and of the greatest importance. In Shanti Nagar, all of the ceremonies celebrating death were simple, containing little ritual and a paucity of symbols compared with birth and marriage rituals.

Death received less attention than birth and marriage. Death aroused fear and anxiety, and concepts about it, the soul, and ghosts were ambiguous. Mourners and the mourned were avoided to some extent through speech and other actions by the rest of the society, indicating that both were in limbo. Mourners were in limbo symbolically

for one year, but their status involved generally ceremonial prohibitions and not those that affected daily life. Although they did not attend birth or wedding ceremonies or celebrate festivals, they went about their daily work and participated in community affairs. A prolonged state of pollution would have been impractical. What ceremonies a family performed were for the prestige of the family, to sever gradually ties with the dead, and to keep the dead at bay, for an unsatisfied soul might become a troublesome ghost.

Just as the rituals of death were simple so the ideology regarding it was complex. The complexity was due to conflicting beliefs about the afterworld, the dead, the soul, rebirth, and release from the round of rebirths. The ceremonies to some extent showed these ambiguities. Funeral ceremonies, according to van Gennep (1961, p. 146), are complicated when the society celebrating the rituals holds several contradictory or different conceptions of the afterworld. However, in Shanti Nagar, confusion about the afterworld resulted in simple rather than complex ceremonies.

Contrary to Jung's pessimistic view of life and death, the people of Shanti Nagar were optimistic. The key to understanding death as a rite of passage in Shanti Nagar is found in the villagers primarily being interested in immortality, for they had a reasonable expectancy of being born again and again. The belief in rebirth and the concept that the rites of passage tied life and death together gave them faith that in life there is death and in death there is life. Thus, the cycle of rebirths was their claim to immortality.

Contradictory beliefs about death are manifest in conceptions of what happens to the soul after death, the belief that the soul has an allotted time on earth, the dangerous dead (ghosts), and the relationship between karma, dharma, and rebirth, and between heaven, hell, and moksha. Differences of beliefs among villagers, especially between followers of Sanatan Dharma and the Arya Samaj, and skepticism with regard to some beliefs concerning concepts of the fate of the soul after death are evident in the rituals of the death rite.

The main death rituals took place during the first 13 days after death; from then until the first anniversary of death, several commemorative ceremonies were held depending on the caste, family finances, and religious orientation of the family in mourning. All death ceremonies reflected the sex, age, and status of the deceased, as van Gennep (1961, p. 146) pointed out. These characteristics also pertain to birth and marriage rites of passage in Shanti Nagar.

DEATH BY AGE, SEX, AND STATUS

The greatest attention to death rituals was given to those of males of high status in their caste and the village power structure. The lower the caste, the less ceremonial. Females received less attention than males; infants, the least and were soon forgotten. This rule of thumb was grimly practical, for infants had the highest mortality rate and funeral ceremonies were costly.

Death during the period of our fieldwork struck primarily at children under four years of age. Out of a total of 19 deaths which occurred from January 1, 1958 to June 1, 1959, 10 were children under four years of age (Freed and Freed, 1979, table 2). The remaining deaths took place in the population classified as adult, those 15 years of age and over. By sex, five of the deaths of children were males, five females. The remaining nine deaths consisted of four females and five males. The age pattern reflected in these figures is classical for developing agricultural countries (Spiro, 1967, table 9.1, p. 146; Lieban, 1977, p. 18).

When a man or woman of 50–55 years of age died, people were not too surprised; when a person of 70 or more died, the death was expected, for the individual had lived a long life by village standards. If a man of middle years died without issue, then both family and village considered it unfortunate.

The attitude toward the death of infants and small children was different. Both mothers and fathers worried about infants dying. Although they expected infant deaths and accepted them as one of life's difficulties,

they would rather they did not occur, especially that of an infant son. An infant death was attributed to the actions of its soul in past lives, or to the malevolent actions of a ghost. Women discussed the deaths of infants among themselves, but men seldom did, at least not outside of the family.

It was believed that if a child was born with a soul burdened by bad actions from previous lives, such a child would not live and it was better for it to die and be born again, having shed a bit of the bad actions in the process. If a ghost was believed to be taking the lives of infants, as a number of women believed when their children died either at birth or shortly thereafter, the deaths were attributed to a female ghost who had died an untimely death either at childbirth or without issue and was, therefore, jealous of women who were bearing children. These beliefs have long been a part of popular Hinduism (Stevenson, 1971, pp. 136, 191). The beliefs in the consequences of actions in past and present lives, rebirth, and ghosts helped allay the anxiety of a mother who had lost her infant either at birth or shortly thereafter by displacing feelings of anger or guilt from her to external agencies and by assuring her that the death was for the best and that the child would be reborn. At the same time, fear of ghosts added to the anxiety regarding the safety of an infant.

Ceremonies for Children

When infants were stillborn or when death took place immediately after birth or when children were small, there was no public mourning or funeral. In many cases, they were buried instead of being cremated. In former times, all dead infants and small children were buried. This custom was in accord with the belief that the soul of a child who died early was so evil that it was impossible for the child to live. In the presence of such inherent evil the main purpose of cremation was relatively useless, that is, to provide the means for quickly releasing the soul for rebirth, possibly at a higher level, or for its release from the round of rebirths. The soul of a dead infant was so evil that it would have a long wait before a series of rebirths could shed enough evil for a higher rebirth, much less permit release from the round of rebirths.

Despite these beliefs, the Brahmans and Jats no longer buried children but cremated them. Members of these two castes said the practice had changed some years earlier because animals dug up the corpses. All the Jat children who died during the field study were cremated; infants from other castes were buried or cremated. No Brahman children died in 1958 and 1959. The cost of cremation influenced a specific family's decision to accept or reject this change since burials cost nothing. A hole was dug, the body interred, and that was all. The substances used for cremation were relatively costly. An infant's relative lack of social relationship as compared to an adult and the economics of cremation militated against rapid change from burial to cremation among the poorer families and castes, but since the lower castes tended to follow the upper, the tendency was in the direction of cremation. The change at the upper level may have been related to Arya Samaj influence or to greater prosperity and fewer infant deaths.

The main intent in the disposal with a minimum of ritual of a dead child, whether by burial or cremation, was that it should be done faster than funeral ceremonies for adults so that the child's mother could recover from the loss. Women mourners tended to wail and moan, and the high-caste men through the village panchayat had attempted to stop public mourning. However, when kinfolk from the wife's side of a family visited shortly after death, they would come through the streets wailing because they considered it correct behavior. The men believed that by eliminating this type of mourning the mother of a dead child would be less upset, but they were not very successful in enforcing their new rule. Human emotions could not be contained by a new rule or by a model of correct stoical behavior. For example, when a boy, almost two years old, of the Chuhra Sweeper caste, died of dysentery and malnutrition, his mother was in a stupor after the cremation. His father carried the dead infant in his arms to the cremation grounds, accompanied by 10 or so Chuhra

Sweeper men. They burned the boy, in spite of the family's extreme poverty, using sandalwood, ghee, and dung cakes; they also washed his body with Ganges water prior to the cremation. The father stated that they would not gather the bones for disposal in the Ganges River, nor would they have mourning rites during the coming year because he was a small child.

The Laws of Manu state that when a child dies whose tonsure has not been performed, the next of kin become pure in a day and a night. If the hair has been cut, then the next of kin become pure after three days. When a child dies before its second year, it should be buried and the bones are not to be collected as they are after the cremation of an adult. For a child of this age, the relatives are impure for three days. On the death of females who have been betrothed but not yet married, the groom and his family and the girl's relatives become pure after three days (Bühler, 1969, p. 180). In Shanti Nagar, the consummation of a marriage marked the dividing line between childhood and adulthood.

Although, in general, the death of an adult caused a family more grief and received greater ceremonial attention than that of a child, the emphasis could be reversed under specific circumstances, especially in the case of a male infant and an adult female. For example, a three-year-old Jat boy died of dysentery and typhoid. Because of a shortage of male heirs in the family, the death affected it deeply. The family head, who was the paternal grandfather of the dead boy and a difficult man at best, showed his unhappiness and inflicted it on the family females, blaming them for not caring for the child properly. As a result, his *orhna* wife, his elder brother's widow, jumped into the main village well and drowned. The grandfather held cremation rites for the boy. The old woman's body, covered by a cloth, remained on the ground near the well until the police investigated the case. Then her body was taken to Delhi for autopsy and in due time was cremated there. The man mourned for his grandson but not for the old woman. Her woman friends, elder Jat and Brahman women whose houses were nearby, were deeply distressed by her death. Her closest friend immediately fell ill and believed the illness was due to the old woman's ghost, for a suicide is an untimely death and the belief was that those who died untimely deaths became ghosts. Although cremation occurred, some effects of the death and of the personality of the dead person lingered.

Deaths of Adult Males

Examples of cremation rituals follow for three males of different castes. One man was the most prestigious Jat in the village; the other two were members of the Chamar and Chuhra castes. All were older men in their fifties, sixties, and seventies so that the deaths were considered timely; their lives had run their allotted course, according to village belief.

The prestigious Jat had been ill for about three months. After consulting a Western physician in the City of Delhi, he had been informed that he had a greatly enlarged heart and was advised to go home and rest. Usually when Western medical practitioners told a patient to return to the village, it indicated that further medical treatment would not help. The man rested at home, but his condition worsened so that his youngest son took him to the physician again. Realizing the Jat was about to die, the physician suggested that he be taken home immediately. When the son brought him home in a taxi, the father went to relieve himself and collapsed.

As the news spread in the village, men and women gathered in the courtyard of his house. Everyone spoke in whispers, mentioning what a good and respected man he was and praising his ability as a judge in the village councils. At the moment, no one knew whether he was dead or dying. Some people thought that he was alive but on the point of death; others believed that he had died in the taxi coming back from Delhi. Some people were uncertain about his ailment and thought that he had some intestinal or internal obstruction.

Inside the house, the man was placed on his cot; his wife, daughters-in-law, and sons hoped that he might still be alive although he

was motionless and appeared to be dead. His younger son was greatly distressed and was crying; his older son showed less emotion. Members of the lineage gathered, and the room became crowded.

In the belief that the Jat was in a coma, a man from the Lohar Blacksmith caste was summoned to place hot coals in an iron pan under his cot. The Lohar also heated cotton and stuffed it around the Jat to keep him warm because it was winter and the unheated houses were chilly and damp. The Jat did not respond to this treatment and the belief grew that he was dead.

Despite the anxiety and distress of the family members, they were courteous and polite to all visitors. The younger son, who was quite urbanized and not much of a believer in village practices, went to his own room saying that he had never believed in God and now that his father was dead, he saw no reason to alter his beliefs. The women did not go into the room where the dead man lay, as their presence was prohibited by custom. Men of the lineage sat near the dead man and smoked the hookah.

A holy man and curer from the hermitage in a nearby village was summoned and pronounced the man dead after using his stethoscope to examine him. Only then did the female members of the family enter the room, filing past the cot and weeping copiously for their last look at the dead man. When the holy man pronounced the man dead, his two sons broke the widow's glass bangles. She stumbled out of the room with blood on her wrists and threw herself on the ground, crying because her husband was dead, her bangles were broken, and her widowhood indicated bad actions in her past life. Her oldest son shouted, "Ma, we'll take care of you. You don't have to feel badly." Then he withdrew to the death chamber to arrange for the cremation, while the female friends of the widow offered their solace and affection, spoke well of the deceased, and consoled the widow by saying her sons would care for her the rest of her life.

In the meantime, the corpse was bathed and readied for cremation. The eldest son did not want his father to be seen naked so it was arranged to bathe him with Ganges water beneath a sheet. The corpse was then transferred to its bier which was another cot rather than the customary ladder, and the body was carried to the cremation grounds.

Four closely related males should carry the corpse. In this funeral, the dead man's two sons and two lineage members of the same generation as his sons were the pallbearers. Women were not allowed to go to the funeral grounds for a cremation. It was believed that women could not bear the sorrow and sight of the cremation. This practice may have been due to the fear that the widow might throw herself on the funeral pyre (the practice of sati) as had formerly been the custom before the practice was banned by British law.

Although the family did not follow all the proper procedures, such as placing the man on the ground to die and carrying him on a ladder, they treated the corpse as though the man was still alive. They were not yet accustomed to thinking of him as dead, and their actions were expressions of affection and honor for the man.

The cremation grounds were on village common land a few minutes' walk from the habitation site. Each man in the procession to the cremation grounds except the pallbearers carried a stick of wood to be placed on the funeral pyre, as was customary. The Nai Barber and Chuhra Sweeper serving the dead man's family had already conveyed a large supply of dung cakes, crushed and dried stalks of sugarcane, a bucket of ghee (clarified butter), and sandalwood to the grounds. They arranged the pyre so that the dung cakes stood on end in a row with the wood, sugarcane stalks, and straw interpersed on top of the dung cakes. When the funeral party arrived at the cremation grounds, the pallbearers lifted the corpse from the bier and placed it on the pyre with its feet to the south, toward the land of the dead.

A Brahman who had been a close friend of the deceased was expected to arrive shortly from the city and so the funeral party waited for him before lighting the pyre. While waiting, the Nai Barber placed a tray of san-

dalwood and incense near the pyre and set the bucket of ghee over a small fire so that it would melt and could easily be ladled onto the pyre. He then folded the sheet on the corpse back to the waist, smeared the chest of the dead man with powdered incense and sandalwood paste, and poured ghee over the body, which was then covered with wood and dung cakes. Finally, he added sugarcane stalks around the bottom of the pyre and poured an abundance of ghee over it.

Since it was customary to burn a corpse by sundown, as it grew late and the Brahman friend did not come, the cremation proceeded without him. The two sons of the dead man took large bundles of twigs, lit them, and walked along each side of the pyre firing it from the bottom. The holy man, who had pronounced the man dead and accompanied the party to the funeral ground, recited mantras after which the sons poured a ladle of ghee on the pyre. This was done a number of times. Each time the mourners threw incense and sandalwood on the pyre.

When the pyre had caught fire thoroughly, the mourning party moved back from the heat, sat on the ground cross-legged, and the holy man recited mantras, which the men repeated after him. This concluded the cremation, just in time, for it was becoming dark. Since no one stayed or walked in the cremation grounds at night for fear of ghosts, the men returned quickly to the village. Before entering it, the mourners washed their hands. None of the mourners took a bath or changed his clothing, either before or after cremation; washing hands was token purification.

According to Stevenson (1971, pp. 44, 163), a Brahman son shaved his moustache and head on the tenth day after the death of his father or mother. In Shanti Nagar, regardless of caste, the eldest son of a deceased man might shave either his head or moustache, but seldom both, sometimes neither. A Sanatan Dharma Brahman said that when his father died, he did neither. He said that formerly men shaved their heads, moustaches, and beards, but that they did not shave moustaches any more although they might shave their heads. He also stated that the eldest son might shave his head but that no other family member need do so. After the death of the prestigious Jat, the eldest son shaved his head, even though the family followed Arya Samaj beliefs. Men did not mind shaving their heads as much as their moustaches because at that time a common style for men was a shaved head. Men did not wear beards.

