

SOME NOTES ON NEPALI CASTES AND SUB-CASTES- JAT AND THAR.

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This paper attempts to make a re-presentation of evolution and construction of Jat and Thar system among the Parbatya or hill people of Nepal. It seeks to expose the reality behind the myth that the large number of Aryans migrated from Indian plains due to Muslim invasion and conquered to become the rulers in Nepal, and the Mongoloids were the indigenous people. It also seeks to show the construction and reconstruction of identity of the different castes (Jats) and subcastes (Thars).

The Nepalese history is lost in legends and fables. Archaeological data, which might shed light on the early years, are practically nonexistent or largely unexplored, because the Nepalese Government has not encouraged such research within its borders. However, there seem to be a number of sites that might yield valuable find, once proper excavation take place. Another problem seems to be that history writing is closely connected with the traditional conception of Nepali historiography, constructed and intervened by the efforts of the ruling elite. Many of the written documents have been re-presented to legitimize the ruling elite's claim to power. As it is well known from political history, the social history, too, becomes an interpretation from the view of the Kathmandu valley, and from the Indian or alleged Indian immigrants and priestly class. It is difficult to imagine, that Aryans came to Nepal in greater numbers about 600 years ago, and because of their mental superiority and their noble character, they were asked by the people to become the rulers of their small states. It gives the impression that the Nepalis were unable to govern themselves. An open and fragmented approach is required to re-present the History of Nepal in printed words. Archaeological remains suggest that areas of Nepal have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years. The Kirant hill tribe people are thought to be the first rulers of the Kathmandu area. The earliest known undisputed Nepali dynasty is the Licchavi dynasty, which was established in about AD 400. The Licchavi dynasty, which probably migrated from present-day Vaishali, India, was centered in the Kathmandu Valley. The Licchavi dynasty expanded its influence to the Kali Gandaki River in the west and Sun Kosi River in the east. The Licchavi dynasty came to an end in the late 9th century and was followed by the medieval period. The early medieval era was unstable and poorly documented. It culminated in the Malla period (1200 to 1769) when three separate dynasties, divided into three kingdoms in the late 15th century, were conquered by the Shah dynasty in 1769, led by King Prithvi Narayan Shah. Nepal's territorial expansion scaled its boundaries up to Killa Kangra in the west to the river Tista in the east and as far as the northern banks of the Ganges in the south with its capital at Kathmandu. This resulted in a clash with the British East India Company. The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816) reduced the country 's size although Nepal retained its independence. In 1859 Nepal was rewarded, for helping the British during the Indian revolt of 1857, with the restoration of the entire portion of the Terai low lands lying between the rivers Kali and Rapti, which was taken over by the British in 1815.

Historiography of Thars and Jats

The historiography of Nepal concerning the social history seems to be the photocopy of the institution of the Indian Varna system dividing the people into Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The Licchavi King Basanta Dev's (506-532 AD) inscription at Thankot refers to "welfare of the peasants by all eighteen castes including Brahmins at Jaypallika village". Similarly, the inscription (607 AD) at Tistung by Amshuvarma (588-621 AD) speaks about "not allowing violating the Arya code of conduct." Jayastithi Malla of Kathmandu valley legally classified the Newari people into 64 Jats to maintain the class hierarchy and division of labour for the easy extraction of revenue. In the Divya Updesh of Prithvi Narayan Shaha, he claims that Nepal as the land of 4 Jats and 36 Varnas. He does not speak about the Chaturvarna system mentioned in the tenth Mandala of Rigveda and religious literatures. What we get is the names of Jats and Thars such as Panthas, Pandeys, Sas (Khas), Basnyat, Magar, and Thakuri, etc. One may be inclined to think what these

4 Jats and 36 Varnas mean?, or they were only an arbitrary numbers to signify diverse Jats or Thars. To investigate this problem we need to know the meanings of the words Arya, Varna, Thar, and Jat.

The word Arya mentioned in the Rigveda and religious literatures denotes the noble and cultured person; and another meaning may indicate the group of people regarded as civilized and following the norms and values or a dominant religious system. The word "Aryan" is accepted to be the German version of Sanskrit Arya, meaning a race. Varna means color in Sanskrit, Thar and Jat may be taken to mean Caste and Sub-castes respectively for the purpose of analyzing in this paper. Caste may mean according to Senart, a French writer who defines Caste as " a close corporation equipped with a certain traditional and independent organization observing ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction, the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of detrain penalties and, above all, by final irrevocable exclusion from the group. It can mean a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community. It can also mean a social group having two characteristics: (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; and (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group.

Apparently in the imagination of Prithvi Narayan Shaha Varna may have meant as Thar commonly known to the Nepali People in their day to day discourse as a variety or type. We may take it as Thari used in discriminating plants, animals according to their physical features or communities of human beings according to their culture, religion, language and physical features, etc. In Nepali society Varna is also used, especially in rural areas, to classify color of a male or female as "Keti rato varna ki chhe" (the belle is of red or pink color) or "keta kalo varna ko chha" (the boy is of dark color). The great Gorkha King may have said 36 Varnas to mean there are many diverse communities in Nepal having varieties of traditions, beliefs, language and so on. However, the 4 Jats in his opinion and if seen in the light of his Updesh would be Bahun, Thakuri, Khas and Magar who played an dominant role in his conquests; and he tries to explain what posts should be given to different Jats and how to secure their service for the maintenance of the Kingdom.

