

## Chapter 2

### The Individual in Society

The institution of caste has historically played a major role in the making of the traditional Hindu society with millions of untouchables who were not even considered as part of the four-fold varna division of the Hindu social order. The eighteenth century village society of Kota could be identified as Dhakar, Jat or Meena village which means that the population of a village was predominately constituted of the low castes than *swarna* Hindus.<sup>1</sup> The untouchables have not only been physically segregated but also been ignored by the scholars. Scholars have generally been working on facets of 'social exclusion' dealing with discrimination of all types related to caste, class, gender, race etc. imposed on the weaker sections by the upper castes.<sup>2</sup>

How have the people in Hadauti faced this 'social exclusion'? How women in the lower strata have been further excluded? Probing such questions would help us to draw a comparative status of the women of the higher strata and that of the women from the lower strata. The caste exploitation and domination has been much severe for women than men. Only respite for the low caste woman was her being an equal bread earner of

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<sup>1</sup> Madhu Tandon Sethia, *Rajput Polity: Warriors, Peasants and Merchants (1700-1800)*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2003, 79.

<sup>2</sup> B.S. Butola, 'Antinomies of Exclusion', in *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 11, No. 1, A Journal of Benaras Hindu University, January-June, 2009.

the family which makes her status better than the women from the high castes who mostly was confined to the four walls of domesticity.

Caste and class refer to socio-economic injustices and inequalities imposed by high castes on the low castes. In case of Rajasthan it can be understood in terms of their multi-dimensional functioning, vertical and horizontal layers and levels. They are inter-related and inter-connected in terms of domination and interdependence. Rajasthan was primarily a feudal society governed by the modes of production based on the socio-cultural and material conditions of the people. Feudalism was a social formation as well as mode of production, polity, administration and social relations in Rajasthan.<sup>3</sup> In Dumont's view caste is social like religion with the ideas of pollution and purity, hierarchy and corporations.<sup>4</sup> There are incongruities and anomalies in the social hierarchy divided as Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with unwritten acceptance and sanction of the people.

Caste hierarchy in Rajasthan is more or less similar to the wider Indian social hierarchy as *dwij* castes, principal agricultural castes, lower castes and untouchables. The basic difference lies in the status of Rajputs who ritualistically stand lower than Brahmins and Vaishyas who observe strict codes which Rajputs tend to skip. But, they being the rulers enjoyed highest status in power. Let it be Brahmin or any business man he was to acknowledge the high status of a *thikanedar* failing in doing so proved

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<sup>3</sup> K.L. Sharma, 'Feudalism, Caste and Class in Rajasthan', in eds. N.K. Singhi and Rajendra Joshi, *Folk, Faith and Feudalism*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 1995, 165-66

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168

disastrous for their survival. Role of a Rajput as landlords empowered them to levy taxes. The family and kinsmen of the ruling house indeed all Rajput families were exempted from these taxes but were imposed on the rest including Brahmins.<sup>5</sup>

The artisans and menials were indispensable part of the village and their household strength varied from 8 to 10 in small villages to around 30-40 in larger villages even if there were no Brahmins, *sahas* or *bohras*. For example *mauza* Digonya had peasants of more than one caste; despite small number of owners of the plough, a relatively large number of artisans and menials inhabited. Out of 16 *halpatis*, there were 2 Dhakars, 2 Meenas, 2 Jats, 3 *Pandits*, 2 Rajputs, 4 Patels and 1 *kalawant* (artist) while there were 14 artisan and menial households.<sup>6</sup>

The 'politics' of dominant and dominated functions fundamentally through the caste prism, 'power' along with caste-class divide have always played significant role. Usually, in a society irrespective of caste the women are subjugated but the moment caste meets class the entire 'balance' of man being dominant and woman being dominated can see a role reversal. Irrespective of gender, social 'power' lies with the upper caste and high class authorizing them with the 'amoral' authority to practise discrimination. The Queens and princesses or even a dancer/singer/slave played an influential role. Although the study does not focus on the royalty but a peep into their

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> Madhu Tandon Sethia, Op. cit., p. 92-93.

lifestyle proved beneficial in understanding the other classes. There has always been a tendency of imitating the 'dominant' culture visible around as it enhances the psyche of the people of becoming 'progressive.' Like the rulers tried to grasp the European lifestyle in their quest of upgrading their status in the eyes of colonizers, so did the upper castes following the royalty so on and so forth.

The *zenani dyodi* was the symbol of traditional life of the elite women. There was *zenana*<sup>7</sup> in the houses of upper castes too. It was a medium through which the patriarchal ideology of seclusion for women was manifest. The women in the *zenana* were dependent on her husband for everything. A kind of hierarchy was present within the women. In the upper caste-class, it was based on her marriage; her *thikana*, family status, her bearing a son and above all whose son would rule.