Some months after the death of this Jat, an Arya Samaj professional Brahman priest discussed the death ceremony with us. He said that a dying person should be taken from the cot and placed on the earth, then bathed and dressed in nice clothing, and, if the person was a male, a new sacred thread should be placed on him. The funeral pyre should be prepared by digging a small hole at the cremation grounds, plastering it with dung, and decorating the dung with whole wheat flour, for this constituted the square upon which the fire would burn. The funeral pyre was then erected on this square. The body should be carried to the cremation ground on a ladder-like bier, which Stevenson (1971, p. 146) said was made of bamboo poles and string. On the way to the burning grounds, the mourners should recite, "Ram, Ram, there is truth. Speak truth and there is salvation." Stevenson (1971, p. 147) noted a similar custom among Shiva worshipers in Kathiawar and said that Rama rather than Shiva is called upon because Rama's name may be employed "even if the man were unholy, whereas Shiva's name is sacrosanct." Although Saraswati (1956, pp. 66–67) taught that anyone who was physically and mentally fit could learn the Vedas and wear a sacred thread, none of the Jat followers of the Arya Samaj in Shanti Nagar did so, thus, sacred threads were not worn by dead Jats at their funerals.

When the prestigious Jat was dying, this Arya Samaj priest commented that he was not placed upon the ground. According to Stevenson (1971, p. 142) the belief was that if a man died on his bed rather than on the floor, he would return after death as an evil spirit because the height of the bed from the ground was comparable to the space between earth and sky which evil spirits inhab-

ited. Although Swami Dayanand (1956, pp. 46, 494–500) denied the existence of evil spirits and was against the complex rites for death, especially of the type found in Kathiawar, his natal region, yet the editor of Saraswati's *The Light of Truth* stated, "In India, a man is not allowed to die on a cot. He is taken down and laid on the ground. It is said that the soul find [*sic*] it is easier to die on the ground, than on a cot" (Saraswati, 1956, p. 496). The earth, symbolized by the square for each fire ceremony, is one of the threads which ties life and death together. Just as the infant is first placed on the earth to indicate that this is from whence its body comes so the deceased is placed on the earth as the place to which its body goes. Van Gennep (1961, p. 165) considered the custom of placing the deceased on the earth a ritual of incorporation of the dead into the world of the dead, but in Hinduism it is symbolic of the link between life and death.

The priest informant mentioned that the custom of the eldest son's breaking open the deceased's forehead with a bamboo pole at the time of cremation to allow its soul to escape was not followed in Shanti Nagar. He listed other omissions from the prestigious Jat's funeral rites. He had been carried to the cremation grounds on a cot, contrary to custom. The funeral pyre had not been properly prepared by digging a small hole and placing dung over the earth.

One villager said the Jat family was stingy because they had not provided a ladder for the bier. Other villagers criticized this family on the same grounds, one of them adding that the cot was an old cot. The criticisms were aimed at nonconformity because the villagers were uncomfortable with these changes and at the attitudes of Jats. The villagers implied that such a prestigious Jat family should have conducted a proper funeral. Jats were generally frugal and believed, as followers of the Arya Samaj, that instead of burning, sacrificing, or giving money to beggars, they should give to respectable poor families. One of their ways of doing so was by giving old clothes and other items to the low castes, just as this cot was given to a Chuhra family after the funeral, along with the dead man's old clothing.

Although Chuhra Sweepers traditionally were given old clothing, there was a feeling of fear about taking items that had been owned by a dead person because the deceased might become a malevolent ghost, especially if funeral ceremonies were not celebrated properly. Also, the low castes were beginning to resist the practice of being given or taking old clothing. The Chamar Leatherworkers, for example, no longer took them. These attitudes may have contributed to the criticisms regarding this Jat cremation.

A Brahman informant said that one should take a bath after coming home from the cremation grounds, but generally nobody did so anymore. Mourners just washed their hands and feet and splashed water on themselves. Thus the rituals separating the mourners from the rest of the society were rather simple. Although death was polluting in Hindu belief, the people of Shanti Nagar were not overly concerned with pollution unless it affected their status and prestige. Then they followed the rules more strictly.

No Brahman male died during the period of our fieldwork so that it was not possible to check the statements of Brahman informants as to the simplicity of their funeral rituals and token purification. Brahmans who attended the cremations of friends in other castes were observed to behave in the manner indicated above. Comparison of the rituals of funerals and mourning in Shanti Nagar with those described by Stevenson for Brahmans in Kathiawar between 1910 and 1920 shows that then the ceremonies were far more complex and elaborate. Stevenson worked with three Brahman informants, all active priests, who represented the range of tradition for that time from conservative to modern. Her information should be considered in the context of the times, the identity of her informants, the section of the country, and the fact that her Brahmans were followers of Shiva and well-off townsmen (Stevenson, 1971, pp. 135–155).

An old Chamar Leatherworker died one evening wearing only a loincloth. According to one of his grandsons, he breathed a deep breath, his son took his pulse, and then he was gone. The old man was feeble and somewhat blind, so that he was expected to die.

The son of the dead man and his two oldest sons, 13 and 14 years of age, removed the loincloth and washed the corpse. Then they placed the body on a ladder, on which wheat straw had first been spread, covered it with four new sheets, costing 8 rupees each, and tied it to the ladder with ropes. The son, one of the grandsons, and two nephews of the deceased carried the bier to the cremation grounds. The rest of the mourners carried the fuel, picking up pieces of wood as they went. At the cremation site, they arranged dung cakes on the ground and placed the bier on them; then they spread more dung cakes over the body. Next, they poured ghee, sandalwood paste, and powdered incense over the top layer of dung cakes. The son of the dead man lit the fire. Nobody said anything, and then the mourners left. Members of other castes, including a few Jats and Brahmans, who had ties of patronage and other relationships to the family, also attended the cremation.

The young grandson who was a pallbearer had never participated in a funeral before. He said, "Previously, I was a child. I felt bad inside but you should not cry when you carry a dead body. The women cried at home. I liked my grandfather; he was kind. He did not beat me if I made a mistake. He just slapped me and said, 'Don't do it again.'" (The boy's father was known for the rough handling of his sons.)

The funeral preparations for an old Chuhra Sweeper man were similar to those for the Chamar. The corpse was bathed and placed on a wooden ladder, which had been covered with dry grass and then a cloth. Just as the corpse was washed by males of the family and lineage, so too only men went to the cremation grounds. The body was dressed in new clothes, wrapped in a white shroud, and tied to the ladder with ropes. Four persons carried the bier: two sons of the deceased, a son's son, and a daughter's son. Only Chuhras went to the cremation ground.

As was traditional during the days after cremation, mourners from other villages visited the bereaved family and wept and wailed. During the wailing, children in two Brahman families whose rooftops overlooked the Chuhra Sweeper compound threw stones down upon the mourners. The Sweepers complained to the children's mothers each of whom tried to blame the other woman's children. As a result, a quarrel broke out between the adults of the two Brahman families and the Chuhra Sweepers. The Brahman children were admonished by their fathers but not very sternly because they were Brahmans and the Chuhras were of much lower caste, and also because some years earlier the village panchayat had decided that for mourning there should be no crying and wailing in the village streets. The Brahman children, in effect, had been enforcing the new rules. The visiting Chuhra mourners, having come from another village, were unaware of the change in custom. On only two occasions did crying and wailing occur at the time of mourning during the field study, both times by outsiders: this occasion and another time at the death of a young Brahman Priest wife when her in-laws came to mourn her. In the latter case, no one complained.

In contrast to the cremation of the prestigious Jat, the cremations of the Chamar and Chuhra indicated a closer adherence to older forms and conservative behavior. This finding is consistent with what Srinivas (1967, p. 6) called Sanskritization, which may have spread more extensively to all castes since the independence of India, possibly because of education, improved economic circumstances, and legal changes. In the process of Sanskritization, the lower castes typically tended to follow the example of the higher castes as scrupulously as possible in order to raise their status, while the higher castes, whose status was already established, were less concerned about traditional ritual details. The Jats who were in a position of power and dominance, might not have bothered about ritual details as much as did the low castes who were interested in raising their status.

According to our informants, Chuhras and Chamars, who previously had buried their dead, started cremating them after 1947, possibly in imitation of the high castes who had long practiced cremation. The change was related to other changing caste customs in India. Formerly, these two low castes not

only lacked the money for cremation but moreover were not allowed to burn their dead. With the change to cremation, these two castes burnt their dead in a part of the cremation grounds reserved only for them. This spatial separation of the two lowest castes from the other castes in both life and death was representative of a caste barrier that had not changed. Stevenson (1971, pp. 148–149) noted that for Kathiawar, "In most towns there are several burning-grounds; for instance . . . there is one for the family of the reigning prince, another for the Nagara, and a third for high-caste Hindus, including other Brahmans, another for such folk as Bhils and Kolis, and a fifth for outcastes . . . ."

If death is polluting for all castes, why differentiate spatially in the cremation grounds between the two lowest castes and all the others? Our observations and enquiries indicated that this segregation was more of a matter of caste status than pollution. The fact that death was polluting did not reduce all the dead to the same social level. Although villagers gave lip service to purity and pollution, they could relax standards when necessary and sometimes became rather casual about the issue. If pollution was so important that it was at the heart of the spatial segregation in the cremation grounds, then one would expect the higher castes to bathe carefully after cremation, but they did not. Rather, a more basic concern of the villagers was caste status and the maintenance of group boundaries, which were manifest in death as in life.

Deaths of Adult Females

The cremation of four females during our fieldwork yielded little additional information because for females there was less fanfare than for males and the circumstances of their deaths militated against excessive ceremonialism. Three were Jats of Arya Samaj families, and one was a Brahman of a poor, Sanatan Dharma family.

The first of these deaths was the old woman who committed suicide when her grandson died. She, as noted previously, was cremated by the police in the City of Delhi. Her family did not carry out any ceremonies, except for the grandson. Her female kin and neighbors mourned her but at the same time they were afraid that her ghost might seize them and cause them to die. As suicide was an untimely death, the deceased was expected to become a troublesome ghost, especially since the funeral ceremonies were not properly observed. The second death was that of a teenage Brahman girl who died at night under strange circumstances and was cremated at dawn with no one except her immediate family attending the cremation. The third was the death of a middle-aged woman, the wife of one of the strictest followers of the Arya Samaj, who died of a liver or circulatory ailment. The last was an old Jat woman who had influenza; her husband beat her while she was ill, thus contributing to her death.

A Brahman girl 11 years old, who watched the cremation for this last death, described it and discussed the dead woman's life and last days. Her husband was considered by villagers to have contributed to her death. He often beat her quite badly with a stick, according to our youthful informant. To stop him, villagers would come to his house. This was unusual, for it was considered correct for a man not only to discipline his wife but also his children with beatings, but not cruelly and without reason.

Once when his wife went to her parents' village, he took his wrath out on his daughters-in-law, not the task of the father-in-law but of the husband. Another time he threatened to kill all three of the women in the household (wife and two daughters-in-law), but some neighbors stopped him. The youngster relating these incidents said, "He's a sinner. One day I was gathering fruit with my brother and sister and we saw him kill a sheep. Another time he shot a dog." Taking the life of animals was generally tabooed.

Because of village gossip about the Jat woman's death and the evil nature of her husband, this girl's curiosity was aroused so she and other children hovered around the cremation grounds. The grown sons of the old man carried the body to the burning

grounds and participated in the funeral. Although women and children were not supposed to go to funerals, no one chased the children away. According to the child informant, the bereaved husband wandered happily and laughed throughout the procession and cremation. The child said that she had liked the dead woman but that she was afraid of the husband and always acted very respectfully and quietly in front of him.

After the funeral, the man talked with this girl's mother and said that when he died, he would come and take her (the mother) and that if she tried to run away, he would become a ghost and kill her. From the time of the funeral, he was ostracized by his sons and daughters-in-law and had recurrent problems in the village. There was an attempt to take his gun license away from him because of his potential for violence.

Our young informant said that she had seen many people die and described the customs of bathing the corpse, wrapping it in a shroud, carrying it to the cremation grounds, and burning it. She felt sad when people died, but did not seem afraid of death or dead people.

The funeral ceremonies for women were similar to those for men, but less money was spent on fuel and fewer people attended. A son did not shave his head or moustache at the death of his mother, but this custom was diminishing for all deaths. Brahman Priest women had no recollection of widows who shaved their heads at the death of a husband.

ROLE OF BRAHMAN PRIESTS AND NAI BARBERS

Throughout the many rituals celebrated for birth and marriage, Brahman Priests and Nai Barbers have generally been the specialists who assisted in carrying out the ceremonies, especially so in the case of marriage. For death, their work had been changed and reduced. Formerly, the family priest (*purohit*) officiated at funerals. Since reforms in the 1930s, the custom of having a family priest to carry out the samskaras no longer existed, so other priests were called to recite mantras at a funeral. However, this custom ceased in 1947; Brahmans no longer served as priests at funerals because to serve at funerals was considered demeaning (Saraswati, 1956, p. 497). In general, hereditary serving relationships that were demeaning had been reduced or eliminated since the independence of India.

Similarly, the family barber no longer shaved corpses. Formerly, the Nai Barber who served a family had special duties at deaths, such as shaving a corpse, helping prepare funeral feasts, cleaning the dead man's house, and cooking food for dogs, the symbolic messengers of Yama, the god of death. There was no special payment for these tasks; they were part of the hereditary employer-employee serving arrangement. However, Nais might still carry the necessary substances for cremation to the burning grounds. One Nai, who operated his own barbershop in the city, had his son perform this task in Shanti Nagar. His wife said that in the city clients sometimes wanted a corpse shaved, but that her husband would not do this work. He hated it, was disgusted with it, and was afraid of the dead body. Shaving a corpse was no longer done in Shanti Nagar.

Thus, the services of the Brahman Priest and the Nai Barber at funerals had been reduced as one of the changes in the hereditary serving relationships. These changes were in the direction of raising the status of the individuals who formerly performed demeaning tasks. In this part of India, therefore, Dumont was partially right and partially wrong, in that the Nai Barbers and Brahman Priests were still specialists for ceremonial events (Dumont, 1970, pp. 98–99, 292–293) but not at funerals. The so-called jajmani system had changed with attendant changes in relationships between castes, but hereditary employment relationships at the village level and caste distinctions still persisted to some degree (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 125–126, 127–128; Lewis, 1958, ch. 2).