Did the ruling class or Prithvi Narayan know about the number of communities and ethnic groups in Nepal? Or did the rulers try to gather information about the society so that they would maintain archives and records about the ethnic groups? Even the Mughal ruling class did not make such an effort in the practical plane influenced by the social elites. Before 1769- the unification of Nepal by the Gorkha dynasty, Nepal was the constellation of scattered principalities, mostly in hills. The Brahmans used to play central roles in diplomacy of conquests and relations among the Rajas through the medium of letter, news reporters and spies. Their networks spread out into the plains; dominant among them were the Pandeys, Panta or Panthas, Jaisies or astrologers and Tewaris. The documents maintained by the Brahmans and memory of the key officials depending on oral traditions may have served the political purpose.

It was only in 1999, the Nepali government recognized 61 communities .Social scientists believe that there are more communities than recognized by the state. The recognition accorded by the state to 61communities does not recognize many linguistic communities within some of those groups and other not well-known communities. In the absence of any effective social information gathering system, Prithvi Narayan Shaha may have thought only 36 varnas or communities existed in Nepal, the number 36 may was taken for granted. The Licchavi inscription may mean the 18 Thars or Jats including the Brahmans; it does not show the existence of 4 castes as per the religious texts; the culture under the Licchavis may have been dynamic and open. The word Arya would also mean a person following a religion, norms and values of society at a given point of time; this may apply to the above-mentioned inscription of Amsuvarman. Arya code of conduct would

mean noble or gentle way of living. We have the legal code of Jung Bahadur Rana called Muluki-Ain framed in 1854 AD that attempts to identify the various communities in Nepal into the single framework.

The Caste Hierarchy of the Muluki Ain

1. Caste group of the "Wearers of the holy cord" (tagadhari):- Upadhyaya Brahmin, Rajput (Thakuri) Jaisi Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar Brahmin, Indian Brahmin, Ascetic sects, Various Newar castes 2. Caste group of the "Non-enslavable Alcohol-drinkers" (namasinya matwali): - Magar, Gurung, Sunuwar, Some other Newar castes 3. Caste group of the "Enslaveable Alcohol-drinkers" (masinya matwali): - Bhote (people of Tibetan cultural extraction), Chepang, Kumal (potters), Tharu, Gharti (descendants of freed slaves) 4. Impure, but "touchable" castes (Paani nacalnya choi chito halnu naparnya): - Kasai (Newar butchers), Kusle (Newar musicians), Newar washermen, Muslim, Mlecch (Europeans). 5. Untouchable castes (Paani nacalnya choi chito halnuparnya): - Kami/Lohaar (blacksmiths) and Sarki (tanners/leatherworkers), Kadara (stemming from unions between Kami and Sarki), Damai (tailors and musicians), Gaine (minstrels), Badi (musicians and prostitutes), Chyame (Newar scavengers). The Muluki Ain functioned as a legal code, which regulated punishments according to Jaat status, which included degradation from caste, fine, and mutilation of limbs, etc. The Muluki-Ain also classifies the Jats and Thars not according to Chatur Varna system. For instance, the hill Brahmins are the highest ranked, the Thakuri, from which comes the royal dynasty, are ranked second, the Chetris are ranked third and comes the Newar Brahmin, and the Indian Brahmins are ranked fifth, etc. The Jaats and Thars are also made enslavable and non-enslavable and touchable and untouchable. This legal code may have been framed to accelerate the process of Nepalisation and to attempt at single framework deconstructing the Newari system of 64 castes, in a way to maintain his new hegemony over Nepal. The causes behind the making of Muluki-Ain was due to the desire of dictatorship to avoid contradictions and tensions from the society- bring hierarchy among the people so that no one could interfere in the works of other. The central cause was to protect Nepal from colonialisation by British. Jung Bahadur may have understood the importance of restrictive trade policy adopted by Prithvi Narayan Shaha with regard to foreign imports and foreign merchants entrance into the Kingdom. His instructions were to encourage domestic production by utilizing local resources, by training local producers and by providing them with samples of foreign products. This way money would not flow out of the Kingdom. Herbs, drugs, and other indigenous products be exported to foreign countries to earn money. Indians and their traders, singers and dancers were not to be allowed in Nepal because they would carry away the secrets endangering the Kingdom and making the Nepali pauper. We can see in Muluki-Ain that the Indian Brahmins are not treated as equal to Nepali Brahmins indicating that if Indians were given equal status in a society then they would have dominated the Nepalis establishing trade and business and in government jobs. Jung Bahadur very cleverly did not include the Indians living in tarai region in Muluki-Ain except the Brahmins; what would have happened if large numbers of upper castes from India migrate to Nepal? The Indian upper castes due to the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty dominate 80% of Nepal's economy. In spite of the friendly relation with the British, he believed that, "With the Bible comes the banner, and with the merchant comes the musket". The Europeans and Muslims are called as impure caste in Muluki-Ain debaring them from easy daily discourse in Nepal, for instance Jung Bahadur used to sprinkle holy water from Ganges if he shook hands with any European or Muslim.