For the higher caste bearing a son was very important as he was considered to be the carrier of the family name and lineage. The entire hierarchy within the *dyodi* was well known to everyone increasing the chances of animosity and jealousy within the women of the family. A woman's status dependent on her bearing son and for the personal expenditure too they had to rely on their husband's or other men in the family. The queens were allotted *jagirs* and some amount as their pocket expenses was earmarked, Maharao Ramsingh of Kota had given eight villages with the earning of

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<sup>7</sup> See Gail Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: The View from the Zenana', eds. Manu Bhagvan and Anne Feldhaus, *Speaking Truth to Power: Religion, Caste and the Subaltern Question in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2008.

13,000-14,000 rupees annually; Ranawat Phoolkanwar was given 13 villages in the Kanwas *tehsil* and another queen Jaisalmeri was provided 5 villages. The queen Udaipuri Ranawat of the prince Kishore Singh was given one village as *jagir*. The amount of the money given as pocket expense was given on the basis of their status within the family. In Kota the grandmothers, princesses and rest of the queens of the princes were given 500, 250, 200 and 150 respectively on the monthly basis. This money they used to spend on different events, occasions and celebrations that were performed in the *dyodi*.<sup>8</sup> These women who were secluded, dominated by their men because of the power of belonging to the upper caste and ruling class gained the authority of doing the same with the other low and weaker class.

In interesting observation made by Mckin Marriot to Norbert Peabody about little fish eating big ones! Norbert adds to it: "The unexpected subversion of the natural order of things in this reading alerts us to the fact that all structures of domination, no matter how seemingly base or fundamental are susceptible to reconfiguration".<sup>9</sup> In the game of 'politics' nothing is ideal and consistent, the 'change' is fundamental and therefore susceptible of role reversals. Irrespective of caste or gender, 'power' authorized the elite women to suppress and dominate the men and women equally who worked for them. Here, it is not the gender or caste but the class, power that rules!

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<sup>8</sup> Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi aur Beeswi Shatabadi mein Striyon ki Stithi*, Jaipur, Printwell Publishers, Jaipur, 1987, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Colonial India*, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2003, 1

Another example of the status overriding the gender comes from newspaper article from *Tarun Rajasthan* (21<sup>st</sup>, March, 1926) mentioning about *Rani Sahiba ke Daije wale*, meaning the retinue that accompanied the queen after marriage as a part of dowry. It mentions about the *Darogas* who were notorious by temperament carrying the 'royal insignia' that made them act like the masters. It was their free-will to molest loot and destroy no one stopping them; if resisted one had to pay a heavy price. Some who opposed *Darogas* were physically wounded and hospitalized. Through '*Tarun Rajasthan*' appeal was made to the Maharana of Bundi to keep a stern eye and control over them so that people can live peacefully.<sup>10</sup>

The tendency of growth in humans had made them to adapt to what Mary Louis Pratt call 'transculturation' a way through which the subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.<sup>11</sup> It psychologically makes them look up to the people in power that works as a morale booster for them. Similar observation was made by A.D. Bannerman, In-charge of the Census of 1901 that in order to raise the level of social status the lower middle class tried to imitate the upper class because of which they picked many negative aspects, one of them being banning of widow remarriage:

The prohibition of widow re-marriage which is in force among the orthodox upper and middle classes and which is one of the first

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<sup>10</sup> (Newspaper) *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated: 21<sup>st</sup>, March, 1926, RSAB.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds feminist essays in social history*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2007, 207.

customs adopted by sections of the lower middle classes which are striving to raise their social status. With regard to the percentage of widows, when we consider that the betrothal is the more important marriage rite and that a girl betrothed in infancy, whose fiancé dies before the subsequent ceremony—the giving of the bride has taken place, is as much a widow, as if she had entered that condition after years of cohabitation with her husband, we may fairly assume that were it not for the prohibition of widow re-marriage in force among a large number of castes, many of these widows would have contracted second marriages and more children would have been born.<sup>12</sup>

Various reforms started by the elite, educated upper caste Hindus have contributed in the 'Sanskratization' of the local, regional system of the lower strata.

The traditional Hindu system which is represented by caste system is defended on the religious grounds. Both Ghurye and Irawati Karve have discussed some broad points associated with the Hindu caste system.<sup>13</sup> According to Ghurye it constitutes segmental division of the society, hierarchy, restriction on feeding and social intercourse, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of the occupation and restriction on marriage. While according to Irawati Karve

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<sup>12</sup> A.D. Bannerman, (Capt.) *Census of India, Rajputana*, Vol. XXV Part-I, Lucknow, Nawal Kishore Press, 1902, 19

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Shyam Lal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement: Special Reference to Rajasthan*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2008, 13

castes are endogamous groups restricted to certain limited areas. They have a certain traditional behaviour pattern which is enforced in many cases by a 'caste council' made up of a number of respected elder men in a caste. They live together with other castes without mingling except on certain occasions only. The intercourse between castes is peripheral or tangential; a caste has generally a hereditary occupation, which is, however, not exclusive to it; and castes are arranged in a hierarchal order.