The position of Brahman Priests and Nai Barbers in the ritual life of this village was paradoxical. Brahmans ranked high in the social hierarchy. Yet on an individual level, if they did not act as professional priests, they ranked higher than those who did. Tak-

ing payments for their services and acting at funerals lowered their status. Nais ranked with Mahar and Gola Potters above the Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers. Yet because of their specialized services they only served the castes who ranked above them, for if they served those below them they could not serve those above. Thus, their services and regular interaction with the castes above them raised their status although many of the services were considered polluting and demeaning. To serve castes higher than they required a status at least high enough for touching and interacting with the higher castes. Perhaps such interaction allowed them to take on some of the "essence" of all the higher castes they served. With the Brahman Priests, who served as professional priests at death and birth, this logic would be reversed, for all the castes which they served except their own were below them.

These paradoxes in ritual behavior may be a form of communicating or calling attention to what otherwise is inexpressible, providing a frame of reference for alluding to the inexpressible by symbolic interaction. What is clean in one context is unclean in another. Ritual separates life from death but, whereas throughout life ritual circumscribes and segregates filth or danger from life, at death ritual embraces dirt. There is no way to escape the human body being reduced to dirt except through projections of another life or release from the round of rebirths (Douglas, 1970, pp. 19, 78, 207, 208). During life, organic substances such as blood from menses and childbearing, semen, and other bodily emissions cause pollution. Thus, birth and marriage deal with organic substances that may cause pollution; but death also deals with substances, the dry remains of cremation, which are also polluting. During life, pollution is remedied by bathing, but at death this purification is limited and a specific time for mourning must elapse before pollution ceases (Dumont, 1970, pp. 48, 50, 51, 70–71). Thus, death is the most polluting condition. Whatever the sources of pollution and whether it is Brahman Priests or the Nai Barbers who are attendants may not matter. The real danger is from the battle between life and death. The rituals to maintain purity and escape pollution are merely symbolic means of keeping death at bay. In the future, therefore, if villagers are better able to extend their life span and perpetuate the lives of their loved ones, this rite of passage may become ever more attenuated and secularized, a trend correlated with a weakening of concepts of purity and pollution.

Those people who regularly attended and performed services for rites of passage knew the details of what should be done. Therefore, since neither Brahmans nor Nais provided their services at funerals any longer, the esoteric aspect of funeral rituals had been simplified. The family of a deceased person rarely attended a large enough number of funerals to have learned the details of the ceremonies. Funeral ceremonies, therefore, were the most attenuated of all the rites of passage. The changes stemmed partially from the demeaning status placed on the Brahman or Nai who provided services at funerals, partially from Arya Samaj influences, and more particularly from political changes since 1947.

MOURNING

A series of brief ceremonies and feasts in a mourning period of one year allowed the living to adjust to the loss of their dead, as remembrances of the deceased gradually faded. These ceremonies during the year following death and later memorials were for adults, not for children.

The period of mourning paralleled the year during which the soul of the deceased was in limbo before its rebirth or release from the round of rebirths. The period of transition was for both the living and the dead. The mourning ceremonies consisted of picking up the bones after the cremation, the ritual on the thirteenth day, a special feast for a very old person, called *Kaj,* and sometimes feasts each month for one year, and more elaborate feasts and rituals at the end of six months and at the end of the year. Thereafter, the Brahman Priests commemorated dead ancestors in the fall of the year during the dark

fortnight of Ashvin (September–October) in the period known as Shraddha or Kanagat. Other castes remembered their ancestors on the last day of Shraddha, except for Arya Samajis, who did not observe this period (R. Freed and S. Freed, 1964, pp. 83, 87). Brahman Priests and sometimes others also observed a day of remembrance on the date on which a person had died. These observations faded away after three generations for males; that is, fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers were remembered. More rarely, comparable generations of females were commemorated. The degree to which the dead were remembered varied depending on the personalities, sex, age, and prestige of the individual who had died, and the personalities, emotional attachments, religious beliefs, and financial positions of the living. The pattern of land inheritance and patrilineal descent reinforced the remembrance of male ancestors. Male Brahmans and Jats, the landowning castes, more often than the lower castes had a memorial shrine for their leading male dead, even when they followed Arya Samaj beliefs.

Picking up the Bones

All castes observed the custom of picking up the finger, toe, and jaw bones, and ashes from the face and forehead of the corpse. They were collected on the third day after death. The number three in this context is inauspicious, related to bad fortune and death. Stevenson (1971, pp. 126, 157) said that three gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, should be worshiped to pacify a dead ancestor, which was not done, but the number three was considered inauspicious and was related to the day for picking up the bones. If a wife died at her parents' village, then the women in her husband's family visited the wife's natal village on the third day after death to gather her bones. Sometimes they were unable to do this until the fourth day, so that four too was inauspicious in the context of death (Stevenson, 1971, p. 158). Since a married woman became the property of her husband's family, it was that family's responsibility to carry out her death ceremonies and mourning period, except for the cremation which was done immediately wherever the death occurred.

The bones and ashes were placed in a bag or a box to be taken either to the Ganges River or the Jumna River, preferably the Ganges. Placing the bones in the Jumna was consistent with the ideology that all rivers in India are a part of Mother Ganges; the Jumna is also the sister of Yama, god of death (Dowson, 1950, pp. 373–375). Taking the bones to the Jumna was convenient because widows and widowers journeyed to it on the day of the new moon, to take a dip, an act of religious merit (R. Freed and S. Freed, 1964, pp. 82, 85).

Not everyone took the bones to the Ganges or Jumna. One Brahman informant said that few Jats took the bones to the Ganges or even picked them up. This was consistent with another teaching of Saraswati, which was that pilgrimages were derived from the teachings of the Jains and not mentioned in the Vedas, and that the places of pilgrimage, such as Hardwar at the Ganges, could not wash away sin. Saraswati said these beliefs and practices were "bosh" (Saraswati, 1956, pp. 468–473).

Mourners who could afford the time and the money took the bones to the Ganges within four to 14 days from the death. Those who could not afford it preferred the Jumna River since it was only an hour's trip by bus from the village.

One informant explained the economics of taking bones to the Ganges. He said, "We pick up the bones of the fingers, toes, and jaw, place them in a bag and are supposed to go to the Ganges with them, but we can pay 10 to 15 rupees and have them taken for us. Then another 4 to 10 annas are given to the Pandas, men who keep track of all the people who come from specific villages to pilgrimages at the Ganges, who say a prayer for the peace of the soul. The person who takes the bones to the river will bring back some Ganges water to be sprinkled on the burning place. If someone does not have the money immediately, he puts the bones in a box and buries it. Later, when someone is going to the Ganges, he may ask him to take

the box of bones. Or else they may throw the whole lot with some ashes into the Jumna."

A Chamar Leatherworker who was a reader of religious literature believed, "When the bones are picked up, one sees God's writing on the skull—figures that look like writing and numbers. These marks were written by God on the deceased's skull when he was in his mother's womb. God writes whether a man will be intelligent, happy, or not. The bones are then taken to the Ganges so that the deceased will get mukti [release from the round of rebirths]. If the soul does not get this, then it goes on wandering in the world."

Thirteenth Day

Although the thirteenth day after death was considered inauspicious, it marked the first formal and social commemoration of a dead adult. Formerly, on the thirteenth day a Brahman Priest performed a fire ceremony, Brahmans were fed by the family of mourning, and special foods were prepared; also clothes of the dead man might be given to a priest. In Brahman families, since all the mourners were Brahmans, Brahmans were fed, and Brahman kin might be given the unused or good clothing of the dead person. When the Arya Samaj Jats observed the thirteenth, Brahman girls might be fed instead of professional priests. Some informants mentioned that no adult wanted to eat on the thirteenth. But in some families, the *purohit* was fed on the thirteenth. In general, Brahmans had stopped going to thirteenth-day feasts for the deceased of other castes. One strict Arya Samaj Jat said that his old father wanted nothing done when he died because he believed that money should be spent while he was alive and not when he was dead.

Feast for an Aged Deceased (*Kaj*)

When a very old, respected and beloved man or woman died, the head of the household might give a feast for the old person provided the deceased had a living grandson. This feast, called *Kaj,* was considered an act of religious merit and not a sad event, for the old person had lived the allotted time on earth. While we were in Shanti Nagar, no one gave a *Kaj,* but one woman, in her forties, attended a *Kaj* for her mother who died in her eightieth year. An old Brahman woman told us that when she died, "they'll throw *batashas*" (white sugar sweets) on her and have a feast for the whole village because she had led a happy life and had been in a prosperous family. A Nai Barber standing nearby joked, "Maybe they'll tie bells on your feet when you die." She responded, "I'm just joking, but they'll celebrate the death."

Although it had been the custom to have a feast for old people who had led a happy and good life, a number of villagers reported that they could not remember when the last such feast had been held in the village, and they believed the custom was dying out. The feast was given about 20 or so days after death. All castes in the village were feasted, including the lowest. The feast was usually given by people who were well off; they were respected for doing so.

One informant said that a person held a *Kaj* only for the sake of winning a reputation, and that this was a good way to ruin oneself. He said, "Depending on how many villages are invited the costs range from Rs. 500 for three villages to Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000 for 10 villages. In past time, a man who gave such a feast was called a *panch* and he was respected and considered a great man. Nowadays nobody likes this and very few do this." This man, who was in his early forties, said that there had been no such feast given in Shanti Nagar in his lifetime, but that about 20 years ago one had been given in a large neighboring village. An even older man of 60 commented that not only had there been no such feast in the village during his lifetime, but that his father told him that the last one he knew of was in the informant's grandfather's time. These two informants were Brahmans. No Chamar had given such a feast within the memory of anyone in the community; the Gola Potter community reported the equivalent. One Chamar, who danced and performed at festivals and mar-

riages, said that he sometimes danced at such feasts in other villages. He was paid for such dancing by donations from the persons attending.

The waning of *Kaj* might be taken as an index of a shift from the sacred to the secular and of urban influences in the area around Shanti Nagar. Some villages, however, apparently still held this event. The celebration of the event was correlated with the belief that the person had lived a "natural" life span and had not died an untimely death. Douglas (1970, p. 201) has reported that among the Lele in Africa, people did not recognize the possibility of natural death; yet when an old person died, they rejoiced. Since the average life span in India has been increasing, it is possible that this feast no longer served the function of marking the relatively rare long life that it once served.

Events from Thirteenth Day To End of Year

Followers of Sanatan Dharma, principally Brahmans, fed a Brahman on the thirteenth day after death and monthly thereafter for one year on the date of death. Most Arya Samajis observed the ceremonies on the thirteenth day, end of six months, and end of the year but not the monthly ceremonies, nor did they feed a Brahman. They instead put some rice and sugar on thirteen leaves from a dhak tree (*Butea frondosa*—which yields a red resin) and gave them to dogs and birds.

Clothing and food were given to relatives on the thirteenth day and each month for one year on the day of death, with special observances at the end of six months and one year. In fact, very few families observed the custom every month, although non-observers might have a special prayer to the dead at that time. Among almost all castes, except the Brahmans, no fire ceremonies were performed at any of these times. Arya Samajis did not have fire ceremonies because of Saraswati's teachings regarding death, and sometimes because they did not know how. Other castes, whether Arya Samaj or not, did not follow the practice of fire ceremonies because they did not know how to perform them and because it was not customary in their households.

The Baniya Merchants professed to be Arya Samaj and said that since they had to deal with all castes in their shop, they no longer wore the sacred thread to which they were entitled by virtue of their twice-born status. No one in the Baniya family had died in recent times or during the period of our fieldwork so there was no way of finding out what they would have done at the time of death. Where only a single family in a caste lived in the village, it was difficult to learn about their ceremonial life, as they tended to carry out ceremonies with members of their own caste in other villages, towns, or cities. The Baniya Merchant family had kin ties to the City of Delhi and to cities in Uttar Pradesh as well as the Punjab and were urbanized to the extent that much of their ceremonial life took place with these kinfolk.

Among Jat families, death ceremonies were primarily a gathering of the consanguineal and affinal relatives who had been affected by the mourning. They assembled, and the family in which death had occurred fed them. For the deaths of prestigious men, friends from other villages, towns, and cities came. A large gathering of such people took place most often at the year-end anniversary of the death, which was, in effect, a "coming out" party symbolic of the mourners' reintegration into the community.

The clothing a person had been wearing at death was given to the family Sweeper. The deceased's good clothes, usually worn only on festive and important occasions, were given to relatives. Most often a male's clothing would be given to a young male affine. Males and females received a great many articles of clothing, especially in the Brahman and Jat castes, as gifts from kin, mainly wives' parents or brothers, at festivals, marriages, births, and when daughters visited their parents and returned to their husbands. This clothing was usually stored in trunks and worn on special occasions. Normally, males and females wore old but not torn clothing around the village. Thus, stores of good clothing might be given away if they belonged specifically to the dead person.

One Chamar Leatherworker said, "Nobody gives away their own clothes on the occasion of death. It's a disgrace." This Chamar was particularly touchy on the subject. At the same time, he maintained his prestige by indicating that Chamars did not give worn clothing to each other at the time of death. He was referring to worn clothes and the former practice of the high castes of using worn clothes to pay Chamars, who were subject to hereditary worker status and to begar (forced labor). Chamars were no longer subject to this system (Freed and Freed, 1976, pp. 130–131).

Gifts of clothing and food were to help the soul of the dead person in its journey of a year to the land of the dead, but Arya Samaj teachings denied the land of death and translated Yama, the god of death, as the air on which the soul traveled in order to be judged by the one great God and be reborn again (Saraswati, 1956, p. 500). The contradiction in beliefs was one of the points of confusion, or sets of cultural alternates, which contributed to less being done for the dead than formerly. Regardless of the contradictions in beliefs, the thirteenth day was observed by high-caste families with the exception of a few very strict Arya Samajis, because it indicated the end of the death pollution and the time when the soul left the cremation grounds and started on its journey toward judgment and rebirth. Most of the villagers believed that the soul was a ghost or in some sort of limbo for the thirteen days before it departed on its year's journey, and that at the end of the year it was judged and reborn.

Among the Jats, it was customary to gather together at the end of one year and say to male members of the lineage that they should follow the path that the deceased man had followed. If the widow was not a strict follower of the Arya Samaj, she might call a Brahman and feed him because she believed that in so doing she was carrying out an act of religious merit. The male mourners would say that the soul of the deceased was going in peace. They would recall his good deeds and some might cry in their minds. (Males did not usually cry aloud or publicly.) Others would laughingly relate tales about the deceased which occurred during his life. The widow provided good food for the gathered kin and friends. Thereafter, the deceased was an ancestor to be remembered, but the soul was believed to be reborn.

When a married daughter or her husband died, well-off Jat and Brahman families sent a gift of food to their conjugal affines. For example, when a married sister died, her brothers' family sent one suit of clothing for a female, a set of bangles, over 10 seers of wheat flour, and 5 or more seers of rice. Not all families gave at this time; it depended on their financial status, feelings, and the relationships between the families. Similarly, not everyone gave clothes. A wealthy Jat widow said that she would not only give clothes throughout the year of mourning, but for as long as she lived. She said, "Some don't give anything; some give a little; some give a lot."