Dynamics of the Parbatya people

The people called Parbatya comprising of Bahun, Thakuri, Chetri, Magar, Gurung, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaine, and Badi inhabit the western part of Nepal. This region seems to have been made their homes by the communities such as Kiratas of Mongoloid race mentioned in the Atharvaveda, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Puranas, etc and the Austric people who are also found in the hills of Uttarnchal and Himalchal Pradesh. In west Nepal the Austrics seem to be assimilated among the people who came to this region in the different times. The Kiratas and the Austrics (Dravidians) were

probably food gatherers and hunters along with some sort of crop cultivation- Shifting cultivation. Some of these advanced groups had clannish chieftainships fighting each other for booty and plunder as forests were not cleared for cultivation, and no archeological evidence exists for cultivation. In about 6th century AD, the Mongols from central Asia, probably from east Mongolia, moved to Nepal, these were pastoralists, Iron using and cavalry men. The Mongols defeated the Kiratas and the Austrics and assimilated them into their hordes; some Kiratas moved to east Nepal where already other Kiratas were living. In 7th century, the Tibeto-Mongoloids, calling themselves Tamu or cavalryman, came to this region and clashed with the Mongols but were defeated by them. The Mongols had chiefs called Khan or Khagan, they practiced Shamanic form of Buddhism and nature worship. Their numbers were augmented with the assimilation of people from Manipur and Burma according to their oral tradition leading to the evolution of Magar community; they lived mostly in the lower and central parts of the mountains between the Bheri and Marsyundi rivers and the Tamu occupied a line of country parallel to that of Mongols, to the north of it, and extending to the snows in that direction.

In about the 11th century the Khasas who were the Scythian people belonging to Turko-Mongol race moved to the western Nepal from the hills of Uttaranchal, and Himachal. These Khasas arrived in India during the 2nd century but most probably in the 4th and 5th centuries of Scythian invasions; they gave the names Khasgarh in Central Asia and Kashmir -in local language Khasira. They are categorized as Vratya Kshatriya in Manusmriti- who did not follow the dominant norms, values and cult. I.e. Vedic religion. They carved out a small chiefdom in a part of Tibet bordering Nepal centered at Dullu. In the early twelfth century a Khasa king, Nagaraja, moved his capital down to Sinja in the Karnali basin and established a powerful dynasty, which also controlled the southwest Ladakh. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in 16th century in India writes in his Babur Nama that, "...Beyond Kashmir there are countless peoples and hordes, parganas and cultivated lands in the mountains...no one has been able to give authentic information in reply to our enquiries and investigation. So far people have been saying that they call these hill-men Kas". He also says that Tibet lies to the north of the "unknown horde called Kas". The history of the Khasas is little understood, for they left few written records and only minor ruins at Sinja (now Hatsinja) and Dullu, south of Jumla- (now in Dailekh/). They ruled from 1100-1484 AD. The Khas learnt much from the Mongols, including dry rice cultivation and a sedentary agricultural lifestyle. They were the followers of Shamanism and Buddhism; gradually Hinduism influenced them, and their priests called Lamas or Lamichhanyas and Dhamis became converted into Bahuns-a Khas word for Brahman. Their religion became the amalgamation of Shamanism, Buddhism and Hinduism. They influenced the Mongols and Tamus and were influenced by the later. They used to raid the Kathmandu valley for booty and plunder, especially the name of one Ripu Malla figures here who raided Kathmandu in 1312. The Khasa Kingdom started disintegrating into petty principalities during the last decades of 15th century.

From the 14th century onwards, the Brahmins and Rajputs began moving to west Nepal through the Uttaranchal and Himachal hills. There is no evidence in the Indian Medieval sources as well in Nepali sources of 14th-18th centuries to say that large numbers of Brahmins and Rajputs came to Nepal. It was only in the later part of 18th and 19th and even 20th century that genealogies were constructed and stories invented for most of the Nepali ruling dynasties tracing their lineage to historical or mythical Rajput kings of Rajputana.

As the contemporary Nepali sources are meager; for the Society of Parbatyas, we have to depend on the accounts of British writers though their writings are colored by the coloniser's discourse that the western societies were progressive and dynamic where as the eastern societies were embroiled in atavistic practices and anachronistic ideals of existence. Kirkpatrick and Hamilton give a very limited data on the society between (1811-1813). After the Nepal war (1814-1816), Hodgson amassed a vast amount of data and information about the society as a British Resident to Kathmandu; he arranges the Jats and Thars of Brahman, Khas Chetri, Thakuri, Ekthariah, Magar, and Gurung in his book in 1833 AD.

The Brahmans from plains of India who moved to west Nepal seem to be of priestly occupation seeking patronage in hills, some of them may have gone hills for Tapasya or as Ascetics, and some for peace and security following the Turko-Afghan Invasions and frequent battles among the Indian rulers. Their numbers were less, as there are few Bahuns who trace their origins to Indian plains such as Pandeys to Kangra, Panthas and Pantis to Maharastra, and Tiwaris to Kannauj. Whereas many of the oral traditions of Khasa Bahuns speak of only changing of villages and towns within West Nepal and some of them say about the movement from Kumaon and Garhwal and not beyond it.