There were further complications in society because of the growth of the occupational groups, inter-caste marriages and advent of the foreigners etc. the structure of the society was no longer based on the Varnas. The criteria developed on numerous castes and sub-castes which were based on birth, hereditary and class privileges, complicating the entire Hindu caste system.<sup>14</sup>

Ronald Inden speaks of three categories: 'agents', who act purposively and reflectively; 'instruments' through whom agents fulfil their desires and 'patients' who are the recipients of the acts of others, to variously pacified or punished saved, reformed or developed<sup>15</sup>. The upper class 'agents' presumes it to be their moral authority to govern through 'instruments'- the middle class the lowest impure strata 'patients' of the society in order to maintain their supremacy. All kinds of checks and measures were forced in order to avoid any kind of contact between the two due to the fear of pollution. When

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<sup>14</sup> Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement*, op. cit., 13-14.

<sup>15</sup> Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds*, op. cit., 16.

one *pujari* arranged his daughters' marriage with some another *pujari* of a low caste he was removed from the temple of *Sri Ji* in Kota.<sup>16</sup>

From women's point of view the condition was deplorable almost equal to those of the low caste untouchables. The way the princely states were took action against those who indulged in sexual crimes such as rape show their insensitivity toward women. For example, one Brahman of Jhalarapatan was thrown out of the State on the allegation of rape; when he was permitted to return wishing to marry the same girl he was not allowed to do so. The father of the victim was asked to take his daughter to some other village and get her married.<sup>17</sup> In the low castes if there was any crime committed either related to marriage or *chamchori* (rape or sexual molestation), some amount as fine was taken and the matter was considered to be resolved. Even the State of Kota extracted *Chauthan* (tax) on the *nata*. When Jat Pakto took the wife of the brother of Jat Pagat of Nanta in *nata*, the Kota State took 15 Rs as *chauthan* from the 50 Rs. of *nata*.<sup>18</sup> One cannot miss the indifferent attitude of State toward their female citizens when they were openly exploited. The man was asked to leave the town with his daughter and get 'rid' of her by marrying her to anyone as if she had committed some crime. For the sexual molestation some petty amount was extracted from the culprit but no sympathy and security for the women was shown. In the lower castes of farmers and the labourers' *nata*, taking the money in *reet* for the marriage, sexual molestations

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<sup>16</sup> Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op. cit., 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 980.

<sup>18</sup> Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op. cit., 18.

were common. And for this the State used to charge fine, *Chauthan* and *natakagali*; only legitimizing the crimes.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly the fine or tax too was to be paid on the basis of the caste of both the accused and the victim especially in cases of sexual crimes. If the man was of the higher caste and woman of the lower caste then the fine imposed on man was less, if both were of the same caste then it was little more but if the woman was of the high caste and man from the low caste than the amount of the fine was much high. When a gardener Dayaram got wife of Hema gardener of Nanta in *nata*, the *nata* was decided at 30 rupees out of which 6 rupees and 2 *aana* were paid as *natakagali* to the State. In another case daughter of gardener Deva who was sent in *nata* to gardener Dewra for which the panchayat decided the amount of 10 rupees but when a *teli* of Bundi after his wife's death started living with a woman from the gardener caste he was severely punished by the panchayat.<sup>20</sup> A woman from Kaithun whose husband had left her, was allowed to do a *nata* and was also ordered not to indulge in fight with his ex-husband. There are instances where a person did not pay the desired tax on his punishment this happened when the wife of *ahodi* Uda of Bairani went to Bhairon latter did not pay *natakagali* for this Bhairon was fined to pay 22 rupees and was also made to plough the land.<sup>21</sup> There was intervention of the State and Panchayats in almost all the decisions of the people belonging to the low castes. Severe punishment were ensure

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi Beesawi Shatabdi*, op. cit., 20.

that these people do try to 'evolve' out from their 'primitive' life thereby and polluting the upper class of the society. And for this reason sexuality of women has always been suppressed and controlled so that they do not become the source to 'pollute' the upper strata of the society. The untouchables were not allowed to walk on the public roads and proximity to the higher castes was not less than a crime. The condition of the untouchables was pitiable in Rajasthan:

The conditions of the Bhangis are quite pitiable. Either the upper caste Hindus pour water in their hallow of palms to drink from a safe distance or they have to go to the kheil (a trough) attached with the well, the water of which is normally used by animals and is thoroughly contaminated by the village women by washing their clothes during menstruation and by men washing their dirty hands after going for natural call. It is completely inhuman.<sup>22</sup>

Rulers' intellect, far-sightedness was the sole criteria for his citizens to become the beneficiary of his 'wisdom.' Meera Kosambi has stated the difference between the public as well as the socio-cultural domain in the Colonial India. The public sphere is the domain of political power it is inhabited by Indian as well as British men and dominated by the latter. The socio-cultural domain subsumes social customs and institutions involving the family. This domain is inhabited by men and women and dominated by

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<sup>22</sup> Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement*, op. cit. p. 15

former.<sup>23</sup> The patriarchal construct of the Indian society is governed completely on the gender difference between male and female. Bhasin has aptly explained how society at large interferes into the psyche of a person to transform him/her into a man or a woman. She says:

Each society slowly transforms a male or female into a man or a woman, into masculine and feminine, with different qualities, behaviour patterns, roles, responsibilities, rights and expectations. Unlike sex, which is biological, the gender identities of women and men are psychologically and socially- which means historically and culturally determined.<sup>24</sup>

One of the important sources to understand the power division between the man and the woman is observation. The behavioural pattern of a male and female in a family can help understand Indian society much better. These two 'individuals' one man and another woman collectively make society, but the irony of the gender relationship is that the 'patriarchs' overpower their counterpart and force them to seek 'refuge' within the prescribed demarcated 'thresholds,' believing that this is the 'best' possible arrangement for their womenfolk. Women too have obeyed and behaved as expected by the so-called creators of the societal norms and codes; going against it is considered as an obnoxious act.

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<sup>23</sup> Meera Kosambi, *Crossing Thresholds*, op. cit., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2003, 2.

In order to understand the position of woman within the social order, it is important to first perceive the construct of the society in which woman too has a very important role to play.

The term gender relations refers to the relations of power between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas, representations, including the division of labour, roles and resources between women and men, and the ascribing to them of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavioural patterns and so on. Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race. They may be seen as largely socially constructed (rather than biologically determined) and as variables over time and place.<sup>25</sup>

How man and woman see each other in relation to each other and how they see them self with respect to the opposite sex is necessary to understand the gender relations. Because, how a man would see himself with respect to woman would be different how a woman would see herself and also how they see each other in totality therefore, essential to identify it with evolution of the society. Oral tradition of the region can also be taken as a non-conventional source to visualize the socio-cultural aspect of the people. Through it the perception of the society can be grasped, which can prove helpful in evaluating the social construction.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

With the advent of the nineteenth century modern technologies and resources helped in transforming the region punching down the conventional parameters of feudalistic society. The political changes though have contributed in some way to bring certain remarkable social changes but it is important to know whether these 'changes' were benefiting the women of the society or not, and if yes, then how much? The women of the region under study need to be seen in the light of the orthodox Hadauti mindset against personal freedom and individual rights.

In one of the folk songs a girl calls herself a bird who would have to leave the nest and fly, *udd jaongi ri maa pankh lagaa r, chaar dina ki panhudi*<sup>26</sup> reflecting girls fate getting married, leaving the parental home for strangers' family. This song tells the patriarchal culture that trains the little girls that they are born to be alienated from her natal. It is expected by the Indian women to accept her new home after marriage like it was hers and the new parents like gods. The folk songs consolidate devotion of bride toward her new family: *saansu ji mahra tirth ganga ji ko, susara ji jaanda pariyag, saansu-susara ri seva karu haan ji sayeba*,<sup>27</sup> woman's in-laws are her pilgrimage and it is her duty to take care of them and respect them.

It is equally important to see how different castes and communities deal with gender relations, a broader look into various castes shall prove helpful to draw some sort of picture regarding this. In order to analyze the

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<sup>26</sup> Chandra Shekhar Bhatt, *Hadauti lok-geet*, Ajmer, Krishna Brothers, 1966, 230.

<sup>27</sup> Chandra Shekhar Bhatt, *Hadauti Ke Lok-Geet*, op. cit., 232.

cultural and social differences of various castes Marwar Census Report 1891 and published under the title of 'Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar' in 1894 became the basis of study.<sup>28</sup> And along with it the census of India report for Rajputana by A.D. Bannerman, the method of both the works are same for the obvious reasons. All the native states contributed their population related data it was an extensive researched work covering almost all the aspects of Indian states. This kind of survey was also useful for the British to analyse their governance in terms of their progress in uplifting their 'colony.' As far both the report and the census record is considered both had a very different perspective in analyzing the caste and communities of India where on the one hand the report was divided from class A to F. In the A class are the Rajputs with its sub-castes and communities, B class is all about Brahmans. C and D are about the business castes, E is about the low castes and F is about the ones who have settled from outside in India. And the census report were critical about the age old customs and emphasized that the low-out caste who were found providing some kind of space for their women which was missing the upper class of Hindus and some business communities along with the Rajputs. The report also made it clear that the Hinduization of the forest tribes and low caste is in process because of which their women too are getting into

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<sup>28</sup> Raibahadur Munshi Hardayal, *Report- Mardumshumari Rajmarwar 1891 c. Marwar Census Report 1891: Rajasthan ki jaityo Ka Itihas evam Ritirivaz*, Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash Shodh Kendra, Jodhpur, 2010, 18. To collect the data as census record this report was prepared in 1891 and was published under the title of 'Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar' in 1894. The report has been divided from class A to F. which means that in the A class is of the Rajput castes and communities. B class is all about Brahmans, C and D are about the business castes. E is about the low castes and F is about the ones who have settled from outside.

the same garb like the upper caste Hindu women. The report by Bannerman also made it clear that because of the caste and sub-caste within the Hindu pantheon there is religious hierarchy governing their decision making. Munshi Hardayal's bias toward Rajputs and Brahmins over other caste and communities is clearly noticeable. The lead has been taken by the census collection of Bannerman in compiling the Marwar census of 1891 by Munshi Hardayal but approach towards the subject has made both the readings equally interesting also making it clear how in research being objective is one of the primary requirements.

