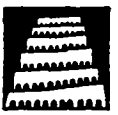
David Goodman Mandelbaum
1911 – 1987

Dimensions of Social Life

New Babylon



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Dimensions of Social Life

Essays in Honor of David G. Mandelbaum

Edited by
Paul Hockings

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Foreword

Although British and occasionally other European anthropologists had done descriptive studies in Southern Asia for many decades before India and Pakistan gained their Independence, America came late on the scene. The first American cultural anthropologist to do fieldwork in India was David G. Mandelbaum.[1] This he began in 1937, shortly after gaining a doctorate from Yale University, and his scholarly interest in the area has continued unabated ever since. In a Foreword such as this a full evaluation of his half-century career is out of the question, but some highlights are worth mentioning. An important phase of that career, during which Mandelbaum was associated with the early development of South Asian studies in his country, is remembered by Milton Singer in the few pages which follow (1-7).

Born in Chicago in 1911, Mandelbaum did his undergraduate study at nearby Northwestern University (1928-32), where his athletic abilities made him a "letter man" and won his admission to a fraternity. But then he heard some lectures by Melville J. Herskovits, and soon decided anthropology was for him. At Yale he was able to work with Edward Sapir, Leslie Spier, and Clark Wissler, all three of them major figures in the discipline at that time. Under their inspiration it was only natural that Mandelbaum's dissertation should have been on a Canadian Indian group, the Plains Cree of Saskatchewan (1936).

But then he went to India and was soon publishing papers on the tribes of Travancore and the nearby Jews of Cochin. And when health reasons (malaria) shifted him up into the Nilgiri Hills, he began a lifelong association with the Kota and Toda tribes there. One of his first studies in this region was the paper, "Culture Change among the Nilgiri Tribes" (1941a), which has been widely cited and reprinted several times.

Then World War II caused a break in his teaching and research, though it brought him back to India and Burma as an officer in the Office of Strategic Services. Lucien M. Hanks, himself a civilian employee, recalls those days, over forty years ago:

> Captain David Mandelbaum was chief of the unit of OSS in Burma where I was assigned. He may have been the one who assigned me to handle the female spies. He censored my mail *en route* home, sending love from the censor to my wife, Jane Richardson Hanks, whom he knew in anthropological circles. He had an anthropologist's appetite for the wondrous curries that the cook at the school for female spies was making. I never met a better commanding officer.

Coming back to civilian life with the military rank of Major, Mandelbaum

returned to his job as a professor at the University of Minnesota (1938-46), but soon moved to the University of California, where he is now Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, having spent four decades on the Berkeley campus. One of his first projects there was to edit the widely used *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir* (1949d, paper edition 1985). But for several years after that he was still building on his military experience, and in 1952 published another book, *Soldier Groups and Negro Soldiers*. It resulted from, first, a voyage home on a troop-ship full of Black soldiers, and secondly, his work with a research group set up by the U.S. Department of War to appraise the then controversial matter of racial desegregation in the U.S. Army. Mandelbaum's principal recommendations were in fact adopted by the military authorities to promote desegregation; no doubt they reflected a changing climate of opinion resulting from wartime experiences with Black soldiers in many fields of battle.

That book was not to be his only excursus into applied anthropology, for in his recent work on fertility in India he has also made important policy recommendations (1954e, 1973a, 1974a, 1979b). Another sort of applied anthropology reached its fruition with the publication of two volumes on teaching anthropology (1963c), of which Mandelbaum was the senior editor and a major contributor. This widely appreciated reference tool grew out of a conference series he instigated that was funded by the National Science Foundation, and it had the virtue of bringing together the distilled teaching experiences of fifty of the world's top anthropologists.

David Mandelbaum himself was already established as a major social scientist at least a decade before that conference. The nineteen-fifties were an important time in the history of American anthropology, for they witnessed a burgeoning of numbers in the profession, a serious attempt to develop an applied anthropology in the U.S. Trust Territories of the Pacific, an elaboration of the concept of civilization as a cultural type, the start of regional studies programs, and a development of the national character studies that had begun with Mead, Bateson, Benedict and others during the Second World War. In much of this Mandelbaum played a part; yet he was active during these years not only in research but on the executive board of the American Anthropological Association (1955-58), and as Chairman of his Department at Berkeley (1955-57). He was busy with Kroeber and others in planning the new Lowie Museum of Anthropology there (cf. Mandelbaum 1953c). And at the same time, as Milton Singer recalls, he was also deeply involved in the development of South Asian studies, something which up to that point in America had meant little but the occasional course in Sanskrit. Later Mandelbaum was to be appointed twice to the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO (1957-62, 1975-76). In 1976 too he was Chairman of the Anthropology Section of the American Association for the Advancement

of Science; and in 1979 he was honored with the Berkeley Citation for distinguished achievement and notable service to the University.

It is easy to document Mandelbaum's formidable output of scholarly writing – indeed, we do so here (pp. 9-20). But another side of the man is without doubt his impact on his students. Some of the former undergraduates still remember seminars in his home, or the time when he led Ravi Shankar into the classroom and the master performed on his sitar, sitting cross-legged on the top of a desk. Many of the contributors to this Festschrift have mentioned the encouragement, the solicitousness, the seriousness with which he prompted his students' research efforts and later followed their careers. Harry Nelson (one of Mandelbaum's early graduate students at Berkeley) recalls for example how

> He was an excellent chairman, sympathetic and helpful. I had a great deal of freedom in what I did, but was given advice when needed... David was that kind of chairman and that kind of person. He made time no matter how busy he was, and when I sought him out at the Museum (the old one) where he probably was hiding from students, he was never nasty about it. . .

Always a craftsman with his words, and encouraging every student to express herself or himself with the utmost clarity too, Mandelbaum is equally meticulous in the gathering and checking of his own field data. His fieldwork experience has covered the San Carlos Apache, 1933; Plains Cree, 1934-35; "Urbana", Connecticut, 1935-36; Chippewa, 1939; Burma, 1945; North India, 1963-64; South India, 1937-38, 1949-50, 1958, 1968, 1969-70, 1973, 1975-76, 1978. Few modern anthropologists have ranged more widely in their research or have been more imaginatively productive in their use of the material so gained. Mandelbaum's substantive interests include social and cultural change, applied anthropology, psychological anthropology, religion, and the teaching of the discipline. His magisterial survey, *Society in India* (1970a), pulled together several of these interests, the experiences of all of his and his students' South Asian fieldwork, and an incredibly wide range of reading. A basic textbook in the subject, it still stands as his *magnum opus*.

David Mandelbaum is a kindly man with many friends and admirers. Those who know him personally might almost have guessed that his very first article would have been on "Friendship in North America", and so it was (1936a).

At about that same period one of his friends and classmates, Edgar E. Siskin, did him the double service of finding him a job, as director of a Jewish community center near New Haven (cf. Mandelbaum 1936c), and of introducing him to Ruth Weiss, a Vassar graduate originally from Tarrytown, New York. And in 1940 Maurice Zigmond, another of his classmates who was already a rabbi before he entered Yale, officiated at the marriage of

David and Ruth at a ceremony held near New York. Decades later anthropologist Zigmond officiated at the wedding of their son too.

Of course, all of the contributors to this *Festschrift* consider themselves friends of David Mandelbaum in one way of another; some have had the added privilege of studying under him. Among his former students whose names appear in this volume are Robert T. Anderson, Alan Beals, Paul Hockings, Harry Izmirlian, Harry Nelson, John Ogbu, Bryan Pfaffenberger, and Thomas Rosin. Then there are other friends and admirers who have also written papers, including Agehananda Bharati, Louis Dumont, S.N. Eisenstadt, Lucien M. and Jane R. Hanks, Francis L.K. Hsu, Glynn Huilgol, Pauline Kolenda, Moni Nag, Manning Nash, George Rosen, A.M. Shah, Milton Singer, M.N. Srinivas, Sylvia Vatuk, and the late M.S.A. Rao. Among three smaller groups of contributors are those colleagues now at the University of California, Berkeley, namely Gerald Berreman, Murray Emeneau, George Hart, John Ogbu and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (the latter two former students). Then there are his close co-workers in the rather specialized field of Nilgiri studies: Nurit Bird-David, M.B. Emeneau, Paul Hockings, William Noble, and Anthony Walker. And finally Emeneau might be mentioned again, along with Edgar Siskin and Maurice Zigmond, as fellow students of Mandelbaum during their days together at Yale, 1932-36.

All thirty-three of us have benefited in diverse ways from our association with David Mandelbuam, and all join wholeheartedly in felicitating him on what happens to be the half-centenary of his first published contributions to the discipline of anthropology, which he obviously loves.

P.H.

Notes

1. A word of explanation: although I have stated (and he agrees) that Mandelbaum was the first trained *cultural* anthropologist from the U.S.A. to do fieldwork there, it would be churlish to omit mention of several predecessors. Two American men and a woman who went to India as Christian missionaries have left their mark on anthropology: one was Wilber T. Elmore, whose excellent study *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism* (1915) earned him the Ph.D. degree of the University of Nebraska. Later the Wisers, William and Charlotte, produced two much-quoted studies, *The Hindu Jajmani System* (1936) and *Behind Mud Walls* (1930; expanded 1963 edition with a new Foreword by David G. Mandelbaum). Also beginning in the year 1935, and continuing still, Murray Emeneau, a Canadian by birth, has done unparalleled work in Indian ethnolinguistics and comparative linguistics (see this volume, pp. 263-273).

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David Mandelbaum and the Rise of South Asian Studies: A Reminiscence

Milton B. Singer

The period of my most intensive and continuous professional association with David Mandelbaum came during the years 1954 through 1958, when I was collaborating with Robert Redfield on his Ford Foundation-supported project in the comparison of civilizations. In Berkeley during the winter of 1954 and the winter and summer of 1956, in Chicago during briefer periods in 1954 and 1957, at the Behavioral Sciences Center in Stanford, during the year 1957-58, Mandelbaum and I were in almost daily contact and conversation. The main subject of our conversations was usually India and Indian civilization. After about two years (1951-53) of exploring general methods for comparing civilizations, as well as some preliminary studies of Chinese and Islamic civilizations, with the help of John Fairbank, Arthur Wright, and Gustav von Grünebaum, Robert Redfield decided to focus his project on Indian civilization. In order to prepare myself for a trip to India in 1954-55, I attended classes at the South Asia Regional Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania during the fall of 1953, and then at the University of California, Berkeley, during the winter of 1954. David Mandelbaum's course on Peoples of India at Berkeley was a useful complement to Norman Brown's indological lectures at Pennsylvania and Stella Kramrisch's slide-illustrated lectures there on Indian art. Anthropological approaches and interpretations were stressed in Mandelbaum's course, although he also called attention to classic traveller's accounts such as the Abbé Dubois' *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (1906).

I remember speaking to Mandelbaum's research seminar about M.N. Srinivas' Coorg monograph (1952). I had begun to read the Srinivas book in Philadelphia, but it did not come alive until Mandelbaum gave me a copy of the book and an opportunity to read it carefully. I think that it was at this time that I first saw how Srinivas' conceptions of "Sanskritic Hinduism" and "Sanskritization" could be linked to Redfield's conception of a civilization as a historic structure of little and great cultural traditions, a perception that proved fruitful in my Madras studies.