Whether or not the living followed all the observances the first year after death, everybody in a family and lineage related to a deceased person refrained from festive activities for a decent period of time, usually one year. A very few strict Arya Samajis did not observe mourning beyond the thirteenth day. No one stopped work for long periods because of funeral observances or mourning. During the early period of mourning, members of the deceased person's family and lineage did not attend any birth ceremonies or weddings, nor did they celebrate major festivals such as Holi, Diwali, and especially those of merriment. When a prestigious Jat died, the celebration of the first Holi after his death was considerably curtailed (cf. van Gennep, 1960, p. 148). When a death occurred in a lineage, a marriage was postponed until the next year. Usually the birth of a first son was an occasion of great joy, but in one case a family did nothing because of a death in another caste in a prestigious neighboring family except to hold the fire ceremony which was celebrated quietly by family members.

In a strict Arya Samaj family where the wife and a child had died, the husband did not believe in observing any life cycle rites, except marriage. He considered them a waste of time and money. However, his im-

mediate female kin and his wife's female kin, together with all the members of his lineage observed mourning.

Mourning for one year depended generally on how one felt about the deceased. For example, a person might die who was little liked or of little importance; then observances were reduced. On the other hand, when a Chamar family's youngest infant son died and a year later another son was born, they did not observe any birth rituals because they said they were still in mourning, but also and more significantly because they believed that if they celebrated the birth of the second son, this might tempt fate in the form of the ghost of the dead child or other malevolent beings.

MEMORIALS TO DEAD ANCESTORS

Members of the Brahman, Bairagi, Jat, and Chuhra castes had memorials (*than*) erected to dead male ancestors. Most of them consisted of small stones. A *than* was not a shrine; a shrine was for a deity or saint. Brahmans and Jats erected these memorials in their fields; the Chuhras, who had no fields, placed a stone where the Chuhra Sweeper ancestor had been buried. The memorial consisted of an arrangement of a few rocks so that a cleft was formed for a lamp, facing in the direction of the Jumna River. When a family followed Arya Samaj principles, they said that they did not worship the ancestor, but rather they folded their hands at the stone and remembered the ancestor. Followers of Sanatan Dharma used the word puja, worship, to describe their activities. Whether or not they were Sanatan Dharmis, Arya Samajis, or just Hindus, all families who had stones for a dead ancestor lit a lamp at the memorial, poured water on it, and left offerings of brown sugarcakes, milk, or cooked food. For recently dead ancestors, worship took place every day. In due time, the observance of these daily rituals was reduced to such times as a wedding, when a cow began to give milk, on the day in the dark fortnight on which the ancestor died, on days of fasting, and to supplicate the ancestor when there was sickness in the family. The belief was that by offering food to the ancestor, he would remove sickness from cattle and men.

Two male Chuhras were recognized as having been buried owing to the circumstances of death in unusual locations. One had been buried on the road going toward the canal; for him there was a *than*. Chuhras who passed it bowed their heads. The grave of the other Chuhra was on a road from Shanti Nagar to another village. He was considered to be a ghost, but was not worshiped. No one had erected a *than* to him because he was not a native of the village.

A wealthy family of Jats erected a fairly elaborate memorial to their family head who had died recently. The dead man's ashes and bones were buried and the memorial was built over them. While it was being planned and erected, the family placed a brick over the grave, lit a lamp there once a day, poured water over the spot, left food offerings, and bowed to the ancestor. The widow, sons, and a granddaughter performed these rituals. Because of the size of the memorial, it was called a samadhi because the family hoped that holy men would use it as a place to meditate. The term samadhi was used as both a place for meditation and for experiencing samadhi, which Bharati (1976, pp. 46–47) defines as a state of oneness, zero experience, and being unable to function. This latter meaning was not the village understanding of the term.

The foundations for this memorial were laid with a Brahman Priest performing a fire ceremony. The plans called for two adjacent brick buildings, one with four marble columns at each corner and a sort of shell-like or umbrella-like top, the whole to be whitewashed. The adjoining building, to consist of one room with a portico and some columns of brick in front, was to be a guest house. This elaborate structure in memory of the dead was contrary to all Arya Samaj principles and to the usual thriftiness of the Jats. Some of the members of this family's lineage were strict followers of the Arya Samaj and they expressed subtle disapproval of its construction as well as of the funeral and mourning ceremonies followed by the family.

COMPARISON OF DEATH RITES OF SANATAN DHARMA AND THE ARYA SAMAJ

The major differences between Sanatan Dharma and Arya Samaj ceremonialism consisted of the followers of Sanatan Dharma observing all of the ceremonies for one year, having a fire ceremony performed by a Brahman Priest, and feeding a Brahman or Brahmans. Brahmans, also, celebrated Kanagat or Shraddha in the month of Ashvin, at which time they remembered their ancestors for at least three generations, especially those in the male line, on the day of the dark fortnight that corresponded to the day on which the person had died. They also commemorated an ancestor on the day and month of his or her death. According to Arya Samaj belief, one should not feed Brahmans, nor need one use them to perform fire ceremonies. If Jats wished, they could perform their own fire ceremonies, but they rarely did.

These differences in belief were best exemplified by a discussion between two lifelong friends, a Brahman Priest, a follower of Sanatan Dharma, and a Jat Farmer, a strict Arya Samaji. Two deaths had recently occurred in the Jat's family. The conversation took place in the context of going to the Jumna to bathe on the next new moon, a custom of widowed people. The widower said to his friend that he would go. The Brahman said that he went occasionally, but that when his father died, he would go regularly. In this discussion, he mentioned the custom that newly widowed persons went occasionally, but that those who had been widowed for a long time went regularly. Their trips to the Jumna on the new moon began after one year of mourning.

Next, the Jat said that because Swami Dayanand had simplified everything, nothing was done at death. Immediately, the Brahman refuted this. He said, "That's not so. Everything is done. The bones are collected the third day after death." For example, he mentioned the prestigious Jat's ashes and bones having been collected, put in boxes, part of them taken to the Ganges, and part being buried and a memorial erected.

Then, teasingly, the Brahman Priest said, "When your father dies, you will tie a rope around him and drag him to the fields and let the vultures eat him!" The widowed Jat then said, "When something is bad you just throw it away. I take care of my parents so my health will be good and I will go to heaven."

When asked what should be done when someone died, the Jat replied, "In this matter there is no sin and no virtue. I don't care what happens to me once I am dead." The Brahman said that he wanted all the ceremonies. He accused the widowed Jat of wanting his father to die immediately.

The Jat replied: "This is rot. I love my father, but if you have no surplus money, you can't build memorials and have a lot of ceremonies." The two men had become angry by this time. Each of them then accused the other of talking rot. The Jat said he would respect his father after death, but collecting the bones had nothing to do with respect. He said that his father told him: "Be good to me now. After my death you can do what you want." The Brahman retorted, "When the bones are burned, you can take them to the Ganges and also bow before the place where the body was burnt." We asked the widowed Jat if he would build a memorial if he had a great deal of money. He replied, "No. My mother and sister died, and I did nothing."

Although the two men were of approximately the same age, the Jat was the Brahman's father's brother in the village fictive kinship system so we asked whether this relationship entitled the two of them to joke and tease each other in this way. The Brahman answered, "We are not joking. We are talking seriously, but he has old-fashioned ideas."

The conversation proceeded as the Brahman commented that the Jat was an animal because he required a lot of food like an animal. None of the conversation pleased the Jat. By this time he was smoking furiously. Usually he talked very little, and when he did speak, he was always pleasant. The conversation took place a few months after the deaths of his wife and infant daughter, which he did not once mention. Although the conversation reflected the extremes of the two religious positions, it also represented some

of the personality problems of the men and the continual competition between Brahman and Jat.

The comment of the Jat that "when something is bad you just throw it away," may well have been a justification for his not having had any ceremonies for his wife when she died. He had not allowed any ceremonies to be held in his household when his last child was born, and his wife was up and about within a few days. He, his adult daughters, and his wife had had to work hard all the time because he and his brother had separated their families shortly before the death of his wife. Although he did not believe in memorials to the dead and was a strict follower of the Arya Samaj, he was planning to go to the Jumna on the new moon, behavior contrary to principles of the Arya Samaj.

The last comment by the Brahman Priest, that [the Jat] "has old-fashioned ideas," reflected a reactionary trend in Hinduism away from the Arya Samaj toward more orthodox, urban Hinduism. The Arya Samaj movement was a reform movement which began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It affected many Hindus whether or not they acknowledged the teachings of Saraswati and the Arya Samaj. As far back as 1911, the census of India stated that Arya Samajis and other Hindus worked together in many ways (Rai, 1967, pp. 184–185). This syncretism has always been characteristic of Hinduism and accounts for its strength and persistence. However, the Brahman's description of the Jat as having old-fashioned ideas was more a matter of polemics in the context of the argument, even though some Jats showed inclinations toward a greater amount of ritual and use of Brahman professional priests in ceremonies.

SOUL'S ALLOTTED TIME ON EARTH

An important theme was that souls were reborn again and again and each rebirth had an allotted time on earth. When this period expired, the person died and after an interval of one year the soul was reborn. The allotted time might be recognized by the age of the person. If an individual died when gray hairs had appeared, then it was assumed that the allotted time had expired. If a person died in infancy, childhood, youth, or before marriage, then it was assumed, but not necessarily said, that the person had a record of acts in past lives which were sufficiently evil to cause an early death. This belief was verbally applied to infants and small children, consistent with their not having been fully incorporated in the society (van Gennep, 1960, p. 152). Deaths among persons from 15 to 45 or 50 were considered to be untimely because the average life span was expected to run into the fifties.

Given the large population of India today, the similarities in Indian names, and the number of souls which Yama's recorder, Chitra-gupta, had noted through the ages (Dowson, 1950, p. 374), it was not surprising that the villagers believed that a soul might accidentally be called before its allotted time. For example, two old men in Shanti Nagar both had the same, unusual name. One was a Chamar, the other a Jat. The Chamar fell ill and was pronounced dead, then apparently came "back to life." At the same time, the Jat died. The Chamar later said that he had gone to Yama and been returned when the clerk called out his name and caste and found he was the wrong man.

Back of this example was the belief that the dying were checked by God or by Chitragupta so that a soul would not be taken before its time. If a person's identity was not verified, he or she would die and the soul would wander as a ghost until its allotted time on earth had expired. This doctrine of an allotted time on earth was consistent with the belief in timely and untimely deaths.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

The mourning rituals paralleled beliefs about what happened after death. The body was considered to be ephemeral as compared to the soul which went on forever. Although the body was seen, felt, and sensed in the world of the living and the soul was not, it was the world of the living, including the body, which was maya, illusion. The world of the soul was non-illusion and was eternal.

What was known and felt in the here and now was non-reality; and what was not known was reality. Some people adhered to these beliefs; others were skeptical; still others professed not to care.

The transition from the world of the body to the world of the soul created difficulties for those who were left behind in the corporeal world, for not only did the survivors have to become accustomed to the physical absence of the departed but also the presence in the vicinity of the deceased's soul in the form of a ghost produced anxiety. Survivors were concerned that the soul be sped on its way. Thus, when a person was dying, it was believed that the soul would have an easier time escaping from the body if the person died on the ground and not on a cot. The body, which was reduced to ashes through cremation, became a part of the earth, and this process marked the separation of the soul from the body. The body no longer existed, only the soul. By speeding the separation of soul from body there was less danger of the dead becoming ghosts. Mourners performed the rituals which helped the soul to achieve its next rebirth or release from the round of rebirths.

From the time of death until the commemoration on the thirteenth day after death, the soul was supposed to be locked into the here and now. It hovered around the family and the cremation ground. The anxiety during this period was severe because the soul was believed to be a ghost. Fear of the cremation ground stemmed from this belief. Fear during the 13 days after death paralleled the concept of pollution from contact with a corpse, an unpleasant condition but earthly and temporary in contrast to a ghost which was intangible, non-polluting, but might linger on in perpetuity. Just as the dead body was polluting, returned to the earth, and was no more, so the pollution of the next of kin disappeared by the thirteenth day, and so too the tie to the earthly habits and personality of the body gradually diminished among the mourners. But of the two spiritual problems of death, pollution from the dead body and fear of the ghost, the latter received greater emphasis. The beliefs about separation of body and soul helped to detach the mourners from the corporeal aspects of the deceased and allowed them to work out their readjusted memories of the dead in terms of the soul during the mourning period. The ghost represented a stage for the mourners in adjusting to a more abstract and gradually diminishing memory of the dead.

If all the rites were properly handled and the deceased had lived the allotted time, the soul was free to proceed on its journey to judgment either by Yama (according to Sanatan Dharma) or by God (according to the Arya Samaj). During the period of one year that it took the soul to journey to the land of the dead and to be reborn, the mourners, who themselves were learning and relearning roles in the absence of the deceased, provided in the form of offerings the necessities of water, fire and food for the soul during its travels so that a projection of the earthly needs of the soul lingered. At the same time, these three substances so important to life and to Hinduism were offerings to God, deities and ghosts (van Gennep, 1960, pp. 153–154). Thus, the villagers took no chances with the unknown. The idea of travel to the land of the dead was one of travail so that the soul had to be helped on its way (van Buitenen, 1969, p. 8).

GHOSTS

If death was untimely the mourners could do nothing about it; but mourners seldom admitted that a death was untimely and that the soul would become a wandering ghost. It was primarily other villagers who made this decision. Their gossip about the deceased, the causes of death, the details of cremation and mourning, and the family life of the deceased together with the feelings of guilt among the living who had been close to the deceased created the ghosts who were believed to linger around the village and cremation ground. By making ghosts of those who died in a state that villagers believed prevented their souls from journeying to the land of the dead, they perpetuated the values of the community and enculturated the young. The stories told about ghosts depict-

ed the lives of adults who in some way were unable to fulfill all of the requirements of adulthood or whose kin did not follow the proper funeral rituals. The ghosts were individuals whose behavior had endangered the community or whose death ceremonies were such that the community was endangered. In other words, they brought cognitive disorder into what the villagers wanted to view as an ordered world (Douglas, 1970, p. 78).

Types of Ghosts

In general, followers of Sanatan Dharma believed in ghosts but Arya Samajis said they did not (Freed and Freed, 1966, pp. 676–677). Women more often said they believed in ghosts than did men; those women who did not believe in ghosts might or might not be Arya Samajis. Some men who were followers of Sanatan Dharma said they did not believe in ghosts or at least scoffed at ghost stories. The low castes believed in them. Although many people in all castes expressed doubts about ghosts, ghost possession, and specific ghosts, all were uneasy about crossing the cremation ground at night and visiting spots which were said to be inhabited by ghosts.