Table 1:

Distribution of 10,000 of each sex for ages above 4 by decennial periods with the multiple of ten in the centre:

Age	All Rel. M.	All Rel. F.	Hindu M.	Hindu F.	Mus. M.	Mus. F.	Jain M.	Jain F.	Anim. M.	Anim. F.	Chris. M.	Chris. F.
5-15	2,543	2,395	2,522	2,374	2,632	2,498	2,510	2,307	2,802	2,649	3,092	3,157
15-25	2,014	1,965	2,011	1,952	1,884	1,889	2,144	2,129	2,291	2,279	1,949	2,063
25-35	1,813	1,786	1,812	1,793	1,737	1,672	1,623	1,646	2,216	2,056	1,600	1,630
35-45	1,311	1,361	1,325	1,381	1,215	1,248	1,286	1,321	1,291	1,240	1,354	1,095
45-55	841	873	851	885	851	845	942	968	493	611	849	628
55 and above	691	665	610	674	647	701	631	735	237	329	392	323

[Note: All Rel. = All Religion, Mus. = Musalman, Anim. = Animistic, Chris. = Christian, M. Male and F. Female]

Source: A.D. Bannerman, *Census of India, Rajputana-I*, Vol. XXV, Lucknow, Nawal Kishore Press, 1902, 78.

Taking religions into account, the proportion of women is highest among the Jains who show an average of 1,006 women to every 1,000 men and lowest among the Christians who have a ratio of 709 females to 1,000 males. Next to the Jains come the Animists with a ratio of 935, then the Musalmans with 910, and last the Hindus with 899. For the age group below 5, the followers of all religions, except the Hindus, show a larger proportion of female children than boys. The excess is greatest among the Animists who have a ratio of 1,166 girls to 1,000 boys. Among the Hindus the proportion of female children to boys is 974. In the 5- 10 age groups the Musalmans with 893 female children have the lowest ratio. From 10 to 15 the Christians with a ratio of 509 females are lowest, and next to them come the Hindus with 781. From 15 to 20 the positions of the members of the different religions are unchanged. From 20 onwards the Jains show at each age- period, except at 55 to 60, a preponderance of females the excess being greatest at the period 60+. Among the Animists, at 20 to 25 and from 45 onwards the females exceed the males. The excess is greatest at 60+ for which period the ratio is 1,417 females to 1 000 males. The Musalmans show a higher ratio of women to men at the periods 40 to 45, and 60+. Among the Hindus the proportion of females to males is higher only at the period 60+.<sup>29</sup>

When Hardayal mentions about that the landless Rajputs or those at lower jobs had different set of rules based on their castes it seems that he demeans their practice. His basis of understanding all the caste and rituals

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<sup>29</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 73.

revolved around women sexuality. Those allowing widow re-marriage and not observing *purdah* are kept at the lowest level of caste hierarchy. The *purdah* for women and matrimonial relations are based on the status of the Rajput i.e. how much wealth in the form of land he possess. More the land, bigger the status and better for their women and further the matrimonial relations are too carried amongst the wealthy and powerful Rajputs.

Women in high class especially Rajput women have always been protected from the outside world because of the fear of getting polluted. Yet she has also been treated like a commodity which can be exchanged to settle their disputes. There are instances of a girl of one family accepted as a bride and immediately their own daughter or any other eligible girl of the family is given off as a bride to the same family.<sup>30</sup> This was also the way to calm the anger amongst the two families like the number of men killed in a family was compensated by the opponent by giving away those many girls from their family putting an end to their enmity. Petty issues were sorted by accepting the opium and bigger matters were settled by getting into the matrimonial relations. Such male determined practices portray the insensitive attitude of men toward their women in not considering them worthy enough to have their say in crucial issue such as marriage.

In the upper caste marriages usually are fixed by the men of the family of both girl and boy. Intricate customs and rituals were introduced by the higher strata complicating social relations between castes and classes. It later

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<sup>30</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 19.

turned out to be a threat for them especially for the native Rajputs of Rajasthan because the eligible grooms began marrying outside Rajasthan bringing higher *Tika* (price). It created problem for the families with girls to find them a suitable match who wanted to marry their daughters within the region. This problem was also raised in the Walerkrit Hitkarini Sabha to stop the *Tika* ceremony. Many suggestions were proposed by almost all princely states. One made by Udaipur is interesting to mention:

that there has been no custom of Tika money in last 50 years, but with the opening up of railways a large number of Rajputs living in the other parts of India came into contact with the Rajputs of this province, with the result that the outsiders began to establish their matrimonial relations with the Rajputs here. Generally, the Rajput boys out of temptation for the Tika money got engaged with the Rajput girls living in the other provinces of India, hence girls in Rajputana decreased and this resulted in the gradual progress of the system. The Tika system can be stopped only when the boys are married as far as possible in Rajputana. With a view to implement this policy, it is necessary that it should be clearly laid down in the rules that no engagement should take place before obtaining sanction from the Local Sabha. Besides the Local Sabha should try to prevent the marriage of boys in other provinces; if any Thikanedar desires to get his daughter married through the agency of the Local Sabha, the Sabha should try to find out a suitable match for her in Rajputana which may lead in putting a stop