Not only David Mandelbaum's formal lectures and classes about India but also the informal discussions outside of class with him and the many scholars to whom he introduced me were a constant source of stimulation

and information. Berkeley in 1954 and especially in the winter of 1956, when, through Mandelbaum's sponsorship, I returned as a Senior Research Anthropologist at the Institute of East Asiatic Studies, was a booming center for South Asianists. Robert Park and Irene Tinker (who were organizing a major conference on Political Leadership), Joan Bondurant, Margaret Fisher, John Gumperz, McKim Marriott, Murray B. Emeneau, Stanley and Ruth Freed, Alan Beals, were some of the people whom we met at that time. Their acessibility and the excellent library and bibliographic services made our stay in Berkeley very productive and pleasant. The presence too of Alfred and Theodora Kroeber, and Reinhard and Jane Bendix, added a mellow and friendly flavor to our experiences of Berkeley.

When we returned to Chicago for the spring quarter of 1954, I had an opportunity to extend my knowledge of India by listening to a group of anthropologists discuss their respective village studies, as possible modes of entry to a study of Indian civilization. The papers of this seminar were later edited by McKim Marriott and published in book form as *Village India: Studies in the Little Community* (1955). David Mandelbaum spoke to the seminar about his interpretation of the Kota world and their world view. In fact, he and McKim Marriott helped me plan the seminar while I was still in Berkeley. Mandelbaum and Gitel Steed, also a participant in the Indian Village Seminar, contributed to a meeting in Chicago of India specialists in 1954 on needs and priorities in Indian studies. W. Norman Brown, Robert Crane, Chadbourne Gilpatrick of the Rockefeller Foundation, Daniel Ingalls, S.M. Katre from Deccan College in Poona, Richard Park, Gitel Steed and Phillips Talbot attended this meeting along with Robert Redfield and me. One of the practical by-products of this meeting was a recommendation urged by Park that an Association for South Asian Studies be formed within the framework of what was then the Far Eastern Association.

Another important event which occurred in the Spring of 1954 in Chicago was a conference on cities organized by Professor Bert Hoselitz, the economist. When Hoselitz invited me to contribute a paper to the conference, I suggested that Redfield and I do a joint paper on "The Cultural Role of Cities", since the other invited papers emphasized demographic, economic, and sociological dimensions of urbanization. The suggestion was accepted by Hoselitz and Redfield. While I was still in Philadelphia in the Fall of 1953, Redfield sent me a first draft of the paper's kernel, the sections on "types of cities" and "the city and folk society". These sections included Redfield's typology of cities and his important distinction between the "orthogenetic" and "heterogenetic" transformation of cities. Drawing on Redfield's book *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (1953), I expanded the paper to include a discussion of primary and secondary urbanization, their consequences for ethos, world view and personality, and the idea of progress. My

recently acquired knowledge of Indian civilization was deployed to illustrate several of Redfield's abstract formulations. Robert Redfield then polished this expanded second draft into a third and final draft, which was presented to the Chicago conference in May of 1954 for discussion and comment by Gustav von Grünebaum, Chauncy Harris, John Wilson and others.

That 1954 Chicago meeting on the needs and priorities for Indian studies laid the groundwork for a closely related meeting in Poona in the Fall of 1954 at the Deccan Postgraduate College. At the invitation of Dr. S.M. Katre, Norman Brown and I co-chaired this meeting, which was attended by a small group of distinguished Indian scholars, as well as by some American specialists (for a summary of the discussions and the names of participants, see Katre 1955). My meeting in Poona with Dr. V. Raghavan, the distinguished Sanskritist of the University of Madras, led to an initial visit to Madras City in December of 1954, and to a return in 1955, 1960-61, and 1964, to pursue my research on the problem of what happened to the great tradition of Sanskritic Hinduism under conditions of modern urbanization and industrialization.

I have already referred to my presence in Berkeley during the Winter of 1956 under the auspices of the Institute for East Asiatic Studies. On that occasion I participated in David Mandelbaum's South Asia research Seminar, which met at his home, to hear and discuss reports of current research. I reported on the Redfield project and my Madras observations along the lines published in my initial field report ("The Cultural Pattern of Indian Civilization", 1955), and received many helpful suggestions from Mandelbaum and other members of the seminar. The discussions, along with my archival research in the Berkeley library, enabled me to finish collecting the documentation I needed to begin analyzing and drafting the full report of my 1954-55 visit to Madras. I did not have an opportunity to finish the analysis and writing of that report until 1957-58, when beginning in the summer of 1957 I became a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford. David Mandelbaum, who also became a Fellow there in 1957-58, had suggested that I might submit the complete Madras study to the University of California Press. This plan was forestalled when Thomas A. Sebeok, then editor of *The Journal of American Folklore*, invited me to edit a special issue of the *Journal* on India. The opportunity to publish in one issue of the *Journal*, and then in a single book, most of the articles I had collected for the Redfield project seemed a more urgent obligation than to publish my monograph on Madras, about half of which I included in the *Traditional India* volume (1958, 1959) and all of which was eventually included in *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* ([1972] 1980).

In 1957-58 the Behavioral Sciences Center was still young and experimental. Under the direction of Ralph Tyler, its routines were relaxed and per-

missive. About fifty fellows a year were selected to come for a period of nine to twelve months, representing most of the social science disciplines and several of the humanities. They were expected to work on their own projects in their individual studies on the Center grounds, but there were no punch clocks and no monitoring of a fellow's activities. In the preceding year one shy fellow was said to have done his serious thinking while perched in a tree. Lunch was served daily at the Center and, weather permitting, was eaten out of doors. Coffee breaks, sherry hours, and evening lectures helped to relax the daily routine. A staff of secretaries and one or two statisticians were available to help the Fellows design, type and reproduce their "output". At the mock graduation which ended the 1957-58 year, an award was given for the largest number of pages produced by a fellow during the year. Kenneth Burke and Talcott Parsons tied for first place, an honor marked by an equal number of "hash-marks" on the sleeves of their graduating sweatshirts, where there were also marks for athletics, etc.

Since the Fellows lived within a few miles' radius of the Center, in Stanford, Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills and other suburbs, there was also a fair amount of social visiting and mutual entertaining, especially at the beginning of the year when the image of one big happy family prevailed. This practice gradually settled into a pattern of seeing a few friends regularly and the rest of the Fellows rarely or not at all.

Because the process of selecting Fellows aimed to group those in any given year in clusters of converging or overlapping interests, such groups were expected to organize seminars and workshops on problems of special interest to their work. Outside specialists would also be occasionally invited to participate in these seminars, especially if their financing was nominal or could be arranged from outside sources. These seminars were usually open to all Fellows in residence.

David Mandelbaum and I collaborated in 1957-58 on organizing and co-chairing a seminar on the comparative study of civilizations. It met for about two hours twice a week in the late afternoons through February and March of 1958, to discuss papers circulated in advance of each meeting. The subject matter and format of the seminar was patterned after the Comparison of Cultures seminars which Robert Redfield and I had offered at least once a year since 1951 at Chicago. In fact, Redfield and several other participants in the Chicago seminars or in Redfield's Comparative Civilizations project also participated in the Center seminar. Redfield opened the seminar with a paper and discussion of "Civilizations as things thought about: anthropological approaches" in two sessions. Alfred Kroeber, who had come from Berkeley with his wife Theodora for the duration of the seminars, followed Redfield with a discussion of two papers, "The Role of Style in Comparative Civilizations" and "History and Anthropology in the Study of Civilizations".

The Swedish scoiologist, Boerje Hanssen, who was a Center Fellow, took two sessions to discuss "Peasantry and Gentry in Sweden". Two other regular Center Fellows presented papers; Ethel Albert spoke on "the World-view and complex Value-system of Urundi, Africa", and Charles Wagley on "Values and Ideal Patterns in Brazilian Family Life". Arthur Wright, who was then teaching at Stanford, prepared a paper and led a discussion on "The Study of Chinese Civilization". He was followed by the Indian geographer and anthropologist, Nirmal Kumar Bose on "East and West in Bengal". The last of the formal papers was presented and discussed by Gustav von Grünebaum on "The Analysis of Islamic Civilization (and Cultural Anthropology)".

While there was general discussion of issues at each session by Joseph Ben David, Crane Brinton, Louis Gottschalk, Ward Goodenough, Dell Hymes, Talcott Parsons, John Tukey and other participating Fellows, two final meetings of the seminar were set aside for an analysis of the preceding discussions. On March 25 Kroeber brought for discussion a concise statement on "Holism and World View" in which he formulated some relations between holistic conceptions of "world view," "value system", "ideal pattern", and "self-image" suggested by the preceding discussions. Redfield, who had already returned to Chicago by then, responded almost by return mail when he received Kroeber's statement with an expression of pleasure and partial agreement; (see Kroeber 1963; Singer 1976)

In the last session of the seminar on March 27, David Mandelbaum and I each attempted to summarize the results of the seminar and raised some questions about unresolved issues. One unresolved issue mentioned by Mandelbaum was the validity of a holistic approach to a comparative study of civilizations. He said that "in the privileged communication of the coffee hour" some scepticism was expressed about trying to study "the great amorphous hazy entities called civilizations" before learning about the parts in a piece-meal procedure. Mandelbaum defended the holistic and comparative approach by pointing out that it may well give us a better way of looking at the parts, and also that it gave him new questions to ask about his own studies. He was at the time just beginning his monumental book on Indian society (1970). Mandelbaum's defense of a comparative, holistic study of civilizations was vigorously supported by Talcott Parsons and Alfred Kroeber, among others. The participation of Kroeber and Parsons in this seminar, and their conversations at the Center, led, I believe, to their joint article on the complementarity of the concept of culture and society (Kroeber and Parsons 1958).

In spite of the originality, distinction and high quality of the seminar papers and discussions, which were taken down and typed, efforts to arrange their publication as a symposium were unsuccessful. One university press, after considerable indecision, turned down the project on the grounds that

symposium volumes were not generally profitable publication ventures. Eventually all the papers were published, either as journal articles or in collections of the author's works. Yet the seminar as a whole was different from and greater than the sum of the individual parts. Tracking down the individual papers in scattered journals and books cannot recover the dramatic confrontations and comparisons of different civilizations within a forum of different disciplines seeking to talk to one another. The Redfield project indeed aimed to break down the barriers of language and discipline to a dialogue of civilizations. Fortunately, the anti-holistic scepticism of the coffee hour did not prevent the publication of other project experiments in a conversation of cultures.

The comparative civilizations seminar was not the only occasion on which Mandelbaum and I met at the Center. We also shared an interest in the relations of anthropology and psychology in American Studies, and participated in seminars and discussions dealing with this subject. I believe David was working on the question of sampling in national character studies at the time. I discussed with him, with Kroeber, and with John Tukey some aspects of this problem while I was writing the long paper on "Culture and Personality Theory and Research" (Singer 1961).

After 1957-58, Mandelbaum and I met a number of times in Berkeley, Chicago, and Delhi and other places. Helen and I have remained friendly with Ruth and David over the years. Yet our relationship has never again achieved the creative intensity of those magical years just before and after my first trip to India, and during the 1957-58 seminars at the Behavioral Sciences Center.