Three words were used for ghosts: bhut, preta, and *opera*. Bhut was used to describe a ghost which entered one's body (spirit possession) or took one's soul; it was the most inclusive term for all kinds of ghosts. Preta was rarely used because it referred to a deceased person who turned into an animal, goat, high tower, or some other non-human form. *Opera* was applied to a deceased person who became a ghost and was one's relative. If the ghost was not a relative, then bhut was used. However, an *opera* might be called a bhut since bhut was the more inclusive term. When a bhut was also an *opera*, the relationship of ghost and survivor usually was one where the *opera* deliberately hurt the living person because of something that happened during the *opera*'s life in its family. Stevenson (1971, pp. 199–200) described six types of ghosts perhaps indicating that when she wrote there was a greater belief in ghosts. Dowson (1950, p. 55) provided a broader definition of bhut as a ghost, imp, goblin, or malignant spirit that haunts cemeteries and deludes and devours human beings. According to Dowson, these ghosts are fierce beings and the offspring of Krodha, anger. This aspect of ghosts, anger, or its related emotional states, revenge and envy, was found in a number of ghost beliefs in Shanti Nagar.

In Shanti Nagar, the dead were believed to become ghosts if they died tortured in unusual circumstances, untimely deaths, or if the proper funeral and mourning rites were not performed. Persons who committed suicide were considered to have died an untimely death because they took their destiny into their own hands. In addition, because they committed suicide, funeral rites were not properly performed for them. The twin threat was a two-edged sword against suicide. Van Gennep said (1961, pp. 160–161) that the dead who are slighted are the most dangerous, and he listed a number of categories of such dead, all of whom may be forever in limbo, cannot be incorporated into the realm of the other dead, and cannot return to the realm of the living. Other categories of untimely dead were women who died in childbirth, people who died in epidemics or accidents, and people about whom inexplicable events and unusual personality traits clustered, such as having fits, losing a head, going against custom, and being different from the community (van Gennep, 1961, pp. 152, 161).

Some male ghosts in Shanti Nagar had such unusual reputations that stories about them were told for a number of generations. In death as in life, the deeds of men were remembered more often than those of women. Female ghosts were usually remembered by females. Mainly they were the ghosts of women who had died recently as suicides, in childbirth, or without having borne children. Females occasionally discussed male ghosts, but males never discussed female ghosts. This behavioral difference was consistent with the separation of male and female activities, for males showed little or no interest in female affairs except when they touched on

their immediate family. The attitude was partially fostered by the ideal role that a male should play, that is, it would not be masculine for a male to express interest in the affairs of women.

Females and Their Ghosts

One of the refrains repeated by women in interviews was that if a woman's kin did not spend a sufficient amount on the fuel used in her cremation and if she was not properly remembered during the year of mourning, then she became a ghost and either tormented her kin or tried to take a family member with her (i.e., someone might die). These statements were seldom made about men or by men, for their funeral rites were not slighted, but those of women often were and less money was expended on them.

Women who did not bear sons might well become ghosts. Birth and death were linked through women, for no soul could be reborn without them. The pressure on women to bear children was partially due to the belief in the soul's need to be reborn. Women, because of the need to bear a son, had the traditional view that their fate was controlled by unseen forces and that they could not do much about bearing children and having a son except fulfill their wifely duties, pray, and make offerings for a son. Just as they feared the female ghosts who died issueless, they also feared that they themselves might be issueless and become ghosts.

In a village in Uttar Pradesh studied by Majumdar (1958, pp. 234–238) ghost beliefs were more extensive than in Shanti Nagar. Most of the ghosts were female or *churail* as Majumdar categorized them: ghosts of women who had died while pregnant, or hags, hobgoblins, giants, and shrews, in other words, people who did not fulfill the standards of the villagers as to what was natural or normal. In Shanti Nagar, however, female ghosts were usually women who committed suicide; died without having borne children, while pregnant or in childbirth; or for whom the proper rituals had not been enacted.

For example, a Sweeper woman had wanted a son for some time, having borne only daughters. She said that there was a ghost (*opera*) of a female Sweeper who was taking away all of the plump and fair baby sons in her husband's lineage. She identified the ghost as the dead wife of her husband's father's younger brother. She believed that when her husband's uncle's wife had died, the relatives had not carried out the proper funeral and mourning rites, and she said that they should have given away good clothes, food, and had a fire ceremony. Quite specifically she stated, "If you don't do anything but burn the dead body, then it becomes angry." Also, she declared, "Whoever sees the face of his son goes to heaven; whoever does not, goes to hell. Because the *opera,* also, had had no sons, she became a ghost." As she was pregnant at the time of this conversation, she said that she was going to fix it so that the ghost would not take away her son-to-be. She was planning to have a *siyana* (a shamanistic curer) carry out a ritual for her protection and that of the unborn child. But she said, "Nowadays, it is hard to get hold of a *siyana* to do this."

An old Brahman woman chimed in and said, "She died restless." The Sweeper woman then said, "The house in which this woman and her husband lived is now empty, since first the husband and then the wife died. No one lives there, and no one lights a light, but you can see the ghost in the house." She believed that this ghost had taken away her two sons and three to four sons of another Sweeper woman in the same lineage living next door to her because both women had had a series of spontaneous abortions during pregnancies. The second Sweeper woman added that her husband did not want her to go to a *siyana* to protect her unborn son because he did not believe that a *siyana* would be effective.

A young woman of the Lohar Blacksmith caste died supposedly because she had been attacked by two ghosts. She had recently borne a child and both she and the child died. The story was told that she went to the fields to relieve herself before the end of the required seclusion period; she was therefore particularly vulnerable and one or both of the ghosts possessed her. She was said to have

named them while she was dying. One of the ghosts was a young bride who had jumped in a well, a suicide; the other, the ghost of a woman whose body became quite swollen during pregnancy so that she died when the child, her first, was about to be born. Both women had died shortly before the death of the Lohar woman. The women who told us about these three ghosts, for the Lohar woman also became one, said that they met untimely deaths. In the case of the Lohar woman, informants indicated that she had not only violated the seclusion taboo but also during seclusion she had eaten sweet foods, which the ghosts desired since ghosts were always characterized as being jealous of anything good that their victims ate. The belief was that female ghosts envied whatever good things they may have missed in their lives and tried to prevent living women from having them. Ghostly personalities would seem to be projections of the desires, frustrations, anger, and envy that surrounded living women in daily life. Women had ambivalent and guilty feelings about their desires as well as their fears because they often envied other women so they seem to have transferred these emotions to ghosts.

The personalities of female ghosts were formed by the general female way of life. Their specific personalities and the details of their lives were relatively unknown, as was generally true of women. Women who became ghosts were not recognized for earthly power, authority, wealth, beauty, ability, or any personal traits; and they faded away in village memories much more quickly than male ghosts. A woman was little remembered after her death except by a mother, sister, brother, husband, or child. Few widowers mentioned their dead wives; but widows mentioned their dead husbands. It was not considered manly for a man to weep or show sorrow over a dead wife or a daughter; but he could show disturbance at the death of a son. All women were sad at the death of a child, boy or girl, even though the preference was for boys, but there were no ghostly children. Children did not become ghosts because their deaths were regarded as due to an excessive amount of bad actions in previous lives and therefore not as being untimely. Very probably since deaths of children occurred in the age range from birth to five years of age, males and females had insufficient time for displacement of emotions upon them.

Males and Their Ghosts

Many males denied the existence of ghosts, but when pressed indicated some qualms about their existence. For example, a male attending university and a follower of Sanatan Dharma said that there were no ghosts, but rather that there was something in one's mind which caused the trouble attributed to a ghost. He supported this statement by saying that when a person passed the cremation grounds, he was reminded of a dead person which caused his heart to palpitate and he became afraid. But he vitiated his first statement by declaring that he would not sleep at the cremation grounds. His father's mother said she had never heard of a male ghost. His sister, revealing insight into her own society, then said that if the person who sees a ghost is a woman, the ghost will be a woman; if a man, then a man's ghost, substantiating the sexual categorization of ghosts and the projections of the living onto the dead.

Even though a number of males professed no belief in ghosts, none of them would sleep at or near the cremation grounds; and none of them was inclined to tarry at night in the vicinity of a spot which was believed to be haunted by a ghost. Whether individuals believed in ghosts or not, one man said that if anyone feared a ghost or a person who cast the evil eye, then if he went past the burning ground, he might fall ill. He attributed the illness to fear. The man who voiced this opinion, a Brahman and follower of Sanatan Dharma, himself believed in ghosts and offered to pay an Arya Samaji 5 rupees if he would sleep all night in a field where a ghost was believed to lurk.

A Chamar said that when a person saw a ghost, he grew ill or died. He attributed the illness or death to the shock of seeing the ghost. This man stated that a ghost might

take the form of a man but could be identified as a ghost because he had feet that were turned backward.

The three best known male ghosts were a Muslim who guarded the fields of a Brahman family, a Jat who had been possessed, and a Chuhra Sweeper who came to Shanti Nagar around 1918 and was a stranger.

The Muslim Ghost

The story of the Muslim ghost was the most often recounted of the ghost stories and consisted of a number of versions, in which there were some inconsistencies. We relied on members of the lineage and family whose fields the ghost protected for the versions and incidents given here. All family and lineage members related how the ghost guarded the family's fields and chased people away. One old woman, a member of the family, considered the ghost to be good because he guarded the fields and warned the family of impending trouble. He never spoiled anything and he sang a song announcing his appearance. Family and lineage members believed that the ghost had brought them luck, but that the luck derived from the Brahman ancestor to whom the ghost was attached. They used the following story and related incidents to perpetuate the belief in their luck and to protect their property.

> A long time ago, the Brahman ancestor went on a pilgrimage to the Ganges. On the way, he met a woman who had been possessed by a ghost. He said he would go with her to her village to find out why. He and the woman went inside her hut and smoked the hookah together whereupon the ghost possessed her and she began to wrestle with the Brahman. After the Brahman had been wrestling with her for an hour, he caught hold of her hair, tied it into seven knots (auspicious and protective), and she became quiet. He told the woman not to untie her hair until he returned from his dip in the Ganges. On his return to her village, the villagers came running to help him with his baggage because they were in awe of his power, i.e., his ability to overcome the ghost. When the Brahman again encountered the woman, he told the ghost to leave her but the ghost refused. When the Brahman insisted, the ghost said, "Take me with you," so the Brahman brought the ghost home with him. From then on the Muslim ghost lived in the fields of the Brahman's family, even after the Brahman died. The ghost resided in a spot near the *than* which had been erected for this Brahman ancestor.

A young man in this Brahman family said that if an animal ate the crops in their fields, the ghost would come and wake up his father saying, "There is an animal eating your crops." Supposedly no outsider could sleep in the fields without the ghost disturbing him. Once an elder Brahman, a man in his eighties, fell asleep in a family field, and the ghost upset his cot. This man became afraid although he was not easily frightened. The young man himself had never seen the ghost, but one night when three or four of the members of the family were asleep, he heard a voice say, "There's a buffalo grazing in the fields," so he got up and chased the buffalo away.

This family had as one member a very old professional priest who was supposed to have seen the ghost, but was not afraid of it. He would recite mantras to chase the ghost away. He did this so the children in his family would not be afraid, but the ghost would not leave because he had taken a vow to remain there forever. One reason given for this Muslim having become a ghost was because he had killed a cow. The cow cursed him so that he had to remain a ghost and stay in this field.

Another male in this family recounted other incidents about this ghost. He said that one of his grandfathers had urinated on the grave of a Muslim so the ghost took hold of him. The ghost protected the fields and told the family members if anyone was in them. They once had gardeners working in a field, and the ghost molested them. Then they had to explain to the ghost that it was all right for the gardeners to work there. They built a memorial to the ancestor who had been seized by this ghost at which they worshiped. On festivals, they took good food and offered it to the ancestor before themselves eating. Once they decided to sink a pipe in a nearby well and a relative from out

of the village helped them. When he fell asleep in the field, the ghost said to him, "You can't sleep here. I won't let you." Again one of the family members had to explain to the ghost that it was all right.

The ghost was said to give the head of the family tips about rising and falling prices, but the man never took advantage of them. Our informant had never heard the ghost give these tips, but he said that he had seen the ghost. One night the ghost came to him and warned him that some men were going to rob the fields, so the man climbed a tree and watched them; but they went away without taking anything.

This same man said that there were three trees which could become ghosts. He had a job which kept him working late at night. When he returned from work riding his bicycle across the fields, he recited the Gayatri mantra for protection whenever he passed these trees or whenever he saw strange phenomena that might be ghosts. He said that a phenomenon was a ghost if it followed you. Once someone told him that a ghost was tied to a nearby nim tree so he investigated and thought he really saw a ghost there. As a result, he took off all his clothing and sat on his bicycle nude. The so-called ghost, a mare, became frightened and ran away. He then knew that a ghost had not taken the form of a mare because it would have followed him instead of running away. He said that when a ghost took the form of an animal it was to terrify people. His behavior in taking off his clothes was his way of protecting himself from the ghost, for to do so was considered shocking. He seemed to believe that the best defense against a ghost was an offense, frightening the ghost away. After frightening the apparent ghost, he no longer believed in it because it did not follow him. He added that a black snake lived in his family's fields, a snake which no one ever saw in any other fields so some people believed that the snake was the Brahman ancestor to whom the memorial shrine had been erected.

The incidents and events regarding the ghost or ghosts in this field consist of deviations from the normal that formed the basis of beliefs in supernatural beings, namely ghosts. This informant's final comment was that since railroads had come to the area, there were fewer ghosts because ghosts were afraid of trains. His comment shows how fact and fiction may become entwined through time. The reduction in the belief in ghosts may have been due to Arya Samaj teachings which denied their existence. Since these teachings date from the time of the introduction of railroads, the alleged incompatibility of ghosts and trains would support Arya Samaj teachings. Moreover, people may have initially had some fear of trains and projected their feelings from ghosts to trains, just as they did with other fears and anxieties.

After relating these incidents, our informant concluded, "All this about ghosts is a way of saying that the actual ghost lies within you. If you are fearful and visit a strange place, you will be afraid. If you are dishonest, you will be afraid. There are some unexplained deaths, and the souls can't find rebirth and so stalk around unhappily. The ghost is within you, otherwise there would be no ghosts." As did other villagers, this informant possessed some insight about beliefs in ghosts.

The senior man in the family to which the Muslim ghost was attached said that the *than* in the fields had a long history. His patrilineal grandfather or great grandfather, the ancestor for whom the *than* had been constructed, was a merchant who sold ghee. On a selling trip near Hissar, he passed through a Muslim graveyard, at the center of which were some offerings of sweets and other foods to the ghost of the graveyard. He was accompanied by other people, all of whom were afraid. He said that there was nothing to be frightened of from the offerings to the ghost. He said that he could eat all the offerings and even urinate on the spot (a sign of blasphemy) and nothing would happen to him. The other people did not believe him so he proceeded to do so. Thereafter, he felt sick and returned home without carrying out his business. He was sick for six months, during which time many remedies were sought for his recovery. Finally, a curer from a nearby village told him that he should return to the Muslim

graveyard and offer five times the amount that he had eaten there. He then did a great deal for this ghost, so much that he obtained power from the ghost and he himself became able to cure other people. He was said to have cured the son of an Englishman and he helped one of the Jats in the village to obtain a son, for which the Jat gave him as payment a plot of land of slightly less than two acres. Ever since, the Muslim ghost remained in the Brahman's field and frightened everyone away except family members.