to the Tika system. The practice of obtaining a sanction before the betrothal ceremony rather than marriage would also prevent the establishment of matrimonial alliance of Rajputs with the non-Rajputs. If any person wants to obtain a certificate for distributing Tyag etc. then it may be given to him by the Local Sabha. But, if he does not desire to do so, no punishment should be awarded to him. On the other he should be made liable to punishment if he performs the betrothal ceremony without the sanction. If anybody obtains the sanction by means of fraud or enters into matrimonial alliance with the non-Rajputs, his issues would not be regarded as his legal heirs but they will be held as "Paswans" (bastard).<sup>31</sup>

Anybody wishing to marry a girl/boy to a non-Rajput would be scared that their children will be called bastards. To overcome this fear immense courage was needed to face the despicable sanctum.

Despite constant pressure to regulate the marital life the new generation of Rajput *thikanedar* and *jagirdars* who were English educated and expected their counterparts to be equally 'educated' brought some change. The inter-state matrimonial relationships gained momentum. A small 'transformed' section within the upper strata of the society was emerging during the late nineteenth century. The apprehension between the 'tradition' and 'modern' is visible in the rituals and customs of people varying from the highest strata of the society up till the lowest section.

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<sup>31</sup> *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitakarini Sabha*, p, 23, RSAB.

A different caste of *natarayat* Rajputs evolved from relations out of *nata* marriages. Those who were unable to marry at a suitable age and considered old enough to get an unmarried woman would marry a widow, possibly a child-widow. By marrying a widow they were considered out-caste and got the name *natarayat* Rajputs. Anyone marrying a girl from this caste too was pushed into the same slot. A bachelor going for a *nata* marriage was made to marry an infant of six months. In such cases little infants grew up as widow. The girl was made to suffer and compromise for the rest of her life for no fault of her. For a community which marry off their daughters in *nata* were condemned as outcastes suffering the consequences of social ostracization. Many taboos were attached with *nata*; it had to be on Tuesday or Saturday night after everyone was asleep as it was believed that the one who sees the lady shall die in six months. As it was taken to be unnatural form of relation the *nata* couple were to ensure they reach their house at night itself avoiding other peoples' contact. After reaching home the lady had to grind the grains or removed the husk believing to unburden their *nata* on the grinding stones. In both the rituals the woman was expected to compensate for her widowhood.

The concept of *gotra* was also visible in *nata*. The upper caste condemned and demeaned same *gotra* marriages as *nata*. Even in *nata*, the *gotras* of the father and the ex-husband of the widow are avoided. Only after consummation of *nata*, the family of the girl and her ex-in-laws disassociate from each other. Among them too there were *ekvada* and *dovada* form of

marriages, that is, those Rajputs who were ready to take the daughters of the *natarayat* Rajput but did not marry their own daughters to them was *ekvada* marriage. The *ekvada natarayat* Rajputs were opposed in marrying their daughters to the *dovada natarayat* Rajputs had not hesitation in accepting their daughters.<sup>32</sup> A new distinction of high and low caste at work, *ekvada* considered them self to be superior to the *dovada natarayat* Rajputs.

In other castes like the *Gujar* community the *nata* of the women was prevalent done within the family as the younger brother marrying deceased brother's widow. Outside the family the *nata* was not encouraged. If the *nata* was to be arranged outside the family, the money was given to her in-laws and *nata* was performed from her paternal home for which some amount was given to her parents as well. Once sanctioned the *nata* was performed on the Saturdays.<sup>33</sup>

There are many communities and castes such as *Deswali Mussalman*, *Gadit*, *Kayamkhani* and *Nayak* claiming their origins from the Rajputs. All of them have something common with Rajput culture as they try to avoid the *Mussalman* from outside India in marriages. *Kayamkhanis* tie a *toran* in weddings of the Hindus or Rajputs and after the *nikah*, the rite of seven *pheres* marks the conclusion. *Nayaks* trace their origins from Rajput Chauhan, Rathore, Sisodiya, Joya, Vahlim, Khilji, Gori and Kazi; marriages takes place within their castes and communities, no divorce for the woman was possible

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<sup>32</sup>Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 42- 43.

<sup>33</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 46, 47.

and even the widows could not have *nata*, girls of the family do not have any property right and their sons too cannot be adopted.<sup>34</sup> As far as the property right of the daughter is concerned unlike main stream Muslims the women have no right over father's property and even in the event of having no sons her son could also not be adopted.