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David G. Mandelbaum: Fifty Years of Scholarship, 1936–1986

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I

Family, Kinship and Personhood

Authority, Power and Autonomy in the Life Cycle of the North Indian Woman

Sylvia J. Vatuk

Within the past decade there has been a spate of scholarship dealing with social roles and the social status of women in various cultures around the world; like colleagues working elsewhere, anthropologists and other social scientists in the South Asia field have recently begun in considerable numbers to try to define, analyze, and explain the complexities of the female condition in the societies of the Indian subcontinent. A review of cross-cultural literature, as well as of that dealing specifically with South Asia, reveals that a leading concern of scholars has been to document and account for what is very widely agreed to be the "domination" or "dominance" of men over women in most human societies.[1] This concern is most often phrased in terms of the "status" of women within a particular society or, comparatively, within a selected set of societies or types of societies. While some individual scholars, to be sure, approach the problem of defining the term "status" in a commendably sophisticated manner, there is a preponderant tendency in the literature to treat it as a unitary construct. Furthermore there is a tendency to interpret "the status of women" in hierarchical and relative terms. So, for example, women in a given society are described as having a "high" status or a "low" status relative to men in that society. Or they are said to rank "high" or "low" relative to women in some other society with which their own is being compared. In writing about agrarian or peasant societies – particularly those with a patrilineal ideology of descent and patrilocal residence as in China, the Middle East and South Asia – it is part of the received wisdom that women's "status" is inferior to that of men of their own societies, and is also low relative to that of women in most other "types" of societies, particularly those of the industrialized West.[2] The task for the social scientist thus becomes one of accounting for this assymetry in gender status, whether in terms of economic or production factors, symbolic constructs peculiar to the culture, or other factors.

One corrective to this kind of over-simplified model of women's position in society is provided by those scholars who have attempted to separate out different spheres of social life – such as the familiar distinction between public and domestic domains – in which women play different kinds of roles, such that their "status" may be higher in one than in another (see

Rosaldo 1974; Sanday 1974, for example). Other approaches have used a distinction between structural and symbolic status, or have sought evidence for the exercise of covert (ritual and/or secular) power by women that obviates the consequences of the overt, formal system of male dominance (e.g. Friedl 1967; Rogers 1975; Wadley 1980). Finally, some attempts have been made to disaggregate the notion of social "status" into some of its component elements, recognizing, as Rosaldo has expressed it, "that women's status is itself not one but many things, that various measures of women's place do not appear to correlate among themselves, and... that few of them appear to be consistently related to an isolable 'cause'" (1980: 401).[3]

In this connection Lamphere has suggested distinguishing, in the first instance, between the exercise of authority and power, using the classical Weberian definitions of these concepts with some modification (1974: 99; see also Weber 1947). To this I would add a third component of status – that of personal autonomy: the ability to determine one's own activities and actions, free of the control (by virtue of either legitimate authority or power) of another person. In the same article, Lamphere makes another pertinent point on the usefulness of a dynamic, processual approach, in which one can show how "any particular woman's relationship to the allocation of power and authority changes as she grows older and her children mature" (1974: 99); the model here being the work of Goody and others on the developmental cycle of the family (Goody 1958). The notion that a woman's social position – both within the domestic domain itself and within the wider context of society at large – changes over the course of her life, in a way that is broadly patterned for all women in a given society, is not of course a novel one. With respect to the South Asian area, most ethnographic works provide documentation of this in their descriptions of the typical content of female family roles – as daughter, sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, or as child, adolescent, young woman, matron, old woman.[4] *À propos* this Festschrift volume, it may be especially appropriate to mention David Mandelbaum's contribution to bringing together and summarizing in a particularly insightful way much of the relevant literature on the changing roles of women at different phases of life cycle in his book, *Society in India: Continuity and Change* (1970: 82-94). What I propose to do here is simply to examine this well-known process in a systematic way and with special reference to the three dimensions or variables of women's "status" mentioned above, namely her ability to exercise, at different points in her life course, power and authority over others and personal autonomy where her own activities are concerned. And rather than attempt to generalize for South Asia as a whole – or even for a particular region of the subcontinent – I will limit myself to a specific caste community, namely the women of Raya caste in a formerly agricultural but now fully urbanized

village within the boundaries of metropolitan Delhi. I have described this community and its women in some detail in earlier publications (Vatuk 1975a, 1982a, and 1982b).[5] It should be noted that there is one rather serious methodological difficulty in any attempt to reconstruct a "typical" life course from ethnographic evidence gathered over a short span of time in a society undergoing rapid social change. Inasmuch as the community of Rayapur has undergone – and is still undergoing – dramatic alterations in terms of economic basis, social interrelationships, and style of life during the lifetime of the oldest women in the village, what emerges from a comparison of women at different stages in the developmental cycle in the years 1974-76 is not a Raya woman's "life cycle" that can be counted on to repeat itself in the same form generation after generation. Instead one has an assemblage of distinct points on a series of very different life trajectories. These commenced at different times in the past eighty years of Indian history: what the young married woman in Rayapur experienced in 1975 in the milieu of her conjugal extended family is not precisely what her mother-in-law experienced twenty to twenty-five years before when she occupied a similar structural position in her husband's family home. Nor will old age hold for this younger woman the identical problems that face her mother-in-law today. Notwithstanding these facts it appears to me that the cultural continuity within this community, even given a great deal of social change, is sufficiently strong to make the over-all *pattern* of the waxing and waning of power, authority and autonomy that I have derived through a comparative methodology broadly valid for women of all age cohorts, even though the specific conditions and issues within and over which they are exercised may differ for each cohort as they reach the respective stages of the life course.

Throughout the discussion I will try to refer specifically to the cultural context within which power, autonomy and authority are actually exercised, or are attempted to be exercised, by the women concerned. That is, I will relate these rather abstract concepts to real substantive issues that have meaning and relevance for Rayapur women and which arise out of the circumstances and activities of their daily lives. Therefore, for example, I will not discuss the Raya woman's lack of freedom to seek employment outside the home, since the idea of doing so has never entered the minds of most of these women, and to those to whom it may have occurred it has not yet become a realistic or indeed a desirable option for them to pursue. On the other hand, the seemingly less significant question of whether one may go to a movie of an evening with one's husband is a live issue for many young married women, and for that reason it has a valid place in a discussion of the dynamics of day-to-day decision-making in the Indian joint family household.

Childhood and Adolescence

A girl child is under the authority of all the senior members of the household – she has authority only over younger siblings in the strict age-based "pecking order" of children, but even the latter if male may turn the tables on her as she grows into adolescence. She must heed not only her parents, uncles and aunts and grandparents but also her older siblings, particularly brothers. However, her daily activities are most directly controlled by her mother and paternal grandmother – if the latter is living. Even if her parents have separated from the extended family for purposes of food preparation and budgets, the grandmother will remain an important force for moral guidance, since in this community very few couples have left the family premises even after household partition. These women direct a girl's domestic chores, set standards for her dress and grooming, and establish limits on her movements outside the home and on the kinds of activities she is permitted to engage in. In respect to more important issues, such as whether she shall remain in school after the elementary grades, her father and other senior men of the family will take a more direct role and will have the final word, regardless of her mother's views.

The issue of mobility outside the home is a live one in most families with young girls, although it is not necessarily one on which there is open conflict or confrontation between the generations. Young girls usually accept as legitimate the authority of their elders to restrict their freedom of movement. They may even be heard to concede the wisdom of curtailing their mobility in the interests of protection from unwholesome influences, temptations and dangers. However, most young girls desire somewhat more freedom to explore the world beyond the walls of their home and community than they are permitted by their parents to have, and they tend to be somewhat more confident of their own ability to handle the perceived risks than are their mothers, fathers, and grandparents.

A girl up to the age of puberty is generally fairly free to move around her immediate neighborhood, subject to the increasing domestic workload imposed by her mother and the obligation to care for younger brothers and sisters. But after she reaches puberty greater pressure is placed upon her to observe strict standards of modesty in dress and comportment, and her activities are subject to careful surveillance. While she may still visit female friends and relatives in the vicinity from time to time, permission must be sought for this on each occasion and too frequent "gadding about" is discouraged strongly. If she wishes to socialize with her peers she must find some valid reason or "work" to rationalize the necessity to go to another's home. A girl's selection of friends is carefully screened by her mother and other older members of the family, including her brothers, and any of these

may legitimately forbid her to spend time with girls of whom they do not, for any reason, approve. To visit male friends – or even to have male friends at all – is strictly forbidden. Even heterosexual friendships within the kinship circle, if the young people involved stand in a marriageable relation to one another, are carefully monitored, and opportunities for boys and girls to be alone together in the home even for brief periods are prevented from occurring whenever possible.

A girl must seek special permission to leave the neighborhood: such decisions are often referred to the father or other senior man of the family by her mother. She may wish, for example, to go shopping with her girl friends or attend a movie, accept an invitation to a birthday party or the wedding of a schoolmate or participate in a school outing or other function. In any case a girl, up to the time of her marriage (nowadays usually between the ages of 18 and 24), may never go beyond the boundaries of Rayapur unaccompanied, whether by an older woman, a group of girl friends, or a brother or male cousin. If she attends college it may be necessary for her to go and return alone, but usually there are other students in the neighborhood and parents see that they travel together. It is insisted that college girls return home immediately after their classes end each day, although boys typically do not do so.

Another sphere in which family authority is explicitly exercised over an unmarried girl is in the matter of her education. Many girls have no particular desire to continue their education beyond that decreed for them by their parents. But it is not uncommon for a girl to wish to study further – or to enter a field of study other than that which her parents consider suitable – and be prevented from doing so by senior members of her family. The issue often leads to protracted discussions among members of a family. Grandparents are particularly likely to oppose higher education for a girl – regarding it either as a waste of resources, a possibly bad moral influence, a distraction from the learning of domestic skills, or a detriment to her marriage chances. Unless some other family member with considerable influence is willing to support her against the older generation, she has little chance of success in pursuing her desired goals.

The decision to stop a girl's education is usually related to plans for her marriage. A girl who is too well educated will have a difficult time finding a suitable mate, for it is felt that the husband should always be better qualified educationally than his wife. The additional period of study may also make her less eligible for marriage because of her age – as a husband ought to be older than his wife too. Furthermore, it is thought that an educated girl will find it more difficult to adjust to the confined life of a young daughter-in-law in a typical Raya joint household. Whatever the specific reasons, this is an area in which a young woman is generally unable to exercise personal

autonomy. She must submit to the authority of those senior to her in the family, regardless of her own wishes.

Several scholars who have viewed the issue of women's status cross-culturally have focussed on the matter of choice of mate as diagnostic of the degree of male dominance in a society. Among Rayas, neither young men nor young women normally select their own spouse. All marriages are by parental arrangement, and it is only very rarely that personal choice of a life partner even becomes an issue so far as young people are concerned. It is also very rare for a young woman to wish to remain unmarried. However, sometimes a girl wishes to delay marriage beyond the time that her family has planned for it. This is usually because, as I have explained above, she wishes to continue her studies, but other reasons may also be involved.

While a young woman's marriage is invariably arranged by others, this is not to say that she has no influence or input in the choice of a husband. Discussion concerning her impending marriage, the search for a mate, and the negotiation process goes on in the family in the presence of the young woman, and although she is not expected to take an active role – indeed, she is expected to feign total disinterest and embarrassment if the subject is broached directly – most girls find ways of making known their views on the qualifications they consider desirable and on the relative merits of specific candidates as they are proposed. In most families of this caste at the time of my field research girls were not "shown" to potential grooms and therefore did not have the opportunity to see candidates for their hands personally. However, they were often able to learn a good deal about the men being considered through family members and other relatives. Such information is more readily available within the kinship network than it is in many north Indian castes, because the Rayas are few in number and most marriages link persons who are already related affinally in some way or who belong to villages in which relatives of the prospective partners live. If a young woman has very strong negative feelings about a particular potential mate, and if her reasons do not appear totally frivolous to her elders, they may be heeded. Thus although she cannot – and does not normally wish to – select her own mate from among young men known to her, a young woman usually has some limited power – at least in a negative manner – to influence the choice made for her by her elders.