Obviously, this family story had become a legend in the course of some three generations. Since the senior man in the lineage was in his sixties in 1958 and the ancestor who became involved with the ghost was at least his grandfather, the events in question probably took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. At that time, customs were different although the basic values of those days may have endured in rural northern India until 1958. Because of the different versions of these legendary personalities, the best approach was to accept the stories as legends that once may have been based on facts, but facts which had been distorted, elaborated, and changed through time. The next step was to see why the legend had been perpetuated and what it indicated about the family and the community in which the family members resided.

The first story is about a Brahman on a pilgrimage to the Ganges, a religious action which many villagers still followed. He met a woman, apparently a total stranger, who indicated that she was possessed by a ghost, so he went with her to her village, entered her hut, and smoked the hookah with her. These activities were currently not usual for the average man or woman who lived in a village and were even less so in the nineteenth century, for rural women in this region were secluded from strangers. Therefore, either this Brahman was deviant in some way and so was the woman, or some elements have been omitted or changed in the telling and retelling of the tale. Since the Brahman wrestled with the ghost, he was in all probability an exorcisor of ghosts, a man with supernatural powers who could "take off" ghosts from their victims. Although Brahmans in Shanti Nagar no longer cured people of spirit possession by exorcism, the Atharva-veda (Müller, 1898, AV, pp. 5–9, 13–14, 21–22, 26–28, 32) indicates that Brahmans acted as exorcisors in driving out spirits, and it was evident in 1958 from the celebration in Shanti Nagar of Akhta (a cattle curing rite) that formerly Brahmans acted as exorcisors (Freed and Freed, 1966, pp. 683–684). The practice had virtually been eliminated by Arya Samaj influence, except for low-caste shamans. Brahmans no longer acted as shamanistic curers. As this Brahman ancestor lived in the period before the Arya Samaj was introduced in Shanti Nagar, he may well have been a Brahman exorcisor. The element of "catching hold of the woman's hair and tying it into seven knots" characterized the kind of action an exorcisor might use to drive out the ghost and to control the woman. The statement that the ghost would not leave when the Brahman insisted that he do so, but instead wanted to go with him was similar to a shaman's treatment of spirit possession even in 1958 (S. Freed and R. Freed, 1964, p. 156). The shaman takes the ghost away with him.

This story was one of the ways by which the family accounted for the presence of a ghost in its fields, but nothing was said in this version as to why the ghost was a Muslim. Although Muslims still lived in this part of India, there were few of them in the village region and they were to some extent regarded with the suspicion rural people had for strangers. In the probable period when the ancestral Brahman lived, there were considerably more Muslims in the region of Shanti Nagar, which claimed that it had always been an all-Hindu village. The story never indicated whether the woman was a Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim. Being possessed by a Muslim ghost did not necessarily mean that she was a follower of Islam.

Another aspect of this story that was unusual was that a strange man went to a woman's hut. Unless someone in her family had asked him to treat her because he was a well known exorcisor, they would have been suspected of sexual activities. Whether or not

"wrestling with her" after smoking the hookah together falls in this category is difficult to say. Even if he was an exorcisor, because exorcisors were male and known to be able to exert supernatural power over women, he might be suspected of having had sexual motivations.

The second story concerning the Brahman ancestor and the Muslim ghost starts from an entirely different basis. The Brahman ancestor was a ghee merchant who was traveling in the Hissar region of the Punjab when he passed a Muslim graveyard where there were sweets and other foods which had been left for the ghost of the graveyard. All the people accompanying this traveling salesman were afraid, but he was not. He said that he would eat all the food and urinate on the spot where the food had been offered to show that there was nothing to fear, which he proceeded to do. Both of these actions were not only blasphemy and totally contrary to what a Brahman should do, but they also showed contempt for Muslims, burials, and the dead. As a result, the merchant became quite ill and did not recover until a shaman told him to offer five times the amount he had eaten at the Muslim graveyard as restitution. He did even more for the ghost, resulting in his obtaining from the ghost the power to cure people. The strength of his power was affirmed in the legend by his ability to cure an Englishman (a stranger to the supernatural curing powers of India) and helping a Jat have a son for which he was given land. Adding these elements to the story provided secondary elaborations or "clinchers" which strengthened a listener's belief in the probability of these events having occurred. Thereafter, the ghost remained in the field of the Brahman ancestor.

Everything related in these versions was contrary to regular, correct behavior. Such strangeness or contrariness was most often associated with supernatural powers which promoted the family's good fortune and protected its fields. Each invasion of the fields by strangers resulted either in a family member telling the ghost that it was all right or in the strangers being driven out by the ghost. Thus, it was a member of the Brahman family who exerted power over the ghost, that in effect was a part of the property of the family.

Some consequences of the family's association with the ghost were particularly interesting. For example, the professional Brahman priest, who was very old and highly regarded, recited mantras so that the family's children would not be frightened by the ghost, thus indicating that it was the adult males who possessed power in the family. The head of the family proved himself of high moral character because he did not take the tips on prices offered by the ghost. The black snake representing the Brahman ancestor, the voice of the Muslim ghost warning members of the family, and the song announcing the coming of the ghost, all provided eerie effects, secondary elaborations, which could be neither proved nor disproved. Although a number of the elements in the story might be considered sexual symbols, such as wrestling, catching hold of the hair and tying it in seven knots, and the black snake, still the main point of these versions of the legend of the Muslim ghost is that all the elements in these stories were strange, not natural, and therefore, supernatural. Finally, the Brahman ancestor who was honored and the Muslim ghost who was a vague entity might well be mirror images of one another, for since the influence of the Arya Samaj, the Brahman ancestor's power to exorcise, no longer highly rated, may have been cloaked by the power of the Muslim ghost.

The Jat Ghost

The second male ghost was a deceased member of a Jat family that, at the time in question, consisted of three widows, their children, a wife whose husband was away and only one resident adult man, who became possessed by the ghost who was the shade of his father's younger brother. It was said that this man suddenly started talking in strange voices. He related all sorts of events that happened to people in other families including what they said about him. For example, in one house, the people had been talking about calling someone to cure him.

He had not heard these conversations, but he said, "No, they can't cure me." Such behavior went on for some time.

One day the ghost's widow found her nephew unconscious. She shook him awake and he said to his aunt, "Everything in the house is full of food, and there is nothing in the house. I am always hungry; yet, I have taken so much milk. Now see there'll be no milk." That evening the family cow gave no milk so the widow folded her hands in prayer and asked that whatever she had done be forgiven. Then the cow gave milk. According to her, the ghost that possessed her nephew was her own husband. Our informant, a sister of the widow, stated that the widow had not done anything, but still her nephew, while grazing his cattle, had been possessed by his uncle's ghost. Apparently, in his ramblings, he spoke about things which had been known only by the dead husband and widow. The informant said that the nephew could not have known about these matters because they were secrets between husband and wife and had taken place before the nephew had been born.

It is tempting to try to reconstruct the psychological and cultural implications of this ghostly personality, but inasmuch as most of the people who had been participants in these events had died, one can only speculate. The analysis is based partially on what was known of the past history of the family and similar situations that arose in joint families in which there were a number of widowed persons. In the history of this family, males in two successive generations had died leaving three widows in one household. In addition, in the younger generation one male had gone into military service and was away from the family for a number of years. His wife was also in the household and was the sister of the youngest widow, who had found her nephew in a trance. The nephew was the only adult male in the household; he carried on the agricultural work and took care of the three widows and their children in the absence of his brother.

There was an element of attachment between the youngest widow and her nephew. The youngest widow had been the wife of her nephew's father's younger brother, who became the ancestral male ghost. The quote: "Everything in the house is full of food, and there is nothing in the house. I am always hungry; yet, I have taken so much milk," indicated that this young male was in a household of females and yet received no sexual satisfaction. The story also revealed the possibility of guilt on the part of the youngest widow, for when the cow gave no milk, overtly as a result of the nephew's statement, she prayed for forgiveness of her sins so this would not happen again.

The main point of this history of ghost possession was that the young man was psychologically disturbed, but was believed by his household to have been possessed by his uncle's ghost. The family attributed the nephew's spirit possession to the ghost because it was the only way they could account for his strange behavior. Attributing the possession of the young man to the ancestral ghost may have been a subliminal index of guilt on the part of the young widow for acts dreamed of or done. The fact that he seemed to know about events that happened before he was born could have indicated intimacy on the part of the nephew and youngest widow, or simply overhearing stories related by his elders when he was a child, or from gossip in the community.

Thereafter, the family supplicated the ancestral ghost, the uncle, regularly on every new moon and also on the ninth day of the dark fortnight, the time of the month at which the uncle died. They lit a lamp and folded their hands in prayer to remember him. If they had not done so, they believed their cattle would not give milk.

The Chuhra Ghost

The third male ghost was a member of the Chuhra Sweeper caste from a village in Rohtak District, Punjab. He was an itinerant worker in Shanti Nagar when he died in an epidemic that occurred around 1918. According to village belief, this was an unnatural death. This ghost was said to have possessed many people in the village. The Jat nephew mentioned previously, according to one informant, was possessed by this ghost

and not by the ghost of his dead uncle. This Chuhra had been buried outside of Shanti Nagar in a deep pit near a pond and a shrine to Kalka on a road to another village. He was described as a ghost desirous of sweet things. The belief was that those who liked sweets and who passed the burial spot could be possessed by this ghost, but that not everyone was susceptible. Belief in ghosts and a fondness for sweets made individuals vulnerable. The implication was that specific personality types were apt to be possessed.

Another account of the Sweeper's death related that when he fell ill, he asked for his son. His wife told him that their son was away from the village. This reply angered the man. When his wife asked him not to make a row about their son's absence, he became even angrier and asked that his hookah be filled. Then he spread a cloth on the ground, sat on it, smoked his hookah, and breathed his last, expiring on the ground. The villagers considered this death to have been suicide and, therefore, unnatural.

This ghost was also identified as the headless one; in his anger and pain with his illness, he is said to have cut off his own head. One informant stated that he was the strongest ghost in the village, that he had driven the other two male ghosts into distant fields, but that he himself moved everywhere and was not afraid of anyone or anything.

The Chuhra ghost was first of all a stranger. All strangers were considered dangerous, more so in the period in which he died when strangers in a village were rare and regarded with suspicion and fear. Although they were still regarded with suspicion, a great many more of them came in and out of the village due to paved roads, the railroad, and general economic development. The villagers kept an eye on all strangers. Wives, when first married, were strangers and were carefully inspected by the women in the village; they only proved themselves when they had children.

The Chuhra ghost was not only a complete outsider who had not been incorporated into the village system but was also a member of the lowest caste which was spatially and socially separated from the high castes. What members of the lowest castes did in the past was not generally known; they often were considered to have quite different ways and beliefs, a characteristic of strangers. Members of the Chuhra Sweeper caste periodically moved in and out of the village and were not considered to be original inhabitants of Shanti Nagar, so in a sense all Chuhras were strangers.

This Chuhra had lived in the village during an epidemic at a time when belief was strong that illness was caused by spirit intrusion and that epidemics were caused by malevolent spirits. The strange Chuhra's appearance in conjunction with the epidemic contributed to the power of his ghost. Therefore, when he fell ill and died a violent death, the stories which went the rounds may have been elaborated to include all the fear and anxiety engendered by a stranger at the time of an epidemic.

KARMA, DHARMA, AND REBIRTH

Rebirth and release from the round of rebirths in Hinduism are founded on the idea that specific paths lead either to rebirth in various forms or to union with the Ultimate Reality (Brahman), which constitutes release from the round of rebirths. Karma, action, was the most often used path in Shanti Nagar for rebirth. It consisted of regular everyday actions such as following ethical or proper caste behavior, giving charity, and celebrating rites of passage and religious festivities. Bhakti, self-forgetting love or devotion to a chosen deity, was the second path. The third way was jnana, the search for transcendental or divine knowledge; it was seldom followed in Shanti Nagar. Combinations of karma and bhakti were most often believed to be the paths by which one obtained rebirth; bhakti and jnana were considered to be the paths by which one was most apt to attain release from the round of rebirths (Freed and Freed, 1962, p. 251). However, jnana was primarily sought by old men of the Brahman Priest caste. Jats, who followed the Arya Samaj, did not believe in union with the Ultimate Reality because Swami Dayanand had said that there was only one God and that a soul could not be joined with God.

Actions were the main criteria for deciding what happened to the soul after death. Actions were either sinful, bad, or they were meritorious, good. Most villagers accrued their actions in terms of everyday living and not in terms of bhakti or jnana, but a little bit of bhakti occasionally did not hurt. Those who were not followers of the Arya Samaj might have a chosen deity to whom they gave devotion from time to time. For example, Brahman Priests worshiped Hanuman every Tuesday. Many women worshiped a mother goddess regularly.

Whether actions were good or bad depended on dharma. Dharma included religious, ethical, and proper behavior. General principles of dharma applied to everyone; but specific limitations and tolerances existed, depending on an individual's caste, sex, and age. As one aged, specific rules of dharma might change. For example, small children were not expected to conform completely to the dharma of caste or of adults. Adults followed more strict rules; the aged, however, had more leeway as they grew older. Caste dharma meant following the rules pertaining to one's caste, rules which were enforced within the caste and by members of other castes. Because of the concepts of dharma and karma and their effect on rebirth and release, individuals generally followed the rules of caste.

Karma provided villagers with a view of life and death as a recurrent cycle of events. They believed that death usually resulted in rebirth. Some of them were not absolutely certain, for they were pragmatic and said, "We have never seen it." They also believed or hoped that they would be reborn in the same caste, have the same spouse, and possibly even the same children. Most of them were content with the idea of rebirth, for rebirth to them was a continuance of life after a short interval called death. Release from the round of rebirths was not such a continuation, even though it was another kind of immortality. The villagers' own worth and strong desire to live entered into these beliefs, for few, if any of them, considered themselves to be such sinners as to have accrued sufficiently bad karma to be reborn as human beings in a lower caste or as a lower form of life.

The way in which the soul moved from one body to another was frequently expressed as follows, "Just as Lord Krishna told Arjuna that the soul never dies, just as a man changes his clothes, so the soul changes its form when a man dies." A similar expression used by Jat followers of the Arya Samaj was, "A brick turns to powder, but someone comes along and makes a brick again." The analogy was to the body (a brick) as the carrier of the soul.

The form the soul would be given in its next life depended on rendering an account of good and bad behavior. An elderly Brahman woman stated this principle thus, "When a person dies, the soul probably goes to God. The body, which is earth, stays here but is burnt. Rebirth is for a person who has done good deeds. A person who has done bad deeds will be reborn as a dog or a cat. If one does good deeds, one is always born as a good person. If the person dies an accidental death, God won't have him because he shouldn't come before the prescribed time."