These Brahmans could not compete with the Khasa Bahuns who could take to sword as well as priestly function when time demanded and could not make converts in the principalities of the Khasas. The Khasas called them as Khate Bahun- Bahuns from plain area; this crystallized into the Nepali proverb- Khate Bahun le Khat khoj chha- Bahuns from plains search for plain area although such proverbs are used to abuse but we can know how the Khas Bahuns thought of the Brahmans from Indian plains. But enterprising and flexible as these Brahmans were, they soon settled in hills. As they did not bring their women from India, so had to take the daughters of Khasa Bahuns as wives. They were able to make converts among some Magar Chiefs- Khans to Shiva-Shakti cult of Hinduism and granted them the status of Thakur, Hinduised as Khand Thakuri. They had also sensual passions to gratify, as well as ambition; they entered into marriage relations with the Magar and Tamu or Gurung women and to their progeny granted the status of Thakuri- Samal, Rakhsya, Jiva and Sena. These clans became the rulers of Magars and Gurung Chiefdoms; although some Magar polities continued to exist. The Senas in the 16th century established their center at Palpa; they also established their rule at Tanahu, Makwanpur, Butwal, and the Kirata land Vijaypur in the east. This is the cause why most of the Thakuris look like Magars and Gurungs.

Some of the Rajputs also came to Nepal between 15th and 17th centuries, these were military adventurers and some were bound to come due to conflicts among the rulers in India and Turko-Afghan and Mughal conquests. While moving through the Uttaranchal and Himachal hills to west Nepal, some of them remained there. They made relationships with the Magar, and Thakuri rulers and took their daughters in marriage and established small chiefdoms as Thakuris- Shaha, Shahi, Singh, Chohan, Ruchal, Uchai and Jalandhari. Some of their descendants became Ekthariahs ranking with Thakuris. They also patronized the Brahmans and spread the Shakti-Shaiva religion. In 1559, Dravya Shaha - a descendant of the Guhila clan of Mewar in Rajasthan, with the aid of Brahmans and Thakuris attacked the Khasa Khadka chief of Gorkha who was supported by the Magars during a chariot racing festival and killed him, establishing the Shaha dynasty which overran the Khasa and Thakuri principalities. Prithvinarayan Shaha was the descendant of this King who achieved the unification of Nepal.

Before the coming of the Brahmans from plains of India, the Magars and Gurungs practiced pastoralism and swidden types of economic activities. They had communal ownership of land called Kipat system. The gradual establishment of Thakuri principalities and the sanskritisation of Khasas and their patronage of the Brahmans led to the agrarian economy. Land grants began to be made to the Brahmans for religious duties as religion influences the people. The Brahmans taught the people new methods of cultivation engaging ploughshare made of Iron and use of cattle, irrigation system, to predict rainfall, knowledge of seasons and stars or nakshastra- the knowledge of crops and agriculture mentioned in Krishiparshara- a work composed in early Medieval India. This expansion of agriculture and clearance of land was accompanied by the Shakti or Devi worship serving as a fertility cult.

The establishment of Thakuri power sanctified by the Brahmans in Western Nepal brought important changes in religion and society. Hinduism began to be absorbed into Buddhism and Shamanism but it became a dominant discourse receiving patronage from the rulers. The interaction of Rajasthani, Maithali and Avadhi with the Khasa language gave birth to Khas kura or Nepali becoming a link language and mother tongue of Jats except the Mongoloids. The Khate Brahmans

and the Khasa Bahuns united to become one Jat called Bahun through marriage and by prohibiting intermarriage outside the Bahun Jat, as earlier the Khasa Bahuns married from non-Bahun also, and by limiting the membership to the progeny born from Bahun female resulting in the creation of one Jat. If a Bahun married with a Khas woman, his progeny became Khatri Khas; the descendants of Bahuns from Thakuri became Hamal Thakuri, and from any other Jat including Ekthariahs remained in their mother's Jat although they received the clan and gotra of the Bahun- for example Rijal Magar, Lamichhanya Gurung, etc. The Bahuns came to be divided into sects- Kumai and Purbia and particularly, Purbia into Thars- Upadhyaya, Jaisi, and Sanyasi-Giri and Puri. The Khasa Mallas came to be included into Thakuri Jat. But those Khasa who remained Shamanic and Buddhist were excluded from mainstream society and found in Karnali region region having their own form of Khasa language. The Bahuns descended from the Khasa continued to follow Shaman practices and sometimes challenging the dominant discourse in one form or other latently or openly invited wrath from the Shaha rulers and we hear of Shaha rulers harassing the Bahuns, and the Bahuns reacted by blaming the rulers responsible for natural calamities like earthquake and famine by committing such sins. Social myths, norms and values were constructed trying to suppress and encompass the practices of the various Jats and Thars, these were justified with the help of religious texts. We find certain practices like Jari Biha, which were looked down by the Bahuns, among the Khasa just like Magar and Gurung. Widow-remarriage was also looked down upon and the rite of Sati was introduced among the Parbatyas, the royal families used to practice it though common people were also affected by it. Bhimsen Thapa banned the custom of marrying the widow of eldest brother in the early 19th century, practiced by the Khasas, even the Khasa Bahuns also used to practice it. The Thar of Jaisi Bahun emerged from such unsocial practices- the descendants of Bahuns through widow remarriage, and marriage without Vedic rites- they worked mostly as astrologers. The idea of sanctity or purity became the dominant discourse in a society contributing to the idea of God and religion, continuously representing the idea of people's existence. But the idea of purity became a problematic concept even for the social elite because when they represented this idea through their socio-cultural-religious practices, they felt that everything what they believe could not be practiced. And when they tried to resist their entry into different frameworks, they substantiate the idea that other mode of existence was also possible. This problem led the discourse of Jat and Thar to centre on Identity and the concept of purity adjusting with the practices of various Thars and Jats.