In this, as in other areas of life where a young woman's wishes may not accord with the intentions of those who have authority over her, the chief avenues through which she can hope to achieve her own ends are by tactful persuasion of those with whom she has a close and affectionate relationship on the one hand, and by passively displaying unhappiness – by refusal to speak or eat, moping, crying, etc. – on the other. Through observation of other female family members and through direct instruction as well, she

learns very early to submit quietly and passively to authority, to respond to provocation with silence, and to avoid direct confrontation with authority figures. She is told that a woman can gain the highest satisfaction by suppressing her own desires in the interests of others'. At the same time she is told that if she wishes to gain her own way the only possibly effective means are indirect ones.

Of course, women are not the only persons to use such strategies in this society. Men also utilize indirect tactics in response to unwelcome impositions by authority figures. But because women are for a greater part of their lives in a position of structural subservience to many of the significant others in their family milieu, it is to be expected that they should employ them more regularly, and as a principal rather than an occasional means of exerting influence.

If one listens to the conversation of unmarried girls in Rayapur one is struck by the way their language is liberally sprinkled with phrases that reveal their awareness of being continually subject to the wishes and decisions of others. There seem to be few areas in which they perceive themselves as autonomous actors. Verbs like "allow", "permit", "deny", "refuse", and expressions in which the speaker is the object of another's action are extremely common when they are discussing their activities, interests, pleasures and problems. There is in Hindi a characteristic causative verb construction, which applies to most active verbs and carries the sense of "to cause to..." or "to make [someone]..." (thus *karnā*, "to do", *karānā*, "to make [someone] do"). Constructions of this kind are prolific in the discourse of late adolescent women in this community.

I am not trying to suggest a pervasive aura of unhappiness and discontent among young Rayapur girls but – quite the contrary – simply to show that the dominant self-perception shared by them is of persons who are unable to act of their own volition in most arenas of their lives. This perception is probably greatly intensified in the present period because so many of the issues that arise for the young woman with respect to her personal autonomy are "modern" ones which cannot easily be dealt with by parents and other elders who have no experience to draw on from their own youth.

The Young Married Woman

Despite the young unmarried woman's lack of autonomy, young married women uniformly regard the period before their marriage as a time of relative freedom in comparison with their present situation. They speak of how "free" – *āzād* – they had been in their natal homes, in contrast to the "bondage" – *bandhan* – of married life. Before children are born the young

married woman has authority over no one in her new family; any power she might exercise over her husband or others must wait until she has consolidated her relationships within the household over a period of years. And as for personal autonomy, she has less than in her parents' home, or so at least she feels, since the absence of autonomy is not accompanied by the atmosphere of tender loving concern and care that surrounded her previously and provided the very rationale for the restrictions imposed on her.

A number of recurring issues related to autonomy arise for newly married women in Rayapur. First, they must conform to stricter standards of modesty in their conjugal home and village or neighborhood. They must become accustomed to a new form of dress and to the observance of *pardā* – veiling the face before elder males within the home and outside.[6] Furthermore, they must become accustomed to being confined to the home at nearly all times (except when leaving the neighborhood for some legitimate purpose such as a visit to the natal home). There is some variability from one family to another in the strictness with which this seclusion is enforced and the length of time it continues, but for all young married women it is a part at least of the early experiences of married life.

Although it is accepted that a young married woman should spend frequent and lengthy periods of time with her parents during the first few years of marriage, her husband and his parents have the acknowledged right to control the timing and duration of such visits and even to refuse them altogether if it is inconvenient for them to allow her to be absent, or if they are for any reason on bad terms with her family. A woman at this stage of life is not free to go home for a visit whenever she wishes. Even if her in-laws do not bar such a visit she must always wait to be "invited" home by her parents or brothers and be "called for" by some man of her family who will accompany her on the journey. Then she must await her in-laws' decision (and that of her husband) whether to "send" her with this kinsman or not. Later she must wait until her husband or other male relative of his "comes to bring her back". She may under no circumstances simply return to her conjugal home on her own initiative, even if properly accompanied, after such a visit. Thus one way in which a man can initiate an effective marital separation is by simply neglecting to go and fetch his wife from her natal home. On the other hand, if she should leave for a visit to her parents without the explicit permission of her in-laws, and unaccompanied by a brother or cousin, her act is interpreted as "running away" from her husband. If she is at her natal home and wishes to remain for a longer time she may be able to persuade her father to "refuse to send her" with her husband when he calls for her. But she cannot directly refuse to return or even express reluctance without endangering the marriage and her relationship with her parents-in-law.

The continuance of friendships with girls she was close to before marriage

is another issue that often confronts young married women with opposition from husband and/or in-laws. Whatever the reasons, these people often object to a wife (or daughter-in-law) maintaining contact with close female friends – and even if they raise no specific objections to such friendships their over-all authority to restrict her freedom of movement makes it difficult for her to find the opportunity to meet and socialize with girls she knew before marriage. The same applies to making new friends within her conjugal village or neighborhood: unless these live in the same house, or themselves are free to move about the village, the newly married woman will have no opportunity to come into contact with peers of her own age and status.

Even with respect to her relationship with her husband a young married woman is subject to considerable control by senior members of the household. Her husband generally spends little time at home, and even when he is there the two cannot talk to one another in the presence of older members of the family. They can be alone together only at night, in their own bedroom. In most families they are rarely allowed to go out together of an evening or on Sunday when the husband is off work. Most young women are very eager to enjoy outings with their husbands – to see a film or to visit friends or colleagues of his in another part of the city. Men also enjoy such excursions but they are not usually as concerned about the issue as are their wives, since they themselves are not confined to the home at any time. They are however usually willing to please their wives by taking them out, as long as it is agreeable to their parents. The latter, unless they are very "modern", see no "need" for a young couple to go out alone together – it never having been customary in their society for a man and wife to spend leisure time together. Parents do not have the recognized authority to curb an adult married son's freedom to go where he pleases, nor even to insist that he spend any of his time at home. Even unmarried young men are relatively independent of parental control in such matters. But a man's mother and father are considered fully justified in exerting their authority over his wife in such a way as to control their spending leisure time together in this way.

The matter of continuing their education is one which concerns many young married women in Rayapur. Since many consider their education to have been interrupted by marriage and because, despite the pressure of work in a joint household, some feel bored and idle for much of the day, they often express the desire to be allowed to study further after marriage. In most cases they do not wish to actually attend school or college (which would normally be out of the question in any case), but rather to study "privately" for a high school, intermediate, or college diploma. Leaving aside the question of how many of these women would actually be able to complete a program of study in this way, given the amount of free time at their disposal and the

entire milieu in which they would have to cope with its demands, it is only very rarely that permission is given to a woman even to make the attempt. The primary objections to young married women studying revolve, as one would expect, around the belief that time given to studies would interfere with their proper performance of household duties.

With respect to all of these issues, the position of a young woman is seen by her not so much as one of submission to the domination of men but rather of subjection to the authority of other women, pre-eminently the mother-in-law. The problem of women's lack of power is typically conceived of – by scholars and laymen alike – in terms of male/female relations. It is commonly taken for granted that if women do not have power or personal autonomy in some sphere of life, this is because men have it instead. But in the context of Rayapur it is clear that the problem of authority relations in the family is as much a matter of woman/woman interactions as it is of the relationship of women and men. The oft-quoted statement from Manu about women being properly under the life-long control of men – first father, then husband, then son – is one way of phrasing the position of women with respect to the autonomy dimension of their social status. But Rayapur women do not necessarily – or only – perceive of their own position in terms of this model. They do not see the constraints on their activities as imposed specifically by men, probably because during most of their life control is administered by other women acting either on their own initiative or at the behest of men or of other women who in turn hold positions of authority over them. It is interesting in this connection to note a feminine version of Manu's injunction, volunteered by several of my Raya informants, that sees a woman's life in terms of three successive phases of subordination to other *women*, namely *mā kā rāj*, *sās kā rāj*, and *bahū kā rāj* ("rule of the mother, the mother-in-law, and the daughter-in-law").

When young married women speak of their husbands' role in the setting of limitations on their activities, they are likely to portray their mates as sympathetic potential allies, who are themselves unable to act independently because they too must submit to the authority of the elders. These men are thus often seen by their wives as being compelled to enforce their parents' standards upon their wives, or as doing so out of proper filial respect, despite their own personal preferences. There is probably some truth in this view. On the other hand, it is quite clear that in most matters adult sons are not seen to submit unquestioningly to their parents' wishes, and there is often considerable dissension in these families over financial matters, lifestyle and personal habits, among other things. While direct confrontations between father and son over such issues are not common, few sons are so respectful of their mother that they will refrain from arguing a point where their own wishes are at stake. And even in the absence of confrontation the expedient

of simply doing as they please, regardless of parental disapproval, is freely employed. It seems clear that it is quite convenient for a young man to allow his parents to set standards for his wife's conduct, and to bear the responsibility for constraining and controlling her activities. This is particularly so during the early years of marriage when the couple is just beginning to establish a relationship and when such issues, if they had to be worked out between the two of them alone, could create unpleasant marital tensions. Whether or not a man shares completely his parents' views on the proper behavior of a new bride of the house, it is doubtless wise for him to refrain from involving himself directly in the matter, and to play with her the role of understanding ally or – alternatively – if he wishes to assume a more traditional attitude, defender of his parents' right to assert their authority. Furthermore by allowing his parents – most particularly his mother – free rein in this area, he is able to justify – to himself and to them – reserving other spheres of his life for exercise of his own personal autonomy. And it is not totally unagreeable, for most young men in this cultural milieu, to have a wife who is confined to the home and always at one's disposal.

Young Women and Material Resources

Control over money and other material resources is one important means by which an individual can gain access to power and a certain amount of personal autonomy, even if on the ideological level he or she is not in a position of legitimate authority over others. To what extent is such control in the hands of women in the early stages of their adult lives? Unlike young men, unmarried girls are rarely given regular pocket money by their parents. They must ask for money for specific purposes and account for its expenditure. However, there are numerous ceremonial occasions as well as informal encounters with kinsmen at which females classified as "daughters" or "sisters" (in contrast to "wives" or "daughters-in-law") are customarily given small cash gifts by older married relatives, both men and women.[7] Such money may be kept for a girl's own personal use and she may spend it as she pleases. As long as she remains unmarried she has no obligation to use any of it to make presents to others, and so these gifts serve a purely consumption function at this stage of life; the amounts involved are too small to be translated into any kind of power or influence over others.

Young married women also do not receive regular spending money in most families – they must ask their mother-in-law or husband if they wish to purchase something for their personal use. However, most young women have some private store of cash received as described above in the form of gifts from natal kin. Particularly when she is first married a woman receives

fairly substantial amounts, both from natal relatives and friends and certain categories of relatives of her in-laws. Although she should inform her mother-in-law of what has been received by her from conjugal kin or associates (in part this is done in order to enable the older woman to make return gifts where and when appropriate), she is usually permitted to retain the money herself and need not account to anyone for its expenditure. In addition, each time she returns to her natal home for a visit she is sent back with cash gifts, as well as clothing and other goods, only part of which is intended for her in-laws. But now that she is married she begins to assume obligations to give cash gifts to other young women who are in turn related to her and her new husband as "sisters" or "daughters", and these obligations will increase throughout her life, markedly so when she becomes the mistress of an independent household apart from that of her mother-in-law. Thus her private fund becomes not only a means of acquiring personal luxuries for herself and later for her children, but also a major means of building social relationships within her kinship network and the village community as a whole.