Another old woman said that one married when young and that death was a second marriage. A man standing nearby explained as follows: "When a girl is young, all of her kinfolk are alive; she is very happy and has no desires. Then she is married, bears children, and has grandchildren. She has had a full life. If she then dies, there are no desires left. Her life has been full so the death is celebrated because she leaves her body in happiness. The celebration is like a second marriage." The old woman, who started the conversation, said that when she died, her death would be like a marriage. When asked if she thought she might be united with her dead husband, she answered, "Maybe." The man said we were seeking a difficult answer because the times were not the same as formerly when Sita and Ram Chandra lived. The reference was to the belief that Sita and Ram Chandra were mates in former births and knew that they would be married to each other. They were predestined for each other.

There were three stories, formerly recited by wandering bards in the Punjab during the nineteenth century, which celebrated the predestined events in the lives of three pairs of lovers, Ranjha and Heer, Mirza and Sahiban, and Sassi and Punnun. Ranjha and Heer were best known in Shanti Nagar because they were Jats. The villagers believed that these three pairs of lovers met with similar fates in their separate periods of life on earth because they were the same souls reborn. This belief was no doubt perpetuated by the bardic tales, although bards no longer wandered throughout the area (Temple, 1885, vol. II, pp. x, 177–178, ch. XXXVIII; 1900, vol. III, pp. xxxvii, xxxviii, xlix, lxii, ch. XXXIX, ch. XL).

There were three interpretations about the sum of actions and resultant rebirth. The first was that all of one's actions were added together from all of one's past lives, including the present life, and the sum of good and bad deeds determined what happened to the soul. This interpretation sometimes allowed for the possibility of the sum changing in the direction of either good or bad in this life, but the second interpretation held that it was not possible to change one's destiny in one's lifetime.

The third interpretation, offered by an Arya Samaji of the Jat Farmer caste, was that if an individual did only good acts in this life he might be freed from rebirth. The Jat, however, was skeptical since Arya Samajis did not believe in permanent release from the round of rebirth and union with Brahman. Arya Samajis were more interested in changing their fate by actions in this life, and believed that such actions would help them in the present as well as in future lives. When these same Jat informants were questioned as to whether actions in this life could help the lowest castes, Chamar Leatherworkers and Chuhra Sweepers, in this life or the next, they stated that it would take them longer because they had more bad actions to lose. One Jat specifically said it would take at least three generations. The following quotations illustrate the villagers' view of death, actions, rebirth, and release.

A very old Brahman Priest said he was ready to die. Then he laughingly stated that even when dying, we should always be happy. We should not be unhappy in sorrow or overly happy in joy. He added, "It will be a nice thing if I die, but God has given me a certain number of breaths. I have to breathe them before I die." A Jat who was listening quoted Lakshmi Bhai, the Queen of Jhansi and a leader in the Great Revolt of 1857, as saying: "We are not afraid of death and we accept it because we know it's God's will." The old Brahman added: "This is all the maya of God. He gives a certain number of breaths and people live them out. Everything is done by God. No one else has the power to do anything."

A middle-aged Chamar who read religious literature from Hindi tracts explained karma, rebirth, and release from rebirth as follows:

> A man is born after he has been an insect, an animal, and all the beings in the world. Only after that does he get human birth. After a man has died, he will be reborn as those beings of the earth; then again he'll get human birth. A person who worships God intensely, goes into the jungle and meditates might get human birth again. If he worships very intensely, he might even see God or he might get to be a king or a saint in this world. When a man goes to the jungle to worship, he stays there without regard to hunger and thirst. God tries to scare him in many ways to see if he'll run away and not worship. When God sees that he can't be scared, then he gives him darshan [God visits him or he sees God]. Then God sees that he is freed from rebirths in the world.

A modern middle-aged Brahman male summed up rebirth by saying, "Nothing will happen when I die. A dead man is gone. How can he come back? But there is rebirth. If this is my second birth, then the next will be my third and so on. The soul moves in a cycle and always goes on taking birth. There is no way to escape this cycle of births. It's God's will that the soul moves like this. No person can tell whether it goes to a better or a worse place. But if a person does good deeds, it is born in a better place. If he is cruel and does bad deeds, then he will get a worse rebirth."

These expressions reflected thoughtful and philosophical attempts to conciliate the ideas of destiny and actions with the ability to do something in this life to change the effects of one's past actions. In Shanti Nagar, the degree to which belief in fate determined one's life was variable and often selective. If a man was unable to do anything about his status, or if a man's prestige might suffer because of a particular action, destiny was an acceptable scapegoat; but on the whole, many people in the village worked as hard as they could to better their lives. They believed this course would improve their lives and increase the possibility of improvement in their next life.

To what degree the Arya Samaj contributed to the separation of the concept of fate from the concept of actions is difficult to determine. Along with other events in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it probably tipped the scales in the direction of planning for the future, believing one can change one's fate in this life, and making attempts to do so. Saraswati (Rai, 1967, p. 95) taught that, "Everyone can make and unmake his or her own destiny, subject to the eternal laws of God, including the law of Karma. Action, right earnest action, with confidence and faith, is the only way to undo Karma, in the sense that the fruits of fresh energetic action may override and supersede previous Karma. Surrender to inaction or Fate means death." More simply, what you will be in the next life depends on what you do today. Gradually Saraswati's teachings have passed into the beliefs of the villagers, for they arrived when both the time and place were ripe for acceptance. Still the villagers' beliefs ranged from the orthodox position of a very old Brahman man who was tired of living and interested in release from the round of rebirths to those of middle-aged and young people who were trying to obtain education, jobs, and various amenities which in the youth of the old Brahman had not been available.

A story related by a member of the Gardener caste best presents village ideology.

> A married girl was on the way to her husband's village. She wanted a drink of water so her husband said, "Come into this village and take it." As she passed by the meeting house, she saw an old man being bathed by two women. She asked for water and they told her that she could have some from a pitcher resting on a shelf. Then she burst out laughing. The old man asked, "Why are you laughing?" She answered, "Father's younger brother, father's elder brother, father's father, I have to go now and cannot tell you. Thirteen months from now I'll have a son and tell you then." After one year, this young woman had a son. The old man awaited her return. She left her son with her mother-in-law and went to see the old man. As she approached him, she was gored by a bull. As she was dying, the old man remembered her and asked her why she had been laughing. She replied, "I'm am going to die. Come again in thirteen months when I'll be born as a deer." He returned after one year and saw some deer and hunters. A hunter shot a deer. Again the deer couldn't explain to the old man but managed to say, "Come again in thirteen months and I'll be born a female Jat." Thirteen months later the old man again asked her why she was laughing. She replied, "You see I'm marrying my son. In my former life, I was his mother. I laughed when I first saw you because you were then being bathed by your wives, who in previous lives had been your mother and sister. That's how it is with life. It's like a Persian wheel; it goes up and down."

At the conclusion of this story, the Gardener said that he himself might die and be reborn to his own sons. Although the orthodox position was that a soul cannot remember past lives, this popular story stated otherwise. It was what people wanted to believe. The number 13 in this story symbolizes the time that it takes for a soul to be reborn and indicates the fate of the female in the story who dies a number of times, each time to be reborn in a different form. Every 13 months conveys the idea of the cyclicity of rebirth, and the uncertainty of fate regarding rebirth, just like a Persian wheel with its ups and downs.

Although the number 13 was inauspicious, the multiplicity of its occurrence in the story rendered it auspicious, for in the end the female attained her kind of immortality through rebirth in the same family. The number 13 is inauspicious because it refers to the first 13 days of mourning when the soul has

become a disembodied wandering ghost, and to the total time from death to rebirth, during which the soul journeys to the land of the dead to be judged for rebirth or release from the round of rebirths. It is even more inauspicious because as a number it consists of 12 (which may be made of subsidiary units amounting to twelve) plus the number one, equaling 13. It is the addition of the number one, a number never used by itself because it stands for non-duality and represents the nature of illusion (maya), all of which is unmanifest—what human beings do not know. Existence, on the other hand, or manifestation is multiplicity. That which is not multiple does not exist and is illusion. "As soon as the first tendency toward manifestation appears . . . duality is already present. This duality has the character of complementary poles of attraction, a positive and a negative tendency, which will be manifested in the whole of creation by male and female characteristics. There can be no creation without the relation of opposites" (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 6–8; quotation from pp. 223–224).

Although this exposition was never given us in Shanti Nagar it represents the belief in maya and the taboo on number one, a number which never appeared by itself in any rites of passage or stories. The only times in which one as a number was used was in sums of money, such as Rs. 41, 81, 101, 201. Sums of money ending in one were considered to be auspicious in terms of the events for which the money was given and in terms of the fortunes of the individuals involved in the events. But these sums always represented a multiplicity, just as in this story the number 13 was eradicated as being inauspicious by its multiplicity.

Thirteen is also composed of two sixes and a one—six represents the union of two threes, which by themselves are inauspicious but together represent the union of male and female. Thirteen may also be regarded as a combination of two fives and a three. The three is inauspicious in the context of death; the two fives represent the union of Shiva and Shakti or the male and female principle (Daniélou, 1964, pp. 352–354). In this story of rebirth, whether or not any of the numbers is auspicious or inauspicious does not matter, for the protagonist, who repeatedly dies, is reborn again and again, a creative process in which both male and female participate. The story exemplified the tying together of the threads of life and death.

HEAVEN, HELL, AND RELEASE FROM THE ROUND OF REBIRTHS

The concepts of heaven and hell together with Swami Dayanand's interpretation of them contributed to confusion as to what exactly happened at death and before rebirth. The Upanishads, one of the early forms of philosphical religious literature commenting on the Vedas, state that a human being dies and is reborn based on past actions. The individual may be reborn in one of three worlds: the world of the forefathers, the world of the demigods, and the world of the Brahman, the highest being, the Universal Absolute or Ultimate Reality. But the Chandogya Upanishad states that the soul, after enjoying the results of good or bad actions by a stay in one of these worlds, is reborn again either as a human being in a family of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, or Vaishyas, or in a bad or low caste, or a bad or low species. The number of possible worlds into which a soul may go may be split into three or 14. The three worlds are as given above; the 14 worlds are seven ascending from the earth and seven descending again from the earth into the nether regions. The Puranas, early stories illustrating Hindu values and principles and celebrating the works of deities, describe various heavens and hells (Morgan, 1952, pp. 90–91). None of the people in Shanti Nagar held a complex belief in heavens and hells as described above. They might relate stories about heaven, hell, rebirth, and release, but their concepts did not consist of compartmentalized heavens and hells. Although some educated men in Shanti Nagar read religious literature, it consisted principally of popularized versions of the epics (Mahabharata and Ramayana) or of the Puranas. Primarily, oral repetitions at festivals or *kathas* (occasions when a Brahman priest recited religious stories to a village audience) influenced most of the villagers.

Although villagers spoke of their dead as

ancestors and either worshiped or remembered them, they did not think of the ancestors as being in another world once a year of mourning had passed. They believed that by then they probably had been reborn. But there was always some doubt because of the custom of remembering ancestors, the belief in ghosts, the concept of release from the round of rebirths, and stories about heaven and hell.

Sanatan Dharma followers and those who were simply Hindus but neither Sanatan Dharma nor Arya Samaj gave lip service to a belief in hell by sayings such as: If a man does not have a son, he will go to hell. Stevenson (1971, p. 132) stated that having a son is paying a debt to one's ancestors, and if a man does not have a son he can adopt one and save himself from the hell called *Put* or *Pud*. The villagers believed that a man needed a son to carry out the proper funeral rites; otherwise he would go to hell. It was said that if a woman sat down to eat before or with her husband, she would go to hell. If an elderly woman ate while cooking, she would go to hell. Eating while cooking polluted the food. Men usually ate together; women waited and ate afterward; but a mother might eat with a son. Children could eat with anyone. A grown son could eat with his brothers, sisters, mother and father, but not all together. The belief in hell, therefore, enforced correct behavior.

Followers of the Arya Samaj took the position that heaven and hell were in this world. A Brahman who combined both the principles of the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma in his beliefs said: "If a man does wrong, commits a murder, the world will start telling him that he is a murderer. Nobody will sit with him nor will they invite him to social gatherings. Or if there are two men, and one is fortunate and the other unfortunate, then there must be something lacking in the deeds of the second man. He's reaping the result of his deeds in past lives. Hell or heaven are in this very life, and one reaps the fruits here." This same man said he stopped believing in paradise when he learned about Karana, who found when he reached paradise that there was no food there, only gold, and so returned to earth for two weeks to stock up on edibles.

A Jat told us the following story about heaven:

> There was a Brahman who needed money so his wife told him to go to Emperor Chandragupta, who was a generous man, and tell him "the roots of charity are always green," and Chandragupta would give him money. The Brahman did what his wife told him and it worked. When he needed money again, he went to Chandragupta, who this time told the Brahman to show him the roots of the tree of charity or he (Chandragupta) would punish him. The Brahman was unhappy for neither he nor his wife knew what to do. When the Brahman's 12-year-old son overheard his mother and father discussing this problem, he told his father that he should go to Chandragupta and tell him that in 12 years he would be able to show him the roots because by then his son, who was on his way to study with a guru for 12 years, would know the answer to the problem. The father did so and the boy then went to the guru. The guru had a wonderful daughter, and after a time the boy married her, lived in the guru's household, and forgot about the roots of the tree of charity.
>
> Twelve years later when the boy returned home, his father asked him how he was to solve the problem for Chandragupta. The boy did not know and everyone in the family was gloomy. Then the boy's wife said, "This is what you must do. Tell Chandragupta to tear down the east wall of the fort. Under it he will find a room, and in the room will be a horse. He must get on the horse and ride wherever the horse takes him." The Brahman told this to Chandragupta, who followed the directions and found the horse. The horse could speak like a man and told Chandragupta to mount him. Chandragupta mounted and was taken to the home of a saint and from there to a golden city in heaven. The horse said, "This is paradise, and it is where you will go when you die."
>
> Chandragupta was delighted and returned home. He then decided that he wanted the Brahman's son's wife since she was able to predict such wonderful things. He told her so and she answered that she would go to him as his wife, but first he must retrace his journey to paradise. When he tried to do so, he found that the horse and the saint both cursed him, and that workmen were tearing down his paradise.

> So he returned to his kingdom and begged pardon of the boy's wife. She told him he could regain his former good position only by going into the jungle with 100 cows, praying and taking good care of the cows, making them increase, and sending the increase to the saints. In this way, he could recoup paradise.

This was not only a story of heaven and hell, but of good and bad karma. While Chandragupta's karma was good, he experienced paradise. When he coveted the Brahman's wife, his karma was bad and he no longer was entitled to paradise. To recoup paradise in this life, he had to follow a path of expiation which at the same time would accrue good karma. A jaded person might think it would have cost less in time and effort to have given the Brahman charity each time he asked for it, but that is not the point of the story. The point is that karma changes by good and bad actions and that paradise, or heaven and hell, are more a state of mind or desires.