Identity has its own form and the tendency of transgression as it is never complete always moving towards completion. The Jat and Thar centered on identity was linked with patriarchy undermining the status of woman especially among the elite- the rich and powerful. The Kings, nobles and rich people used to marry many wives and maintain concubines caring little about the Thar and Jat; and they made their children to be accepted into their father's Jat and Thar with the help of Bahun priests. We have many evidences in Nepalese history to this effect and we can see this among the rich and powerful even today. Identity also gave them dominant space in the society and they became the center and the common people were relegated to periphery. Jung Bahadur Rana tried to create a single framework suppressing the discourses of the Thars and Jats. In his Muluki-Ain, Upadhyaya, Jaisi, Sanyasi and Newar priests were brought under a common Jat called Brahman. Thakuri was given the name of Rajput; and Thars and Jatis of Khasa and Ekthariahs were categorized as Chetri. The Mongoloids are lumped as Matwali and the Kami, Damai, Gaine and Sarki, etc as pani nachalne Jat. Among the common people the Jat was centered on the idea of purity- Jats were made pure and impure according to work and occupation resulting in degradation and expulsion from Jat but not from Thar as the children carried the Thar and gotra of their father to their mother's Jat, this made the woman immobile. But certain features of this concept transgressed the class distinction; a Thakuri would not take rice from even a Upadhyaya Bahun except from his religious Guru, and a Bahun would not take rice cooked by a Chetri. Here Jat acting as a self-enclosed unit limiting social intercourse including messing etc. to members within it. This may not have worked in the practical-political plane.

Identifying the four Jats

The Muluki-Ain defines the Kami, Damai, Sarki and Gaine, etc as the Chhoi chhito halnu parne, pani nachalni Jat. There are no works done on the social history of these Jats and even the British writers did not give the list of their clans. It appears that these Jats are heterogeneous groups consisting of Mongoloid, Austric, Khasa and Indo-European races as they are different from the other untouchables of Indian descent who are Dravidians and Proto-Austroliods genetically.

The word Kami is derived from the Persian term "Kamin", which appears in the 18th century Mughal sources of India, in which this term is used for small peasants, artisans, and landless labourers. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Gorkhas adopted some words from the Mughal Empire like Kazi, Barkazi, Jagir, etc; Kamin or Nepalised Kami was one of them. The Austrics and the Mongoloids were working as artisans and craftsmen during the Khasa rule and the Mongol chiefdoms. The coming of the Brahmans and the establishment of the Thakuri power led to their low esteem in a society and such occupations began to be considered as lowly. But there is no evidence of untouchability. Some of the clans sound like that of Mongoloids and Austrics like Afladhoti, Mar, Labad and Thatera, etc. But most of the clans are same as those of the Chetris and Bahuns; many clans are same as of the Khasa Bahuns. During the later 18th century, and especially the Rana period the number of clans increased as caste came to be centered on the idea of purity and the Bahuns and few Chetris were degraded to the Jat of their wives taken from artisans. The name Kami was given to all these clans.

Nepal had small-scale manufacturing units scattered around the country producing textiles, Iron, copper and many other products like guns, tools, weapons of war, etc. It even used to mint coins for Tibet and exported large quantities of these metals and other metal goods. It seems that these manufacturing units functioned under the guilds - each guild was under a head. A guild or a person was known by the work associated with him like works relating to gold as Sunar; constructing building or makes pots as Od; working on copper as Tamta; one engaged in iron-related works as Lohar, one engaged in making utensils from wood as Chunara; one who constructing good from bamboo as Parki. Some persons choose to work free of the guild. Bahuns and Chetris degraded to Kami Jat used to become such heads of the guilds due to their latent relations in the upper castes and economic power enabling them to dominate the Kamis descended from Mongols and the Austrics (Dravidians). During the Rana period these chiefs called Mijar were entrusted with sorting out issues related to the Jat. This system was developed with the purpose that the community members might not have to go to offices or courts to settle trivial legal matters. A Mijar sometimes used to exploit his people; no appeal was heard against him. The law facilitated the system of degradation from Jat; if a person from higher caste had sexual relation with lower caste woman, he was required to pay nominal or no fine, if he was to marry a woman from lower caste, he was not eligible for 'jarikhat' i.e he did not have to pay fine to the former husband of his wife. A person was degraded to the Jat of his wife but he was allowed to maintain his property; he also kept latent and open relations with his relatives and friends from his previous Jat. He could deal in diamonds and jewelry and practice moneylending. The power and privilege associated with the Mijar may have encouraged the opportunist and poor Bahuns and Chetris to marry Kami women.