In evident recognition of the importance of control over material assets for the personal autonomy of a woman, there is a stereotyped pattern of suspicion – by men of their wives, and by older women of their daughters-in-law and younger sisters-in-law – that if given the opportunity the newcomers will attempt to divert the resources of the conjugal household to their natal kinsmen or to the exclusive unit of themselves and their young children. It is considered natural that a woman would want to do this, particularly in the early years of marriage, before she has come to identify her own interests with those of the conjugal joint family. Partly for this reason a young married woman is generally not given direct access to food stores or to the cash or other assets of the family. Her mother-in-law typically retains the keys to the larder for many years, doling out the amounts needed once a day or before each meal.

There is considerable variation from one family to another in the way that joint finances are handled. In some the oldest woman is in charge of the entire household budget and controls the earnings of all of the male members: they hand over their pay to her and she returns them some pocket money for their personal expenses. In other cases the father of the family handles all of the finances, providing his wife with a fixed housekeeping allowance. However, it is in fact rare for earning sons to contribute their entire earnings to the joint household; in fact in some households in which the father has substantial earnings from properties or investments the working sons keep all of their earnings for themselves and their own nuclear family units, relying on the household head to carry all of the regular expenses of running the joint household. More usually, employed sons give their

mother or father a negotiated and fixed portion of their wages or salary, keeping back the rest for their own use. Some of this may then be turned over to the wife, but at least in the early years of marriage a man usually requires an accounting for any money she may spend. Therefore there is usually little scope at this stage of life for a woman to exert power through the control of material resources, except for her personal fund, whose source lies outside her conjugal joint family household.

In this period of early married life one can observe patterns of control over women which are imposed in direct reponse to two major threats which the new bride is perceived as presenting to her new family. First is the fear of her disgracing the family through sexual misconduct or the appearance of it: the various forms of seclusion and restrictions on her activities and social interaction with outsiders effectively prevent this. Second is the fear of her power to destroy the family through its impoverishment, by diverting or squandering its commonly owned resources. The limitation of her direct access to money and food supplies counters this threat.

The Mature Married Woman

As children are born and begin to grow, the extent to which older members of the family exert authority over a married woman gradually diminishes. As she is gradually able to solidify the exclusive bond between herself and her husband, through the sexual relationship and the development of a shared interest in the children who are an outcome of it, she becomes less subservient in her own behavior toward her mother-in-law, and her husband in turn begins in most cases to assert more openly his allegiance to her and his special concern with their nuclear unit within the larger joint family. Eventually the younger couple may even separate from the joint family, at least to the extent of setting-up a separate cooking hearth within the family-owned house. If they do not separate, the mother-in-law, if alive, gradually withdraws voluntarily from her central role as manager of the household, or is forced out of this dominant role by the daughter-in-law.

The established married woman has learned by this time how to exert some power and influence over her husband; her mother-in-law usually comes to realize this and is compelled to accede to her daughter-in-law's growing self-assertion for fear of losing her son's attention and regard completely. It is in this period that the locus of authority, from the point of view of the woman, begins to shift from the mother-in-law to the husband himself. Her personal autonomy increases somewhat, but she must now acknowledge the direct authority of her husband and act within the limits he sets for her.

In this period a woman is increasingly placed in charge of the management

of her own home, and her husband is unlikely to take a direct interest in how she does this as long as the household runs relatively smoothly and his personal needs are promptly met. If by this time a woman has demonstrated that she is frugal and competent she may begin to be given a regular household allowance with the authority to budget expenditures herself. Or she may be allowed by her husband to charge purchases at local shops, to be paid for by him at the end of each month. Some husbands turn over the greater part of their earnings to such a wife – as they may have done earlier to their mother – keeping only pocket money for themselves and trusting the wife to build up a fund of savings from what she is able to set aside after taking care of the day-to-day running expenses of the home. Whatever the particular arrangement, in the middle years most women gradually increase their control over material resources and gain considerable autonomy in terms of expenditures for the household and for themselves and their children personally. At the same time they gain control over food supplies and the preparation and distribution of food to family members and guests. By manipulating the provision of food and the gift-giving network a woman is increasingly in a position to exert influence over the wider social field within which the family is operating. A man's prestige and the prestige of his family within the kindred, caste, and local community still depend in large part upon his ability and willingness to provide hospitality to others, and on the scale at which the family participates in reciprocal exchange relationships. But in both of these arenas it is the woman who is directly involved in providing and serving food, in calculating the amounts to be distributed and determining the proper recipients, and in keeping track of past exchanges. As long as she remains a junior member of a joint family she will continue to defer to her mother-in-law in matters of this kind, but she will be developing her own skills and a small network of her own, building toward the day when she will be in control herself as the mistress of an independent household.

During these middle years a woman is generally very busy in her home, particularly if she and her husband have separated from the extended family household. There are fewer external constraints to her leaving the confines of her home, but she is too much occupied with her work to exercise her freedom to move about very often. She does find time, usually in the afternoons, to visit close neighbors and chat with them while knitting, making handmade noodles, or doing other tasks which are portable, require little concentration, and can be accomplished while sitting down. Although her husband probably does the major shopping for food and household supplies, she may go out to the local shops to buy small items when needed, and occasionally may go with some female friends to the market on the main road to shop for clothing or household utensils or for gifts to present at an upcoming wedding or other ceremonial. Rarely she and a woman friend

may plan an afternoon movie excursion, or a visit to friends or relatives elsewhere in Delhi, taking their young children by bus. She now visits her natal home more seldom than before, and for shorter periods, but she is increasingly in a position to decide when she wishes to go and is able to travel by herself if her parents live within the city of Delhi itself. However, even at this period she will prefer to have someone accompany her when she leaves Rayapur, even if only a young child.

Any activities in which such a woman engages outside her own home must however be fitted into her husband's schedule, and unless the occasion is quite exceptional, and she has made arrangements with him beforehand, a husband has a legitimate expectation that she should always be at home when he returns from work in the evening and that his meals should not be delayed or curtailed because of any outside engagements or preoccupations of his wife.

Participation in religious activities often becomes an issue over which a man tries to exert authority over his wife during this stage of life. Young married women who are still under the control of a mother-in-law must perforce restrict their religious observances to private worship at the household shrine, unless they are taken by the older woman to a *bhajan*-singing gathering or some similar event in the neigborhood. But as a woman gains a somewhat more autonomous position with regard to her own activities, she may wish to participate more actively in such forms of group worship as temple *bhajans* and lectures by locally popular *gurūs*. It is not uncommon for husbands to object and to forbid their wives to participate in this kind of gathering, either because of opposition to these particular forms of religious worship or simply because they take women away from the home and draw them into association with outsiders. A woman in this stage of life must generally submit to her husband's authority in this as in other matters. Similarly, a husband may wish to prevent his wife's association with persons with whose family he is on bad terms, or whose influence over his wife he distrusts, and here again she generally feels that she must obey his wishes.

However, in terms of authority and power over others a woman's "status" rises markedly in this stage of life: her young children of both sexes and her older daughters are under her direct authority as it is one of her major responsibilities to see to their socialization and control. Her growing sons come less and less under her immediate supervision, particularly as they begin to move outside the home among their peers, but she retains in most cases considerable influence over them by virtue of the close emotional bonds developed in their earlier years.

A woman enters a fourth stage of her life when her children begin to marry, and particularly when daughters-in-law begin to be brought into the

newly forming joint household. By this time, in most cases, a woman's mother-in-law has either died or is no longer actively involved in household management. The mother of young adult sons and daughters is intimately and actively involved in the process of choosing mates for her children, although initial approaches and direct negotiations are generally handled by her husband and/or. other senior males. She is also involved in the arrangement of marriages of nieces and nephews, goes with other female relatives to view prospective daughters-in-law and welcomes visiting women from other families to view her own daughters. Through her access to and control of the female gossip network she can play a key role in locating and checking out potential candidates and typically has considerable influence in making a final choice, at least through the elimination of those she finds for some reason particularly unsuitable.

When the marriages are ready to take place, such a woman is responsible for collecting together the many gifts which must be presented – in the form of a dowry and trousseau when a daughter is wed, jewelry and clothing for an incoming bride in the case of a son's marriage, and appropriate grifts as well on the marriage of the child of a husband's brother or sister. In addition, if the marriage involves her own child, she must see that gifts are readied for each of the key persons in the kindred to whom clothing and other items must be distributed at such a time (Vatuk 1975b). A wise mother has been accumulating goods for these purposes since the time of her own marriage, and her efforts have been stepped up in recent years as her children approach marriageable age. But there are nevertheless always many purchases to be made in the last months, and the woman of the house is typically left in charge of making these, as much as possible out of funds which she has been able to save over the years. She also has considerable control over the arrangement of the festivities, the planning of the menu for the wedding feasts and setting up the specifically women's rituals and singing sessions which are an important part of the whole series of wedding events. In the latter she depends heavily for guidance on her mother-in-law or other senior women who have had experience in those matters, but the responsibility is ultimately her own.

Early Old Age

When her daughters-in-law have begun to take up residence a woman thinks of herself as entering old age. This is the time of life when a woman can theoretically begin to take her ease, delegate the drudgery of housework to the younger women, and luxuriate in the kinds of personal service which it is the duty of a daughter-in-law to provide. Typically she begins to establish

a division of labor in which she handles the "outside" work, while her sons' wives work "inside" the home: cooking, cleaning, washing the clothes, and the like. Now she has the time and the social sanction for moving freely around the village and outside it as she pleases. She is defined culturally as being past the period of sexual desirability and therefore this freedom no longer poses a threat to the honor of her husband and his family. Typically a woman's social sphere expands dramatically at this stage of life, and her level of social participation also greatly increases. She is free to take as much or as little direct interest in the running of her household as she likes, and as long as she retains firm control over her daughters-in-law she will not be criticized for neglecting household duties in favor of outside activities. This is the period of greatest personal autonomy for a woman. She is no longer to any great extent under the authority even of her husband, in terms of the kinds of activity she engages in or how much time she devotes to them.

Women of this age often become very much involved in religious activities of a communal character – although by no means all aging woman do so. It is interesting to compare the comments of older women with those of women in their middle years concerning this kind of participation. Many of the latter explained their failure to attend temple *bhajan*s and the like by their husband's disapproval. Aging women, on the other hand, tended to discuss their religious activities entirely in terms of personal inclination, and if their religious participation was slight they commonly attributed this to their own disinterest, or to the pressure of household responsibilities, the necessity of caring for milch animals, and so on. Several in fact made specific reference to their husband's disapproval of their devotion to a locally popular *guru* or their heavy involvement in *bhajan* groups, but reported that they continued to follow their own inclinations in these matters despite their husbands' attitude. The difference is doubtless in part related to the fact that this latter period of life is, in terms of their cultural conceptions, a time to turn toward introspection and the development of one's individual spiritual worth. It is appropriate that such concerns should begin to take priority over the cultivation of social bonds, and even if necessary over the duty of a woman to defer to her husband's wishes.