The Shrimalis are Brahmans and they don't marry in their own gotra as also they avoid such relations with their mother's gotra of five generations standing. The engagement or *sagai* happens after the parents of boy and girl decide an auspicious day, the girl's sister or brother who should be younger go to the boy's place along with an uncle and tell his elders that we now give our girl to sift through cow dung (*hum apni ladki aapke yahan gobar chugne dete hai*) and after it is finalised, distribute jaggery among their relatives. Engagement is not a final bond among Shrimalis and can be broken whenever the girl's parents want. The property is divided equally among the boys and nothing is given to the daughters and their husbands or sons, but daughters sons can be adopted by the grandfather i.e. mother's father. The women do not follow *pardah* and are independent to do their household as well as outside work. They do not eat with people outside their community. They believe to have food with others their sins are carried on to them.<sup>35</sup>

Sayyids like other Muslims marry in their grandfather's family. They too first fix the marriage and do the engagement after which the *nikah* is

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>35</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 146, 154, 156.

followed. In the property division there is right of the daughter, her husband and son. In the Nath community the women do not pierce their ears, only those wishing to follow the life of a hermit go for the piercing ceremony. But their permission to pierce is a must after which they wear men's clothes discarding women's wear. They practice *nata*.<sup>36</sup>

The Kalbeliye claim to be from the Rajput clan; they have Solanki, Pawar, Rathore and Bhati as surnames. They either beg or do masonry work. Amongst them are the Kadim Kalbeliye who are said to be the progeny of Naga i.e. son of Arjun from a Nagkanya. Since Arjun did not accept Naga as his son the latter moved to the forest and learnt the art of taming the snakes and curing people with a snake bite which he had learned from his mother. They do not marry or go in *nata* in their own caste. There is polygamy among the Kalbeliye and can keep as many wives as possible. They avoid the *khamp* of their grandfathers, both paternal and maternal, and sisters both paternal and maternal. They have their *khamps* like- Daiya, Bhati, Solanki, Vaghela, Sisodiya, Rathore, Dewra, Goyal, Pawar, Chauhan and Parihar etc<sup>37</sup>.

In the Charan community the marriage is fixed by serving a glass of opium between the family members of both the boy and the girl. It is a symbol confirming the marital alliance after which the girl's family cannot break the marriage though the boy or his family can walk out of the deal. The *Reet* money varies from Rs. 50 to 500 which if the daughter's family is well-off

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 227, 245-46.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 251.

doesn't accept. In case the betrothed boy dies the girl is married to the younger brother and not to the older one. Most of the customs and traditions of the charans are similar to the Rajputs'. The *Asuda* Charan practice polygamy while only the *Jalori* and *Sachori* charans perform *nata* because of which they are thrown out from their caste and are known as the *sove natarayat*. Women follow *pardah* like the Rajputs.<sup>38</sup>

Among the *Bhats* the marriage was fixed after some money with jaggery and coconut was given to the bride's father. Opium is served by girl's father and a cloth is given to the boy's father. *Nata* is done for which the *reet* money varying from Rs. 40 to Rs. 120 was given to girl's in-laws and 10 to 20 Rs. was taken by her parents. She had to climb the wall or jump off the fence at midnight and go as she was not permitted to leave from the main door.<sup>39</sup>

In the Kayastha community when a boy is born then there is a custom to bang the copper plate and when the girl is born then they play an instrument called *chhajala*. This is done to define that when the girl is born then it is believed that goddess *laxmi* has arrived and all the miseries shall go, and when the boy is born it means that prosperity has arrived and his arrival with the copper plates is known as *shadiyaana*. There is partial *pardah* as the women do not usually go out and when they do they have to wear another cloth over their *odhni* known as *dushala*<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Madumshumari Report*, op. cit., 340-41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 402-03.

In the Jain Osawal community the marriage of the girl used to be fixed at 14 years of age but in the *Gorwar* and *Jalore* districts the girls are kept unmarried till the age of 18-20 for the reason that some wealthy businessman might just be ready to pay high price for her even if the man was older image. *Nata* was not allowed.<sup>41</sup> The Porwal consider girls' as money making machines. On a wealthy businessman agreeing to pay for the marriage, the marriage was performed. The girls who earned Rs. 500 were called *bakri* (goat) and the one who was married with more than Rs. 500 was called *Gheta*. The birth of the girl was celebrated by Porwals while birth of the boy was undesirable. It was said that there were men who lived their entire life in heavy debt because they had the bait of a daughter whom he would marry to a wealthy man, and clear all the debt. Not that every Porwal practiced marrying off their girls for high prices. *Bhomashah* followers did not accept the *reet* money instead they provided all the material facilities to the girl and her husband as *daija*.<sup>42</sup> Among Maheshwari (Mahesari) community the marriage was fixed with giving the girl lot of jewelleryes rationalizing it her survival after she became widow: "*jo gehna na hoga to randhuvve peechhe khayegi kya*".<sup>43</sup>

The *Dholi* caste follow similar customs like the Rajputs, not allowing *nata* of the widows. And where the girl is married once then for next four generations the girl from that family is not accepted by the girl's family and four *gotras* are avoided for selecting the groom. Their women are too into