On becoming Mijars, they carried the Hindu norms, values and rituals of the upper castes to Kami Jat like menstrual taboo, beef eating as taboo, etc. While the Mijar clans like Gahadraj called Gahatey also (degraded from Jalandhari Thakuri of Humla \Jumla), Rijal, Risyal or popularly Rasaili\Rasali, and Adhikari from Bahun maintain their gotra like Kashyap, Gautam, and Vashist, etc, the other clans from Austrics and Mongols have no gotra or they say Kaushila gotra- a saying that Kamis have only Kaushila gotra. Where as the Kami born from Sarki woman is called Kadara or teen Kami. There are three oral tradition woven in myths among the Kamis. One story is that the Kamis are also Bahuns and Chetris. Some Bahuns stole their Vedas and conspire with the King against them, and without Vedas they became impure and those Bahuns deny them Janai or sacred thread. Another story makes the Kamis as descendants of Vishwakarma- the heavenly

engineer of gods who was the son of Brahma- Bahuns made them lowly by denying the Veda and Janai. The degraded Bahuns and Chetris into Kami might have invented these two separate stories to justify their occupation and existence. These two stories merged in course of time to become one- Kamis are the children of Vishwkarma, they had written the Vedas on the copper plates and had kept at Aaran- work place of the smiths. The Bahuns-children of Brahma stole these Vedas and became priests making the Kamis lower Caste by denying them Janai and study.

The word Damai seems to have been Nepalised from the Rajasthani word Damami- a singing and dancing caste in Rajasthan, this was given to the singers and musicians by the Brahmans and Rajputs on coming to west Nepal. During the Rana rule, their chiefs of guild of textiles were called Nagarchis- similar functions to that of Mijars, some clans came from uppercastes through degradation.

It is not known from where the word Sarki came. They seem to be the descendants of those Khasas who fled to forests when the Thakuris attacked the Khasa kingdoms and forced to eat carrion due to poverty and Prithvi Narayan Shaha once distributed the Thakuri children of the defeated King among the Sarkis. The people who were expelled from society for committing crime also became Sarkis since eating of carrion was considered as impure and most lowly practice. Some upper castes became Sarki through degradation. They had also Mijars similar to that of Kamis.

There seems to have been a class of people called Gandharva moving from place to place informing people about the incidents and giving news through songs during the Khasa times. These were the Khasas, Mongols and Austrics. But the Thakuris and Brahmans considered singing as lowly profession and the Shahas did not patronise them as we can see from Divya Updesh that the singers used to take secrets of the courts. The Shahas did not like them so that they may not take the secrets to other courts in Nepal. In course of time, they came to be known as Gaine- one who sings, and came to be considered as low caste in Muluki-Ain.

The Mijars enjoyed the benefit of small-scale industries and trade till 1923 AD when the Ranas allowed the British goods to enter Nepal and took no interest for technical or industrial development of the country. But the system of degradation continued till 1963 legally making the castes Kami, Damai, etc. This resulted the large number of the clans descended from upper castes mostly Khasas and Khas Bahuns in the lower castes.

Jats and Thars of Parbatya Nepal

Bahun Jaat from Khas:- Dhongyal, Dhungana, Dotiyal, Lamsal, Paudyal, Gilal, Neopanya, Chanvala Gai, Am gai, Baj gai, Devakota, Regmi, Kandaria, Dahal, Khatiwada, Rupakheti, Hamya gai, Khannal, Bikral, Osti, Tumrakot, Soti, Dangal, Sapkota, Koirala, Sattyal, Rimal, Koikyal, Nepalya, Baral, Pokhrel, Rukai, Suyal, Rijal, Loiyal, Kandel, Katuwal, Ukniyal, Vasta gai, Guragai, Gaithaula, Gairaha Pipli, Simkhara, Punwal, Risyal, Bharari, Bagyal, Dulal, Parajuli, Ghurcholi, Kelathoni, Muthbari, Parijai Kavala, Alphaltopi, Maharajila, Singyal, Chapagai, Dhakal, Arjal, Adhikari, Doeja, Ghartmel, Ghartyal, Dhurari, Bhurtyal, Paneru, Loityal, Sighdel, Sutar, Ghimiryia.

Khas found in Karnali region and are not included in Bahun or Chetri jaat:- Dhongyal, Loyal, Lamsal, Khukhriyal, Dangal, Sikhmiyal, Bhiryal, Poudel, Bikral, Khanal, Batyal, Ganjal, Sijal, Chonvala gai, Amgai, Bajgai, Satyagai, Devakota, Garhtola, Soera, Balya, Gilal, Chonial, Regmi, Satonya, Chalatani, Kelathoni, Muri bus, Alphaltopi, Parijai kavala, Bamankota, Porseni, Homyagai, Tumrakot, Rupakheti, Khatiwada, Neopanya, Dahal, Soti, Osti, Kandaraih, Dhungana, Pungyal. But Hodgson even included the plain Bahuns in the list of true Khas like- Prasai, Tewari, Bhattarai, and even Khatri clan called Khatri khatri.