In line with the view that one should begin gradually to withdraw from household and worldly activities when one's sons are married, it is considered proper at this stage of life to cease sexual relations. Women of this age group encountered in 1975 had spent their earlier married years in an agricultural milieu, in which it was customary for adult men to sleep in an outbuilding rather than in the main house with their wives. Most had never had a separate room to share with their husband, although currently young couples are invariably provided such a private space within a joint household. Even if an older couple were inclined to continue an active sex life after their

sons married, it is for this reason difficult for them to do so without arousing attention and comment from other members of the family and kin network, not to mention neighbors. Most older men even today sleep in an outbuilding or in a men's guest room in the main house, along with other men or boys, while their wives share a room with grandchildren or unmarried daughters. While some couples by this time have developed a close and intimate relationship and find that the onset of old age permits them to enjoy one another's company more easily, with fewer social constraints than formerly, a more common pattern seems to involve a distancing of husband and wife, at least in terms of the amount of time spent together. Although they may indeed talk more freely together and on a more egalitarian footing than they did at earlier periods, for the most part older men spend very little time at home, except at meals. Couples who have not been on good terms for years find it a simple matter at this stage to stay out of each other's way and interact only minimally. Whatever the individual case, one might say that if an older couple is obviously very close, it is something more to be remarked upon by others than if they live effectively apart. Of course, there is no question in the latter instance of any kind of formal separation or divorce: such marital separations as do occasionally occur in this society invariably take place within the first year or two of marriage.

In addition to religious involvement and general sociability on an informal basis and in connection with ceremonial events in the village and caste community, a woman at this time of life is most active in the networks of reciprocal gift-giving. Financially, she is in firm control, having at least a substantial household budget to manage, if not the family's entire assets. While she may not make major purchases without consulting her husband and earning sons, she nevertheless acts fairly autonomously on a day-to-day basis. In addition to money made available to her by her husband, she is also usually able to prevail upon her sons to hand over to her the better part of their earnings and this enhances her power in the household considerably.

Later Old Age

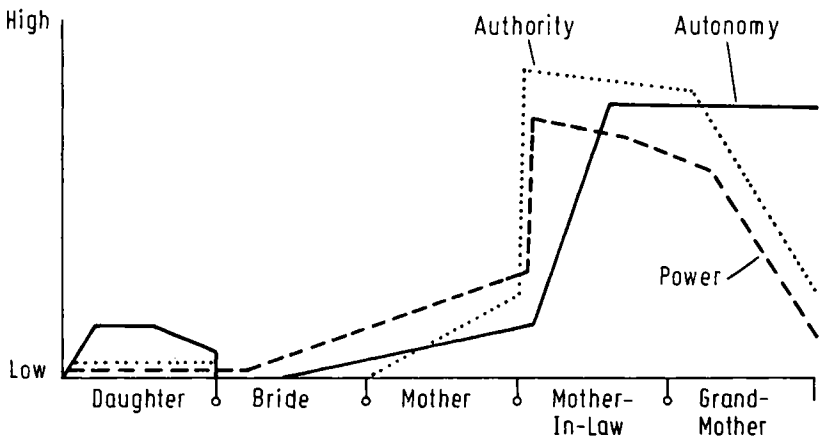
As time goes on, however, as a woman's daughters-in-law in turn become acclimatized to their new situation and begin to exert increasing influence over their respective husbands, and to assert their own autonomy *vis-a-vis* their mother-in-law, a woman gradually descends from this peak level of authority and power and enters the later stage of old age. At this time she retains her hard-won autonomy – at least as long as her health continues – but loses her basis of legitimate authority over others within the family, except perhaps to a limited extent in moral matters over the young un-

married girls of the household. She gradually has to assent to the takeover of managerial control by whichever daughter-in-law has remained with her in a joint household – all except one are likely by now to have set up separate hearths, if they have not actually moved out of the parental home. Such an old woman is free to spend her time as she likes within the limits of her physical capacities, and there is little in the way of work responsibilities to hinder this. Women of this age group seem to do a considerable amount of visiting, often going for fairly lengthy stays at the homes of relatives, in other parts of Delhi or in the rural Raya caste villages in neighboring U.P. State. The pattern of lengthy stays with natal kin – now brothers or brothers' sons rather than parents – is revived on a small scale, and any wedding or other ceremonial in the kindred will serve as an opportunity for a visit of several days' duration, as will any family crisis, a death or illness in a related household, for example. She will regularly be consulted on the proper performance of rituals by younger women of her kindred and local caste group, and given a certain amount of deference and precedence in the serving of food within her household. But her time for directing the affairs of the family in any active sense has past, and any power she may retain to influence household decisions derives only from such close bonds of affection and regard as she may have been able to cultivate with her sons and their wives and children during the early and middle years of her life.

Conclusion

I have attempted here to present descriptively a picture of the changing patterns of access to authority, power, and personal autonomy at different stages in the life course of women of the Raya caste in an urbanized village in northern India. With reference to this community one can observe that the values on each of these dimensions of "status" generally rise throughout the life span toward a peak in early old age, after which a woman's degree of autonomy is retained at a fairly constant level, while the amount of power and authority a woman exercises typically declines sharply. In Diag. 1 an attempt has been made to represent graphically this developmental process, as its characteristics have emerged from an analysis of the specific circumstances of these particular women's lives. It is of course to be understood as an approximation, and it is clear that for other Indian women, under diverse social and economic conditions, and at different points in the caste hierarchy, the stages of life depicted may be shortened or lengthened, the angle of rise and fall of the three variables may be steeper or less steep, and so on. However, in a general way the literature as well as my own field experience tend to confirm the over-all pattern as characterizing the life course of Indian

Diag. 1 Access to Authority, Power, and Autonomy at Different Life Stages



women of diverse communities in the subcontinent. The exercise has perhaps demonstrated the usefulness of a multidimensional and developmental approach to the issue of the "status of women", not only in South Asia but elsewhere in the world as well.[8]

Notes

1. See several recent reviews of the cross-cultural literature on women and gender roles: for example, Lamphere (1977), Quinn (1977), Rapp (1979), Rogers (1978), and Rosaldo (1980). See also Huilgol's paper in this volume.
2. Such a view is presented, for example, in Michaelson and Goldschmidt's cross-cultural comparative analysis of the position of women in a number of peasant societies (1971).
3. Similar statements are to be found in earlier publications by Quinn (1977), Lamphere (1974) and Whyte (1978) as well.
4. Manisha Roy's cultural psychological study of the upper middle class Bengali woman's life course is one of the more detailed and insightful analyses of this process (1975).
5. Field research in this community was supported by NIMH Grant No. R01 MH 24220, and by the American Institute of Indian Studies.
6. A good description of *pardā* practices among Hindu women is provided by Jacobson. Although based on field data from central India, her

description holds true in most respects for the Raya women considered here (1982).

7. See my articles on north Indian kinship categories (1969) and on gift-giving patterns (1975b) in this region of India. Although based upon research among Gaur Brahmans, the descriptions found there conform in broad outlines to Raya practice as well.
8. This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies, in March 1981 at Toronto.

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Living the Levirate: the Mating of an Untouchable Chuhra Widow

Pauline Kolenda

"Mandelbaum (1957: 257) says that the 1891 census of India suggested that 60 percent of the population of Madras allowed and practiced widow remarriage." (Kolenda 1982: 198)

"Where widows can remarry, the levirate is commonly preferred; a brother of the deceased husband becomes the next husband or at least he has the right of first refusal. Generally a second marriage, whether for a man or a woman, is marked with a much simpler wedding than was the first and is not as prestigious an arrangement as the first might be." (Mandelbaum 1970:78)

*

Haradi alternated between laughter and tears in our conversations with her. Her tears flowed when she spoke of her departed husband, Pratap. In the following passage, she praises his handsome appearance and explains the reason why she cannot marry either of his *chacha-taū* brothers (his father's brother's sons).

He was a very good-looking man. You can't find the likes of him in the whole *basti* now. He was as tall as Kantu, well built and very fair and good. An honest man like him we can never find. He was in Lahore at the time of the riots [during the Partition of 1947], and he ran home from there saying, "My wife is alone." He left all his belongings in Lahore and even money and came back. Twice during his service in Lahore he came home to take me to Lahore, but all the people here in the *basti* told him not to take me, because then "the woman will breathe the city air."

He was very fond of children. He would sleep with Kati and other children, fondle them, and he used to get annoyed when I drove them out. He would say, "You are jealous because you do not have any children of your own." I said, "Yes, if God has not given us our own, why should we look upon other people's children? They create unnecessary dirt."

When I was expecting a baby, he said, "Now God will give us children too, and then you need not be jealous." When I had the stillborn baby, however, many people would not come [due to birth pollution]. They said, "She has a stillborn child," but he used to help me with everything... He used to cook all kinds of herbs for me and spend all the morning doing that... When I had serious dysentery, they all thought I was going to die. He ran in all directions calling doctors, and many people gathered. He

kept beating his head against the wall. People told him, "If she dies, you will get another woman," but he said, "No, I cannot find another one like her." He came in despite other people's objecting, and he sat down beside the bed and took my hand. I, the wretched one, was saved however, and he died.

[Haradi's husband, Pratap, went into considerable debt in order to finance the wedding of his dead brother's son, Chiteru. This included a loan of one hundred rupees from Kalu, his *chacha-tāū ka bhāi* (his father's brother's son).]

Haradi explained: Kalu demanded his money many times, and every time my husband said, "We will give it to you." They were two – Kalu and his brother, Swami, while my husband was alone. His brother, Prithvi, was not here. One night in Phagun (February-March) they quarreled on the *chaupāṛā* (men's sitting platform), and Kalu and Swami said, "You *Sasurās* (fathers-in-law) [referring to Pratap and Prithvi], you will both die, and we will keep your widows." My husband came straight home and placing his *pagṛī* (turban) at my feet, he said, "In this quarrel, one of us must die – either Kalu or I. And as I am alone, if I die, you must destroy yourself in any way. Do anything. Go away anywhere, but do not live with Kalu or Swami." Ram [the headman] was listening; he told my husband, "Don't be crazy. Brothers should not quarrel. Don't say such things to your wife." But Pratap asked me many times not to live with Kalu or Swami. He died two months later in the middle of Baisakh (April-May). When he died we put a white cloth over him which he had bought for a *dhoti* (waistcloth) and shirt. Kalu all the time now, when he quarrels with me, taunts me saying, "We provided the shroud for your dead husband." And I reply, "Don't worry. I will put one on you when you die."

*

This is the story of Haradi, a widow, aged about 30, of the Untouchable Sweeper (*Chuhra*) caste community in the village of Khalapur in northern India. A lithe graceful small woman with a moonface of oriental cast – waxy yellow with somewhat slanted eyes – she loved to sing and dance and tease her *devars* (husband's younger brothers), both real ones and those in relationship within the Chuhra colony. She was the delight of the *devars* but also of her other neighbors, both men and women. She was respectful to elderly women, going to help them bathe when they needed it, washing their backs, massaging their necks. She did her sweeping work for her Rajput and other higher caste *jajmans* well, going regularly and doing a thorough job.

But before Hardi's story, some background[1] is needed.

The Chuhra *basti* (colony) was on the west side of Khalapur. Usha and I used to cross the bridge at the east front of the village and walk along the north side road that edged the canal, passing Rajput houses of Canal *pattī*, and then the houses of Watercarriers, and then Rajput houses of Western *pattī*. Sometimes the Rajput or Watercarrier women would call us in, coming

to the doorways of their windowless compounds to beckon, "*Ā jao. Ā jao.* (Come in. Come in.)" And we would stop and visit them for a while. Four or five women of a joint-family would cluster around us after we had been seated on a string cot and would examine our clothing. If I was wearing something from America, they would feel it and ask if I had made the machine-produced lace of a sleeve or the embroidery of a Guatemalan skirt. Then after a few minutes we would leave, and they would go back to their spinning-wheels or vegetable-cutting or grain-cleaning. All these activities were carried on in the open paved central space, bordered by single rows of separate rooms in which grain, food and implements were stored, or where clothing and jewelry were kept in metal trunks. Only in rainy weather did sleeping or cooking take place inside. Most of women's life went on in the courtyards beneath the clear blue skies and bright sun of the North Indian plains.