In contrast to this story, van Buitenen (1969, pp. 79–101) told of a Brahman gambler seeking to marry a king's daughter by finding the City of Gold, a paradise of aerial spirits, of which the king's daughter had been one before she was born on earth. The situations are reversed. In the first story, Chandragupta succeeds in getting to paradise the first time but fails at the second attempt. In the City of Gold, the Brahman gets there twice; the second time he stays with the king's daughter and her three sisters as his consorts. Here the Brahman "tasted the perfection of happiness" (van Buitenen, 1969, p. 101). The point of the second story is that one can never tell what actions result in attaining paradise. The contrast in the two stories is characteristic of Hindu legends which are not clear as to what exactly results in going to paradise, release from the round of rebirths, or as to what constitutes the sum of good and bad actions. These stories contribute to the confusion regarding what happens at death.

The villagers were not greatly concerned with heaven or hell nor with release from the round of rebirths which was in essence one of the ways of going to heaven. As Stevenson (1971, p. 198) noted many years ago, ". . . the common people seem to believe that very often without passing through either heaven (*Svarga*) or hell (*Naraka*), the soul is reborn immediately after death," and so it was and probably has long been in Shanti Nagar.

Saraswati's teachings have reinforced this position. He believed that *Svarga* "is the enjoyment of special kinds of happiness and the acquisition of the material which is conducive to such happiness" in this life. *Naraka* "is the special kind of pain or the presence of that material which produces pain" (Saraswati, 1956, p. 86). With a complex philosophical literature about heaven and hell which has never been read by the villagers, with their own lack of interest in heaven and hell, and with Saraswati's teachings, these two concepts were of no great concern although the words heaven and hell were used in conversations. For example, an individual might say, "Life is hell," or "I'll go to hell."

Saraswati (1956, pp. 337–343, 353–354, 850–851) discussed emancipation and salvation in terms of release from the round of rebirths and union with the Ultimate Reality, Brahman. His position is that by right actions a soul may attain freedom from rebirth temporarily, but all souls are born again. His discussion of this emancipation is somewhat abstruse, conveying the idea that through dharma, ethical and right behavior, the soul attains happiness, which in effect is emancipation. His writings aim at having emancipation or happiness as he described these terms as a reward for right behavior. Saraswati, however, insists that the soul and God are distinct so that the soul and God never merge and become one, for the soul is the worshiper and God the object of worship. Contrary to Saraswati's teachings, the general belief is that the soul which attains release from the round of rebirths is joined with Brahman, i.e., is one with deityness.

Very few villagers expressed interest in release from the round of rebirths and union with the Ultimate Reality. The exceptions that came to our attention were two old men, literate Brahmans and followers of Sanatan Dharma. Through mukti, the village term for

release from the round of rebirths and union with Brahman, the soul might attain immortality without repeatedly taking birth and dying. This immortality was supreme bliss. Mukti or moksha (the more orthodox term), permanent release from the round of rebirths, appealed to very few. The best example of this search for release was an old Brahman grandfather whose two successive wives and all of his children had died, and who had given all his property to his brothers and brothers' children in his village of birth. He was living his final years tending cattle for his sister's son. Daily he took the cattle to the field, read religious tracts, and recited the mantra, AUM. He had renounced all of his material possessions; he helped his sister and sister's son (as a good mother's brother), and he actively sought release by his regular repetition of AUM.

What has been called an undue emphasis on Brahmanism may be of significance here, for only two old Brahman males, 80 years of age or older, desired mukti. Although adult villagers understood the concept of mukti and would discuss it, they did not express much interest in achieving release from the round of rebirths, only in being reborn. Thus, in death as in life the Brahmans were more complex in their rituals and in their beliefs than were members of other castes. Although the Arya Samaj had considerably influenced the life cycle and religious beliefs of the entire village, the Brahmanical model (Srinivas, 1967, pp. 26–27) in ritual life still existed and Arya Samaj influences had not extinguished the differences between the ritual life of Brahmans and others. Moksha was the apotheosis in death of the rank of Brahmans in life and perpetuated the stratification of village society from life to death.

PROTAGONISTS OF THE RITES OF PASSAGE

The rites of passage revolved around specific groups of people with central actors. The birth ceremonies starred the mother and infant with the adult women in the household providing the supporting cast. The infant at the time of delivery had never belonged to the household and was a new being in it. Therefore, many of the rituals for the infant were incorporating. The mother, on the other hand, was a member of her family of marriage, but when she was one of the two central actors for the first time in the rite of birth, she was separated from the family and lineage as a whole, placed in limbo, and then reincorporated into the family group. The first time a woman gave birth was the most significant because it was the first occasion that she went through this process of separation and reincorporation although earlier birth ceremonies which she may have witnessed in her natal household provided her with some of the knowledge necessary for the birth of her first child. Even her own birth may have had some effect on her, for mothers often tell their children something about their births, and children hear their mothers talking about births with other women. The point being made about these two actors, mother and child, is that both undergo different ceremonial and social experiences at birth. The primipara mother moves from the status and role of young married woman to mother; the infant moves from the status and role of unborn soul to infant who becomes a member of a particular family and lineage. In both instances, the mother and child, although separated and in a sacred state throughout many of the birth ceremonies, are at the same time undergoing rituals which incorporate them into the family group. Although the infant is almost immediately recognized as a full member of the family, the mother has a longer period to prove herself inasmuch as she remains a blood member of her own family and lineage throughout her life. All rites of passage constitute a periodic affirmation of an individual's place in family, kin, and community. They reaffirm the acceptance by these groups and the sense of belonging.

In marriage, the central actors were the bride and groom, although during the negotiations that preceded the engagement, the fathers of the prospective spouses held the

center of the stage. The bride made her entrance late, beginning with the oil baths. From the time of *Lagan* and the oil baths, both girl and boy were definitely marked as separated from society by their lustrations; they began a symbolic joint participation even though in separate villages. From then on, they took the center of the stage for most of the ceremonies, which were aimed at joining the two together, thus constituting a change in status from childhood to adulthood. But the rituals also were aimed at gradually incorporating the bride, a stranger, into the family of her husband. Just as the bride was a stranger to her affines, so too the groom was a stranger to his. Therefore, the oil baths which they took were to establish their purity, demonstrate it to the opposite side, and to protect them from unknown dangers when meeting strangers.

In death, the central actor was the deceased, more specifically the soul. The mourners, in particular the wife or husband and to a somewhat lesser extent the other members of the immediate family of the deceased, passed through a period of liminality that paralleled the liminality of the soul of the deceased in order to adjust to their loss. The status of widow or widower, especially, required a new form of behavior. The soul of the deceased had 13 days to become accustomed to a disembodied state and then had another period of a year to journey to the land of the dead and judgment. If all went well, 13 months after death the soul was reborn or attained release from the round of rebirths. Those few individuals who in life had difficulty meeting the standards of the community remained in limbo as ghosts. The soul that was in limbo was sacred, differing from the standards of the community for the living and the dead. Although the soul that was released from the round of rebirths was in permanent limbo and most sacred, this state was seldom sought, perhaps because the villagers had seen births but had never witnessed the results of release from the round of rebirths and union with the Ultimate Reality. Thus, in the last rite of passage, death was tied to life through the soul.

Each of the rites of passage had a somewhat different cast of actors by sex. Birth ceremonies were dominantly female. The male actors were the infant if he was a boy, the professional Brahman Priest, or the boy's father, if there was a fire ceremony, and the Nai Barber who cut the boy's hair on the fortieth day. For marriage, both males and females participated in the ceremonies, sometimes with emphasis on males, as for example in all the contractual and financial arrangements for the marriage, sometimes on females for such rituals as the song sessions, the worship of the potter's wheel, handmarks and other symboling, cooking sweet pancakes, the rituals performed by the women in the bride's family to incorporate the groom, and the rituals performed by the groom's family to incorporate the bride. A few ceremonies were specifically for the bride: the exchange of the metal box, thread-winding, and the ritual of the coconut half-shell, the first two of which were primarily celebrated by the Brahman Priest caste, just as the initiation ceremony was for the groom. Marriage ceremonies symbolized not only the change from childhood to adult status and the beginning of a sexual life as wife and husband, but for Brahmans they also marked the full attainment of twice-born status for bride and groom. On the whole, however, the marriage rituals reflected participation of both males and females, as well they might if union was to be achieved.

Death was another story, for only men participated in the major ceremonies, even though males and females joined together in mourning. The importance of the male in the last rite was signified by the need to have a son to carry out the cremation and mourning ceremonies. Thus, females started life, males and females joined together to continue it, and males marked its end. In the rites of passage, each sex had its own share of life's drama in marking the stages through which the people of Shanti Nagar moved in their quest for immortality.

In addition to the primary actors in each of the three rites of passage, none of the ceremonies and rituals could have been per-

formed without a strong supporting cast. For birth, these actors consisted of the husband's mother, father's sister, father's father's sister, midwife, Barber woman, and priest. In addition all members of a household were affected by the delivery and lying-in and each contributed to carrying out the rites of passage. Although the parents of the new mother did not visit her at birth, they sent her, her new baby, and members of her household gifts of food and clothing.

To unite two individuals in marriage and establish relationships between their families and lineages, many relatives were involved in carrying out the necessary events. Primary actors in addition to the parents and other household members of both the bride and groom were married sisters, mother's brothers, and mother's mother's brothers on both sides of the marriage. Sisters usually married into several different villages and provided links among them. Their husbands attended weddings in their wives' families. Senior women visited the families of their brothers or mother's brothers and of related married female kin to obtain their support for the coming wedding. The visits served to reinforce kinship ties. In addition, important personages in the village and region were invited to attend weddings. The male and female Nai Barbers and the professional Brahman Priest were essential for a wedding.

Fewer individuals were involved in death ceremonies than in those of either marriage or birth. The primary actors were principally relatives of the household but lineage members and specific affines also took part in the year-long mourning ceremonies. At this time, the family of the deceased gave gifts to daughters and sisters and members of their husbands' families.

The three rites of passage served not only to pass individuals from one status to another during the life cycle and to continue life through birth, marriage, and rebirth, but also to tie all the members of the cast of actors together. In addition, they served as a means of economic exchange.

FUTURE TRENDS

There is evidence in the rites of passage of a trend toward a reduction of ceremonalism. Such a trend is in accord with Max Weber's analysis of Hinduism in contrast to Protestantism and industrialization in the West. Weber's ideas about India and Hinduism should now be regarded as too simplistic, for even in his day, India possessed considerable diversity, had encountered the West, and had experienced some reduction in ceremonialism probably due to economic and other changes in the nineteenth century.

Singer (1972, pp. 275–278) has commented on Weber's theories and applied them to his own study of the Hindu ethic and industrial leadership in the city of Madras. He has described a number of processes that have taken place in this setting, some of which may be comparable to those that affect the rites of passage in Shanti Nagar. One of these processes is compartmentalization, which he described as a means by which industrialists separate their religious and domestic life from their business affairs (Singer, 1972, pp. 322–323). This process occurs in Western countries, where, for example, to describe someone as a Christian on Sundays only, implies that the individual is entirely secularized and non-religious during the rest of the week, a complete compartmentalization. Compartmentalization existed in Shanti Nagar in somewhat the same way as described in Madras; men who worked in the city often violated norms of behavior found in the village. For example, Brahmans, who visited or worked in the city, might eat meat and drink liquor. Young wives, who accompanied their husbands to the city, might not cover their faces there. The urban setting provided a different milieu than the rural.

Urban influences and occupations, as well as education, appear generally to have been correlated with a reduction in ceremonial. For example, Singer (1972, p. 332) reported a group of ceremonies that were condensed and carried out together. We have evidence

in comparing rites from Stevenson with those celebrated in Shanti Nagar that ceremonies which took three days in Kathiawar took one day in Shanti Nagar, or even less. These reductions may have been due partly to occupational changes because of the number of males who worked in the cities, and partly to the influence of the Arya Samaj, the teachings of which have caused a reduction in the number of rituals, especially those for death. Educational changes, however, seem to have afforded greater knowledge about Sanskritic rituals and may well lead to enlarged celebrations. Certainly, some of the marriage ceremonies celebrated by the more educated families had taken on similarities to urban ceremonies, for example, the employment of a professional, urban, Brahman priest rather than a local professional priest.

For birth, because women enjoyed the 40-day seclusion period and welcomed the rest, attention, and presents they received, we are doubtful that delivery will be taken care of in hospitals in the relatively near future. A factor militating against this possibility was that admission to hospitals was the business principally of males; whereas the birth rite was primarily the domain of females. If, however, women become more educated than they were in 1958 and 1959, and begin to work in cities, then it is possible that more hospital deliveries may take place. However, the cost of this medical service to the national economy and its inconvenience for rural people may both be considered excessive so that rural clinics and maternity care would be a better alternative for the rural population. A step had been taken in this direction with the government-trained midwife. The effectiveness of this development was reduced because the village midwife still had to attend the mother after birth and thus a family had to pay double for the services of two midwives. Many families were reluctant to do so.

The rite of marriage seemed more vulnerable to change than birth and death rites. There were attempts in Shanti Nagar to reduce the time and expense put into marriages, but they were not very successful. These attempts were offset by the necessity for maintaining one's prestige, the need to marry one's daughter properly, and the perpetuation of the inheritance of land in the male line. The laws for inheritance of land had been changed although their effects were generally being evaded in the rural areas. However, if the full effects of the new laws were to be realized, then parents would not be willing to spend as much as formerly on the marriage of a daughter. If young people begin to marry at a later age and wish to choose their own mates, then the marriage system with its associated rituals will change. There was evidence that the age of marriage for both sexes would increase and that the period between the engagement and wedding day would decrease with consummation following immediately or shortly thereafter. If the trend for more education for both boys and girls were to continue, then education should increase the ages at engagement, wedding, and consummation.

The funeral rite of passage was the simplest of all three rites due largely to changes in caste practices and to the influence of the Arya Samaj. It is doubtful that much more will happen to reduce it in the future. The belief in ghosts may gradually diminish as there was some evidence that it was more extensive in the past. However, ghost beliefs are often projections of one's own anxiety; if there are no ghosts upon which to displace anxiety, then it will be projected elsewhere. Psychological states will not disappear; perhaps that is why some ghosts are said to be in limbo forever.

The custom of having memorials erected to ancestors is very ancient. Only the Arya Samaj opposed the practice; yet, those who most often erected memorials were prestigious Jats, the followers of the Arya Samaj. In fact, there was evidence that some Jats went beyond the teachings of the Arya Samaj in remembering the dead. Thus, it is unlikely that the custom of erecting memorials will be weakened. As Arya Samaj teachings mellow through time, this area of the dead and their remembrance is probably one in which currently abandoned customs and rituals may be revived.

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[1] This index also serves as a glossary. Each Hindi word used in the text, not listed in Webster's *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged,* has its own entry. The reader should refer to the listed pages, usually the earlier ones, for a definition.

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