There are some clans that moved to Nepal from Plains of India and not found among the Khas but found among the Brahmans in India:- Bhatta, Bhattarai- Rai is used by Bhumihars

and south Indian Brahmans, Utkali, Nirola, Acharya, Misra, Davari, Dangi, Subedi, Tevapanya, Kaphalya, Chamka saini, Purasaini, Ghorasaini, Chalisya, Satola, Lahoni, Tewari, Panth, Pandey, Timilsina, Dixit, Prasai.

Khas Chetri:- 1. Thapa- Bagyal, Thakuryal, Palami, Suyal, Maharajil, Lamichhanya, Pawar, Ghimiriya, Khulal, Parajuli, Deoja, Gudar.2. Basnyat- Khaptari, Sripali. 3. Khadka- Maharji, Lakangi, Kalikotya.5. Karki- Sutar, Lama, Mundala. 6. Bhandari- Raghuvansi, Lama, Sijapati.7. Adhikari- Dhami, Thararai, Pokhrel, Musiah, Khadsena, Thakuri.8. Bishta. 9. Kunwar- Bagalya, Khulal, Khadka, Arjal. 10. Baniya. 11. Dani.12- Gharti- Kalikotya, Sijapati.

Ektharya Chetri:- Burathoki, Raya, Ravat, Katwal, Khati, Maghati, Chohan, Boghati, Savan, Mahat, Barwal, Bohara, Chiloti, Dangi, Raimanjhi, Bhukandi, Bhusal, Kutal, Dikshit, Prasai, Chokhal, Chohara, Durrah.

Thakuri:- Shaha, Shahi, Malla, Singh, Sen, Maan, Chohan, Chand, Hamal, Ruchal, Jiva, Rakhsya, Samal, Uchhai, Raika, Khan or Khand, Jalandhari, Kalyal.

Magar: - Bhusal, Thapa, Rana, Pun, Aley, Aslami, Yahayo, Saru, Arghounle, Gyangmi, Palami, Gacha, Thada, Byangnasi, Phuyyali, Lamichhanya, Gandharma, Kyapchaki, Durralama, Maski, Charmi, Dutt, Granja, Namjali, Marsyandi, Gelang, Chumi, Lengali, Chituaorai, Singjali, Keli, Jhandi, yangdi, Jhari, Bareya, Rijal, Yangmi, Suryavansi, Thokchaki, Sithung, Lahakpa, Pachhai, Sarangi, Gonda, Dukhchaki, Meng, Sripali, Sijapati, Gharti, Lamsal, Suyal, Panthi, Rakhal.

Gurung:- The Gurungs are divided into 4 Jats and 16 Jats as 4 Jats are Hindu and 16 Jats are buddhists and Shaman followers. According to their oral tradition, one prince Locan with his wife, priest Bali and a slave moved to Nepal Himalayas and lived there. The descendants of the priest Bali are called Lamichhanyas, the descendants of the prince are called Ghale, Lama and Ghotane-making the four Jats. Where as the descendants of the slave are the 16 Jats. This myth was invented to explain the caste system among the Gurungs, the Lamichhanyas are the descendants of the Khasa Bahuns who may have introduced the concept of 4 and 16 Jats among the Gurungs. Their clans are- Ghale, Byapri, Vamjan, Lama, Thathung, Gothi, Gondok, Ghotane, Gohori, Barahi, Gharti, Lamichhanya, Siddh, Karamati, Gosti, Bagalya, Chada, Charki, Khati, Guabari, Pengi, Dhakaren, Khaptari, Ghundane, Dharen, Jimel, Lopate, Lothang, Bulung, Shakya lama, Golanya, Khangya, tange, Ghonya, Painsi, Mengi, Dhalama, Kurangi, Suryavansi lama, Madan, Palami.

Kami:- Agri, Acharya, Aafladhoti, Wokheda, Kadara (Kandara), Kasara, Kallohar, Kalikote, Kaliraj (Shahoo), Kumaki, Kaini, Koirala, Koli, Khadkathoki, Khapangi, Khati, Gajmer, Gajurel, Gadai, Gadaili, Gahate (Gahatraj), Giri, Gotame, Gowa, Ghatani, Ghamal, GhartiGhimire, Ghamghotle, Ghimire (Sijapati and Ghimire also called "Shobh"), Ghotane, Chilime, Tiwari, Chhistal, Jandkami, Thagunna, Thatera, Tiruwa, Dayal/Diyali, Dalami, Darnal, Dudraj (Dudhraj), Dural, Deupate, Dewal, Dhamala, Dhanik (Dhanuk), Niraula, Nepal, Panthi, Palla (Ya), Parajuli, Padhyawati, Pagri, , Pulami, Pokharel, Portel, Poudel, Baraili/Barali/Baral, Bunchebhale, Banskota, Bipali, Bhatta, Bhattarai, Bhusal, Mahilipar, Mar (Mahar), Risyal or Rasali (or Rasaili), Rahpal, Rajilohar, Ramdam/Ramdammoo, Rijal, Ruchal, Raikal, Lakandri, Latopi, Labad, Lamgade (It has three sub-category - Lamakarmi, Lamichhane and Poudeli), Lohani, Lwagun/Luhagun, Shahsankar, Shahoo, Sheral, Sadasankar/Sattasankar, Sapkota, Sani, Sundhuwa, Sunchyuri/Sunchiuri, Singaure, Sijapati, Sirpali (Shripali), Suni, Setipar, Seti Mahara, Setisural, Sonam, Himchyuri etc.