But on the whole we were not especially noticed as we made our way to the Untouchable Sweepers' (Chuhras') colony. Some people accounted for our twice-daily trips as the egg-buying expeditions of non-vegetarians. They knew we ate eggs. When Bal Mal, a leading Bania shopkeeper and money-lender, would come to our project house to give me lectures on Hinduism, he would comment on the smell of eggs, and when on rarer occasions his wife came, she would even hold her nose because the odor of our breakfast presumably lingered on so strongly.

It would have been difficult for any of us to have got to know the Untouchable Chuhras intimately if we had not been a *group* of researchers. Another anthropologist and his wife, as well as the psychologist and the linguist, together with their assistants, worked much of their time with the dominant land-owning caste of Rajputs. An Indian graduate student in anthropology was studying the high priestly caste of Brahmans. The leaders of the village were being attended to. Thus two of us ethnographers, along with our interpreter-assistants, could concentrate on Untouchables. The other worked with the Chamars, the field laborers, traditionally leather workers, and I worked with the Sweepers who made dung cakes (used for fuel in cooking hearths) in the higher castemen's cattle-yards, and cleaned the latrines to be found in booths on the rooftops of high caste women's quarters.

Right after breakfast, Usha and I would leave the project house where we social researchers lived. It was just across the dirt road from the new high school, a few hundred feet up from the bridge crossing the canal to the village. Originally there was hope that we might live within the village itself, but the building of the new high school that had just been completed meant that all extra housing was taken by the teachers and students who had come in from the outside, So the Cornell University project had built its own housing and compound; the anthropologist field director and his wife, John and Pat

Hitchcock, and the other anthropologist in Khalapur the first year, Toshio Yatsushiro and their Indian research assistants had spent much of the first year of the three-year project managing the building of the long nine-room barracks – eight double rooms for the researchers, plus a kitchen-dining room – as well as separate quarters for the cooks. Those of us who came in the second year found that the housing and wall of the compound had been built, rapport had been established with the villagers by our predecessors, and our fieldwork could begin immediately.

Usha and I would often spend the morning in the Chuhra *basti*, Usha translating my questions into Hindi and translating the Chuhras' answers into English, I taking notes. We were usually concentrating on some particular cultural institution – this month, the *jajmāni* system, another month, kinship – but we inevitably became involved in whatever human events were occurring in the lives of the Chuhras. We learned about the levirate in the course of listening to the daily gossip.

We would return to the project house for lunch. In the hot months we, like everyone else, napped in the first part of the afternoon. If it was colder, I would type notes until three. Then Usha and I would have tea and a couple of vitamin pills (for strength) and work among the Sweepers until six when it was supper time. In the evening I would again type notes. Only rarely did we go into the village at night. There was no electricity then, in the mid-1950s, and it was a mile or so to walk to the Bhangi *basti* in the dark. We did occasionally go, of course, to attend a special ceremony or to hear some crucial decision taken in the Chuhra men's council.

*

Beside the large women's quarters and men's sitting platform of the Rajputs of Western *pattī* was the waist-high brick shrine with a bulbous peak on top and a small indentation to accept food offerings and *dīyās* (small clay oil lamps) dedicated to the village-god, Bhūmiyā. The Bhūmiyā is typically located in North Indian villages, as this one was, on an outer boundary. It stood on a slight hillock above the roadway looking out over a stagnant pond, perhaps a hundred feet across in both directions. Beyond the pond was the Chuhra colony of the western part of the village. There was another colony of Sweepers in the southeastern part of the village with whom the western *basti* Sweepers had enmity, because it was men of that colony who had helped to arrange the sale of Haradi, as will be told below.

As is customary all over India for Untouchables, the Chuhras lived "outside" the clean castes' village (Dumont 1970: 134). Here they were separated by the pond; beyond them was only unoccupied sun-baked ground, a western-*pattī* Rajput's cattle-yard, and then the fields. We would go around the pond to the rows of adobe women's houses forming two three-sided rectangles side by side, open toward the pond, built not on flat ground but

on a gentle incline. The round solid brick well stood near the place where an outer wall of each of the two rectangles came together. The two rectangles, along with two men's platforms, constituted the main structures of the *basti*. The whole *basti* could not have covered much more than 1000 square feet.

Whichever way we entered, we faced the two men's sitting platforms (*chaupāṛā*). One belonged to Jhanki's *kunbā* (patrilineal group), one to Ram's. To the south of Jhanki's were his women's quarters, behind a compound wall where his two sons' wives and children lived. Across from his sitting platform was a small compound belonging to an ex-daughter-in-law of Jhanki's *kunbā* and her subsequent husband and their two married sons, their wives and children. The husbands, of course, slept on the men's sitting platform at night in the roofed, moghul-arched men's dormitory at the back.

The ex-daughter-in-law, Sumi, was now a woman in her fifties. As a girl in her teens, she had gone through the first round of wedding ceremonies (the *shādī*) with Jhanki's father's brother's eldest son. Before the second set of wedding ceremonies (the *gaunā*) her bridegroom died, and she went through these rites with the groom's younger brother, a boy much younger than herself, following the Chuhras' rule of prescriptive levirate. It was then that she took up residence with her mother-in-law in her husband's parental household. As often seemed to happen when a mature woman married a child-groom, she eventually had an affair with an older man – in fact, with her husband's father's elder brother Shyam, a man with whom she should have had an avoidance relationship. She should have kept her face covered in his presence at all times and should not even have spoken to him; he was a kind of father-in-law to her, and thus should have been treated with the restraint a married woman should show all men outside her own patrilineage who were older than her husband. The lovers had no choice but to be found out and punished by the Chuhra men's council, or to run away. They ran away and worked in Hyderabad, a city in Sind where Shyam, the child-groom's father's brother, worked on a municipal sanitation crew, and Sumi worked as a servant in the homes of Europeans. The couple had two sons. After some years Shyam died, and Sumi entered another secondary mating with a Chuhra from Khalapur, a man of Ram's *kunbā* who was also working in Hyderabad. This couple also had two sons. After many years of absence Sumi and Jammal and the four sons returned to the *basti*. Sumi's child-groom had died long before, and Jhanki was glad to have a family to swell the numbers of his smaller *kunbā*, chronically at odds with Ram's *kunbā*. Perhaps they had returned because the sons needed to be married, and it is easiest to arrange marriages when living within one's own caste community. So this family's *bagar* (women's quarters), a tiny single room, was built on a patch of wet soil right on the edge of the pond, across from Jhanki's *chaupāṛā*.

Behind Ram's sitting-platform along three walls forming a rectangle were

the quarters of women whose husbands were descended from *bhānjās* (daughters' sons) or *sālās* (wives' brothers) of Ram's patrilineage. Although, like most North Indian castes, the residence rule for the Chuhras was patrilocal – a couple should live with the husband's patrilineal relatives after marriage – there was among the landless Chuhras a good deal of deviance from the rule. Frequently a daughter who had been married out returned with her husband and children to live with her patrilineal kin; or a brother, dissatisfied in his father's village, joined his sister who had married into the *basti*. So Ghasitu, now an elder in his seventies, had been the son of a daughter who had returned. Now his two sons, men in their prime, were the beginnings of a new patrilineage. In the other way, Kantu's father had joined his sister Kreshani, who had married into the *basti*, so Kantu and the sons of his dead brother founded a new patrilineage. This same woman Kreshani's two married daughters had also returned with husbands and children. Each daughter had had a son, both now married, who would also start new patrilineages. There were six houses of *bhānjās* and one house of a *sālā*'s son, while there were only six houses headed by men descendant from Ram's male ancestors in a strictly male line; these six were properly patrilineal and patrilocal. In addition there was the house belonging to Gyarsi who had married Sumi and Shyam's son, Tikku, who had died. Now Gyarsi remained in her first husband's home but had taken, in a kind of leviratic secondary mating, her mother-in-law's brother's son, her dead husband's mother's brother's son. The advantage of this uxorilocal mating, the widow living in the house she had shared with her dead husband, was that the *ghar jamai* (uxorilocal son-in-law) could not easily sell her, protected as she was by her dead husband's *basti*-men.

In the seventeen houses of Chuhras there were never more than 100 people during the twenty months that Usha and I knew them. There was a certain amount of flux in their population as daughters came to stay with their parents, and daughters-in-law went to visit their parental villages. Some of the men worked in sanitation crews in cities of the region; all of the adult men had done so at one time or another. So men came and went. One or two families moved in and one or two families moved out during the time we were there.

The men could absent themselves from the village, because the *jajmāni* work was carried on very largely by the women. A pair, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or mother and daughter, or two brothers' wives, would serve a dozen or so *jajmāns*, higher caste clients – cleaning their latrines and cattle-yards where they patted the animal dung into cakes, which when dried, served as fuel for cooking.

Culture as Constituted

The general Hindu idea which the Chuhras of the Western colony also accepted was that although a man could marry more than once, a woman could marry only once; she should have in her lifetime only one husband (Dumont 1964: 82). Among the higher Hindu castes of India – for example, the Rajputs, Banias and Brahmans of Khalapur – a widow remains celibate, staying in her dead husband's house and raising her children or being cared for by her adult sons. Among lower castes widow remating is widely practised (Singh 1947: 169; Crooke 1907: 209; Mandelbaum 1957: 257; Dube 1955: 122; Mayer 1960: 234-235; Carstairs 1957: 136; Dumont 1957: 180; Beals 1962: 31; Lewis 1958: 190-191; Vatuk 1980: 289). The Hindi term used in Khalapur was *karāwa* – the widow comes in *karāwa* and "sits with" (*baiṭh denā*) her new mate. Anthropologists (O'Malley 1932: 92; Blunt 1969: 72; Dumont 1970: 111) refer to the custom as a secondary marriage or an inferior form of marriage; from the native view, it is not a marriage but a permanent liaison. I hesitate to use the term which some British observers used for widow remating among Hindu peasants, "concubinage", because the children of the secondary marriage had full status as offspring of their father.

In Khalapur among some clean castes like the Watercarriers and Potters, and among some unclean or untouchable castes like the Chamar agricultural laborers or the Chuhra Sweepers, there was a rule of levirate (a widow should mate with her husband's brother). The levirate is not as widespread as widow remating, but it is widespread among middle and lower castes in northern India (Singh 1947: 169); it is less prevalent in southern India (Karve 1965: 224; Chattopadhyay 1922: 41). The commencement of the leviratic liaison is only briefly ceremonialized and feasted (Singh 1947: 167; Crooke 1907: 93; Stevenson 1930: 67; O'Malley 1932: 93; Kolenda 1982: 202) in comparison to the lengthy set of double ceremonies for the wedding of a virgin. The workings of the levirate are not well-known. In Khalapur I came to know only the way the levirate worked among the Chuhras of the Western colony (see Kolenda 1982 for a theoretical treatment and p. 201 of that article for a brief description of the levirate as I found it in Jaipur District, Rajasthan, among Jats.).