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<sup>41</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 415.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

singing but do not dance, they are considered low in caste by the barbers, washermen as also by the sweepers. It is believed that they were born from a sweeper woman and a Rajput man; their touch was avoided even by Muslim washermen, cobblers and *bambhis*.<sup>44</sup>

It is believed that *apsara* rambha was once cursed because of which she was to live on earth for a few years. The children born out of her later became the caste of dancers and singers. There are few castes which are professionally into singing and dancing and are known as *Ramjani*, *Hurkani*, *Patar* and *Bhagtan* among Hindus and *Kanchani* and *Sawant* among Muslims. *Patar* are said to be daughters of *Jagiri* who called themselves to be true Rajputs like *Gehlot*, *Pawar*, *Chauhan* and *Bhati* etc. but because of their poverty they employed their womenfolk in singing and dancing. The sons from them were called *jagiri* and girls were known as *patar*.<sup>45</sup> *Jagiri* make their living through *patars* who are basically the daughters and sisters and not the wives and marry them avoiding their own caste and even marry *gola*. The widow though is not sent in *nata* but the widower *jagiri* can bring a woman from the *gola* caste for which he pays Rs. 100 to her parents. The *jagiri* who wants to make a girl *patar* marries her at a very young age to Ganapati, the Brahmin makes her to take the *pheres* with Ganeshji after which the man who pays the highest price for her is handed over the girl. That night is celebrated with dance and music by the family. After which the woman starts her earning through *kasab*

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>45</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit. 377.

i.e. prostitution. The right on the property is equal with the brothers and sisters, the *patar* can adopt a *jagiri* and the daughter of her brother and no one else. If a widow is found to be with some other man then she is thrown out from the community or if a *patar* agrees to go with a Muslim then too she is considered to be an outcast. It is a rule that the *patar* should not go with a Mussalman even if he pays very high.<sup>46</sup>

The *Bhagat* like *jagiris* too send their women into prostitution. The young girl is made to marry a poor *bhagat* to whom already some money is given so that he may not claim his right over her. As the young maiden is not allowed into the profession she is married first; if no *bhagat* agrees for the token marriage she is married to Ganeshji like the *patars* after which she can get into the prostitution. The ones marrying the *bhagat* are not *bhagatans*; they manage their household chores. There is no *nata* for the widows. *Bhagtans* have equal share in the property and can adopt any children from within their families. They do not have problem with the Muslim men, but do not eat anything given by them. *Kanchanis* were the Muslim prostitutes, women follow *purdah*. Young girls of the family were taught singing and dancing and trained into prostitution. They too do not push a maiden into sex before entering the profession, the *kanchans* were dressed like a bride and forced to sleep with an old man of the community. The next day sweets were distributed after which she was allowed to become a prostitute.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>47</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 380.

The *Chela* caste believes to be Rathore Rajput prodigy of a *padayat* and Rajput king or a chief.<sup>48</sup> The most popular amongst the helper caste are of the *gola* or the *chakar*. Wherever there were Rajputs there were *golas* and *chakars*. Different *jagirdari thikana* denoted them with different names; at some places they were known as *daroga* some called them *khawas* some *paswans* or *chakar* or even *chela* and *wazir*. Likewise their women were also called *goli*, *dawadi*, *khal*, *saidawadi*, *manas*, *bandaran* and *darogan*. They have Chauhan, Rathore, Sankhla, Pokhran, Pawar, Kachhwaha, Solankhi, Gehlot, Sisodia, Tak, Bhati, Tanwar, Badgujar, Goyal, Gaur, Vagehla, Ida, Sodha, Asayach surnames; all the castes within the Rajputs were found in the *chakars* too.

Keeping *chakar* marked a status symbol for the Rajput chiefs. Even the smallest chief kept *gola* priding himself to be standing on the same pedestal as the high class Rajputs. They took care of the *chakar* and his family, their sons were mostly seen to be wandering uselessly in whose association even the sons of the chiefs tend to get lousy and venture into demeaning acts with the *golis*. The *padayats* and *bandaran* moved the ladder of the status by allowing wearing gold. Their sons and other male members took pride in being related to them. They elevated themselves to Rajputs and did not marry the *chakars* who were not associated with the Rajputs. The *golis* had to fulfil the desire of the chiefs and rulers and entered into relation with them; their sons were not called *gola* but their caste like solankis etc were given to them along with the lands and jagirs. The women who nursed the sons of the rulers were called

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 556.

*daiji* and the sons were called *dhabhai* who grew up amidst everyone as Rajputs.<sup>49</sup>

Status of women and weaker sections is more or less same. They have to be medium of exploitation of varying degrees by the patriarchs of the society. The emancipation issues of the upper caste women and lower caste women may vary but the struggle to attain a respectable life continues.

Upper castes have created a pitfall of hierarchy to come out from it is a challenge. It is not easy to break through this established power structure but change is visible amongst the scholars who are trying to understand the social, economical and political conditions of lower castes.

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<sup>49</sup> Munshi Hardayal, *Mardumshumari Report*, op. cit., 559.