Damai:- Asasai, Aauji, Kandel, Katuwal, Karki (Khulal, Mudula, Lama, Sutar), Kalakhati, Koirala, Khatiwada, Guinde, Gautam (Gotame), Ghatani, Ghale, Chahar, Chuhan, Chhinal, Jairu, Thagunna, Thatal, Daunde, Dholi (also used by those who forgot their sub-caste), Dhyaki, Tiwari/Tikhatri, Thapa, Darnal, Damai Pariyar, Damai Parel, Das, Deukar, Dewal, Nagwag, Nagwan, Nagarchi, Negi, Nepal, Naubag, Pariyar (Achhame, Chudal), Panchkoti/Panchakoti, Bahak, Pokharel, Bardewa, Bagchan, Bagdas, Budhapothi, Boodhapriithi, Baiju, Bhandari, Bhitrikoti, Bhusal, Magar,

Mahate, Mahara, Male, Ranpal, Ranpahenli, Ratna/Ratne, Ratnapariyar, Rana, Raigain, Raika, Ryainjhyain, Lamghate, Luintel, Shinal, Shilal, Shiwa/Siwa (Kukhure, Gotame, Bhede), Samudrasai, Sunal, Sunam, Sunam, Sunchyuri/Sunchiuri, Sudas, Sasmundra, Shahassamudra, Sooji, Hingmang, Hudke etc.

Sarki:- Achchhami/Achhami, Uparkoti, Upreti, Kamar, Koirala, Khatiwada, Giri, Gaire, Gairepipan, Gothe, Ghimire, Chamar, Chudal, Chuhan, Chhatkuli, Thagunna, Chhamarki, Thakursya, Thararai, Dale, Tolangi, Thapaliya, Thak, Daulakoti/Dyaulakoti, Dabe, Dahal, Dulal, Dhamel, Naghali, Pahenli (Panyeli), Purkoti, Batsyal/Basel, Bamrel, Bayalkoti, Bastakoti, Bisunkhe, Bogati, Bhangyal, Bhul/Bheyani, Bhurtel, Mangrati/Magarati (Aaththane, Kala, Khilinge, Doodh, Dhur, Barhathane), Majboti, Malbule, Malbok, Mudel, Ramtel, Ruchal, Roila, Rokka, Lamjel, Lamsal, Shahi, Shrimati/Sirimal, Sarmaute, Siraute, Surkheni, Suyeni, Sejwal, Hitang etc.

Gaines:- The Gaines used to keep on wandering about different places like gypsies, as a result they are found to be mainly settled down in some districts of the Western and mid-western regions, namely, Jumla, Kaski (Batulechaur), Syangja, Gorkha, Tanhun, Palpa, Gulmi, Bhairhawa, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Rukum, Pyuthan, Dang and Salyan. They are also found in the Kathmandu valley and Bhojpur in the eastern region. Some of their clans are named after the places they come from. Their clans are as follows: Adhikari, Kami, Kala Kaushik, Kala Poudel, Kalichan, Gosai, Jogi, Thakuri, Turki, Bahun, Budhathoki, Baikar/Wagyakar, Baistha (Bistha), Bogate, Bhusal, Bhusalparbate, Maheshwar, Meghnath, Bishwakarma, Bishnupad, Samudri, Sai, Sursaman, Setaparbate, Setichan, Hukchingrana etc.

Examples of the Clans common to all the Jats as a result of degradation from caste: -

- a. Palami or Pulami- Khas Thapa Chetri, Magar, Gurung, Kami.
- b. Pachhai- Chetri, Magar.
- c. Khaptari- Basnyat Chetri, Gurung.
- d. Bhusal- Ekthariya Chetri, Magar, Kami, Damai.
- e. Khati- Ekthariya Chetri, Gurung, Kami, Gaine.
- f. Bagale- Chetri Thapa, Gurung.
- s. Rijal- Bahun, Chetri, Magar, Kami.
- t. Lamsal- Bahun, Chetri, Magar, Kami.
- i. Burathoki- Chetri Ekthariya, Magar, Gaine.
- j. Katuwal- Bahun, Chetri, Damai.
- k. Lamichhanya- Bahun, Chetri, Magar, Gurung, Kami.
- l. Sripali- Basnyat Chetri, Magar, Kami.
- m. Sijapati- Khas Chetri, Magar, Kami.
- n. Khulal- Khas Chetri, Magar, Gurung, Damai.
- o. Panthi or Pant- Bahun, Chetri, Magar, Kami.
- p. Durahh- Chetri, Magar.
- q. Thapa- Khas Chetri, Magar.
- r. Suyal, Swal- Bahun, Chetri, Kami.
- s. Gharti- Bhujel, Magar, Gurung, Khas Chetri. (This Gharti seems to be of class nature as it means palanquin bearers belonging to any Jat)
- t. Risyal- Bahun, Kami, Chetri.

In my opinion, the Parbatya people are the mixture of the Mongol, Khasa, Tibeto-Mongoloids, and the few Indian upper castes that merged among themselves and gave a language Nepal and culture although they are divided into Jats and Thars. Only DNA tests may prove or disprove this view.

Referances

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