The proscriptive rule, always followed among the Chuhras of Khalapur, was that a widow must marry her dead husband's unmarried brother. Since siblings of the same sex marry in order of age, an unmarried brother of a married man usually is younger, but it is possible that an elder brother is a widower or is for some other reason unmarried. The widow was supposed to be assigned to a new mate at the thirteenth day ceremony after her dead husband's cremation. Her father or brother usually attended the ceremony

and agreed that she should go in a secondary mating to the husband's unmarried brother.

Culture as Lived-in

The assignment of a widow to her dead husband's brother at the end of the death period often resulted in the situation in which Sumi had found herself, mated to a child-groom. Often the women so assigned did not wait until the boy had grown up to become sexually active again; such women often took lovers and, like Sumi, ran away with them. Whether the couple was ever accepted back into the colony or not after running away depended on whether the lover was also a Chuhra; if he were a Muslim or a Chamar or a man of some other caste, they would never be accepted; if he was a Chuhra, the likelihood for re-acceptance after some years of absence, as in Sumi's case, was good. If the lovers were caught in an illicit affair, the Chuhra man might be required to pay the woman's dead husband's family for the widow; otherwise they would separate her from the lover and sell her. A man of another caste or religion could not legitimize the mating by paying the woman's dead husband's family for her.

The proscriptive levirate rule was inadequate, not just because child-grooms were immature and unready to mate with the widow of an elder brother, but because it was a rule that did not succeed in allotting many widows. It was not unusual for the husband's younger brother to be married already; in that instance the custom was that the widow, as well as the man and his wife, must all accede to the polygynous arrangement that would result if the widow joined the household. The general community assessment was that co-wives fight all the time. Neither Chuhra widows nor married brothers' wives agreed to the polygynous solution without hesitation, so this solution was rarely chosen although, as we shall see, Haradi did prefer it.

Then there was the common possibility of a dead husband having no brothers. To allow for these two kinds of failure of the leviratic rule, that the dead man's brothers were all married or that there was no brother, it was customary for the Chuhra elders to suggest that the widow accept a substitute for the husband's full brother and take as a mate the dead husband's cousin – usually, his father's brother's son; more rarely, a mother's brother's son or even more rarely, a father's sister's son; or even a more distant cousin of the dead husband might be proposed. Hindi kinship terminology uses the same term *bhāi* for all male cousins; they are all called "brother". However, the distinction between a man's full brother, and a "cousin-brother" is carefully noted, and the distance makes a difference.

If a woman mates with her dead husband's full brother, he cannot sell

her. There is the idea that she came as a virgin to the whole household of the first husband, that she came in a sense as a virgin to the husband's brothers as well as to the husband. This entails the rule that the husband's full brother cannot sell the leviratic mate. The rule seems to hinge on the ideal of the lineal-fraternal joint family; the woman comes in marriage to that joint household. However, cousin-brothers are not considered to be part of the husband's household, and the introduction of a factor of lateral genealogical distance from the original husband entails the secondary husband's right to sell the woman. The Hindu pollution concept, so important in understanding caste ranking and untouchability (Kolenda 1978: 62-85; Stevenson 1954; Davis 1983; Marriott and Inden 1973), extends to the purity of women (Yalman 1963). A woman is impure for any sexual partner subsequent to the partner to whom she was taken as a virgin. The Chuhra modification of this Hindu ideal seems to be that she is pure for all the men of the patri-fraternal contingent of her husband's joint-family (his brothers and father) but she is not pure for a man outside that family. Once she is taken by a second mate she is impure and presumably "spoiled" and thus saleable. This is not stated explicitly by the Chuhras but it is a Hindu way to account for this right of the cousin-brother of the dead husband to sell the secondary wife (see also Kolenda 1982: 206.) If a cousin-brother accepting the widow takes her to live in another village, he must pay her first husband's male family member for her; if on the other hand he resides in the same village as the dead husband, he does not pay for her, but may sell her. A woman who has been bought can be resold.

Women are usually sold to widowers, because widowers generally have a hard time convincing the guardians of young virgins to arrange marriages with them. Widowers may be left with children to raise and may have no choice for a mate except to buy a widow. The sale of a widow by her dead husband's cousin-brother or by anyone else is usually by deception. I never heard of a widow consenting to being sold. If she is sold by deception, it is done secretly and she may lose her entire complement of relatives, both those of her natal village and those in her first husband's village, for none of these is likely to be informed about her whereabouts, at least for some time, and there is not likely to be anyone in the buyer's village whom she knows (although fortunately for Haradi, there was in the village into which she was sold a man related to a man of her dead husband's village). It is this alienation from all her relatives, the deception and secrecy, the lack of ceremonialization or of any public affirmation that sharply distinguish the sale of a woman from marriage by brideprice, a custom also prevalent in India, especially among lower castes. A woman who is sold is stigmatized; there is the implication that she has engaged in an illicit affair; often women who are sold are already pregnant through such an affair. A wife who has come to a family in a first

marriage or a virtuous widow should not be sold. Among the 27 adult Chuhris of the western colony who had married into the *basti*, 15 were still married to their first husband, 6 were in leviratic marriages, 2 were elderly widows and 3 were women who had been sold to men of the *basti*; one other widow had taken a lover who had paid her dead husband's family men for her. It was not an unusual destiny for a widow or (even though it was against the rule) for a wife to be sold although, as we shall see with Haradi, a widow may try hard to avoid being sold.

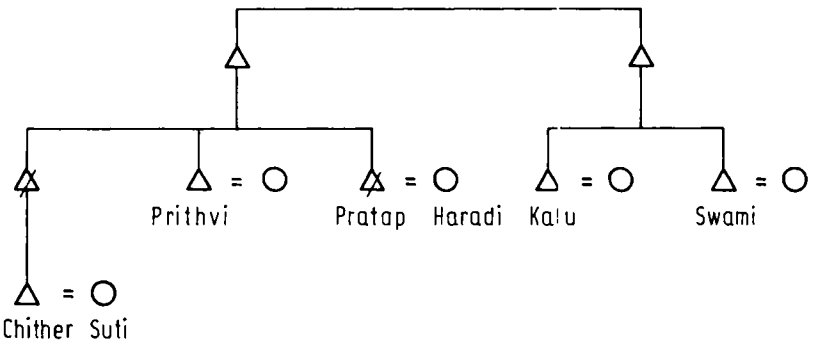
While North Indian kinship culture seems to place a heavy emphasis upon the sibling relationship as one of solidarity, needless to say, the real relationships in which people live do not always follow these ideals of loyalty and love. Hostility between brothers is common, but even more common is hostility between cousin-brothers, who are the sons of full brothers. Such patrilateral parallel cousins belong to households founded by men who once shared a household and then separated, men who belonged to the same parental and later the same joint family. When brothers divide a joint household they seldom do it without bad feelings. Thus the cousin-brothers inherit their fathers' hostility; there have probably been bad feelings between their households for much of their lives. By implication, the widow may have good reason to fear that if she agrees to "sit with" her dead husband's cousin-brother, he may be motivated to sell her.

The marriages of virgins are arranged in India. The widow who has not been automatically assigned to sit with her dead husband's unmarried brother has choice, or at least veto power over her subsequent mate. Her agreement must be taken concerning her mating with either her husband's married brother or with her husband's cousin-brother. She may also choose to remain a celibate widow. However, if she chooses to be a celibate widow and she is still in her childbearing period of life, she is likely to be under pressure from the elders of her caste-community to accept a man who can be construed to be a brother of the dead husband.

Haradi's Story

The story of Haradi (see Diag. 2) is pieced together from twenty-two conversations which Usha and I had over a year and a half with Haradi herself as well as thirteen other members of the Chuhra community. Of these Kali, Mahendi, Bhuli, Kishandai (Chuhris), and Kantu (a Chuhra) are cited in the passages below.

Diag. 2 Haradi and some Kin



Outline of Haradi's Career as a Widow

1946 Widowed, at about the age of 23.

1946-48 Remained in village where she worked with Prithvi's wife, wife of her dead husband's brother, absent in Delhi. When Prithvi failed to return, both women went to their parental villages.

1948-49 In her home village, her brother and his wife made Haradi feel unwelcome so she returned to her dead husband's village.

1950 Elders suggested that Haradi "sit with" Mahinder, her dead husband's father's father's brother's daughter's son. After a short time, Haradi turned him out of her house.

1952 Haradi was sold by her dead husband's brother's son Chiter, who was under pressure to pay off debts from the expenses of his own wedding. Haradi was rescued by the elders and *devars* of the western Chuhra *basti* of Khalapur.

1953 At Mangal's wedding, elders suggested that Haradi "sit with" Kalu, her dead husband's father's brother's son. Both Kalu's wife and Haradi refused that arrangement.

1954-56 Haradi was under pressure from Kalu to "sit with" either himself or his brother, Swami.

195? Haradi "sat with" Prithvi, her dead husband's full brother.

196? Haradi died.

Haradi, born in Manohar village, had a father who married three times and took widows to wife (*karāwa*) twice. Haradi told us:

> My mother came last [thus in a *karāwa* widow remating]. I had only one full brother, Radhu. Only one of my father's first four wives had a child, a girl married in Kishan village.... I don't remember much about

my mother. She died when I was about 6 years old. People tell me she looked like me. She died at about my age [30]. At first, we both [Haradi and Radhu] went to live with our *bhuwā* (father's sister) in Surenderpur village. My *bhuwā* nursed my brother. Then one of our previous mothers who had run away earlier came back, and we returned to Manohar village. She lived with us there. My father was as old as Jammal [perhaps late sixties] and looked like him also. We liked everything about him. He kept us very well and loved us very much. He had lots of money, but when he died my *taū*'s (father's elder brother's) son took all the money, as my brother was very young and I was married here. My father kept asking for me when he was dying, but I could not go. I went later. When I reached there, everything in our house had been removed by my *taū*'s son who had pretended to take my brother into his house.

Haradi was very popular with the Sweepers of the *basti* because she loved to joke and tease, to dance and sing, often making up songs presented extemporaneously. North Indian culture prescribes avoidance between a woman and men older than her husband who are not of her own patrilineage, but it also prescribes a joking relationship with men younger than her husband in his patrilineage and by extension in his residential community. Haradi loved to indulge in joking with her *devar*s. Thus I recorded in my notes:

Haradi was teasing old Dharmi (a really ancient widow, perhaps in her seventies), telling us how Dharmi's wedding had been arranged. Haradi laughed, "I told my *sasurā* (father-in-law) to go and look for a bride for my *dādasarā* (husband's father's father). Then I plastered the house [in preparation for a wedding] and had a man stand beating the drum, so everyone would know that my *dādasarā* had brought a new wife."

Here the joke is in the age reversal, a grand-daughter-in-law having arranged her grandmother-in-law's wedding. Similarly in the next joke, she plays on the absurdity of a woman in her thirties being mated with a boy of twelve and having to keep her face covered from men in their late teens and twenties, because they were men older than her adolescent husband:

"If I become Suku's (a boy of twelve) wife, I'll have to keep *ghungaṭ* (face covered with end of sari or head-covering) from you (to Moti, a male of early twenties) and from Nathu (a boy of 17)."

The reader may refer to the beginning of the paper for Haradi's perceptions of her dead husband and for the reason why she could not marry either of her husband's *chacha-taū* brothers (father's brother's sons), Kalu and Swami.

Haradi's husband, Pratap, had had two brothers. One, the father of Chither, was dead, but the other, Prithvi, who had a reputation for being a gambler, was still alive in 1956, working in Delhi. Pratap and Prithvi had quarreled over the division of the house and utensils when their joint family divided into two nuclear families. Kali told us that Prithvi lived in the city not