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## **Caste, Patti and Faction in the Life of a Punjab Village**

By Inayat Ullah\*

The village Tararwala<sup>1</sup> lies four miles south of the river Chenab, on the north bank of the Nullah Wahg which is usually in spate during the rainy season. Whenever this spate synchronizes with an inundation of the river, the paddy fields are flooded, and if the water stands on the fields for more than two days, the crop is destroyed. This has happened practically in all the last seven years, reducing the villagers to abject poverty, and has, in a way, tamed the wild, daring, and proud Jat who live here.

The village lies at the tail end of the minor canal which comes from the Lower Chenab Canal; this makes the water supply of the village more scarce. The cultivators, for whom the rice crop is both, food and cash crop, requiring relatively much water, sometimes give more value to water than to their life. With his simple wooden plow, primitive tools and emaciated livestock, the farmer toils for three months under the scorching sun of June, July and August. In the exacting process of cultivation of the crop, all the village people take part — and this labor in Pakistani climate influences to various degrees the social attitude of the villagers.

Other crops sown are wheat, tobacco and sugar-cane, but they are just enough for local needs.

The rice is sold at the Hafizabad market, 15 miles from the village. The village is connected with Hafizabad by a road for 10 miles; the rest is a muddy zig-zag trail, hardly passable in the rainy season. Hafizabad is a famous rice market of West Pakistan, situated on the railway line connecting Rawalpindi and Lyallpur, where influences of modern life and rural culture are hesitatingly embracing one another. The area is an old settlement, and Tararwala is perhaps one of the oldest villages of the area.

The majority of the landowning class in this area are Jats; and Tarar, a subcaste of the Jats, are most powerful in every respect. The membership in the Provincial Assembly, in the District Board, and all other important public offices belong to Tarar members. In the area they are known for their shrewdness, intelligence, diplomacy, power-hunger and pride, while their opponents blame them for lack

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<sup>1</sup> A fictitious name.

of fidelity and honesty. The social goal of life of an individual and thereby of a family is to be effective and powerful enough to be of help to friends and awe the enemies. Success of a family and an individual in life is measured by the extent of one's influence over other people. A person who has no enemy, whom nobody fears and whom nobody obeys is a worthless person. This social philosophy is shared by all Jats of this area, but Tarars are its fervent exponents and strict followers.

The village has one mosque in the center, to which two bath-rooms and one lavatory, meant to be used by all villagers, are attached; along with the mosque is one room where the travellers with lower status, peddlars, pawndas<sup>2</sup>, etc. stay at night. Other visitors would stay in the village *dera*<sup>3</sup>. There are two *dera* now in the village. In winter fire is ignited there, around which the villagers sit and gossip. There are two such "fire-places", and all families take fire for use in the house or the *huqqa*<sup>4</sup> from it. The *Dhooandar*, who arranges this fire, is paid in grain by every family in each of the two harvesting seasons. In summer, when the men are free from work, they sit under the shade of a tree, sleep, play cards or *pasha*<sup>5</sup>. There are 4 such clusters of trees under which the villagers sit. There is no common well in the village; practically all land-owning families have installed hand-pumps in their homes. The rest either take their water from these pumps or get it from some well working near the village.

The village has one Primary School, opened in 1952; as there is no special building for the school, the teachers take their class in one courtyard of a *dera*. There is no playground in the village, where children or older persons could play.

The village houses are in a compact form. There is only one separate colony of Sansis<sup>6</sup> which is almost a furlong away from the village. Only a few families live at their farms. Everybody except

<sup>2</sup> An Afghan nomadic tribe which during the winter moves into West-Pakistan villages. They earn their living by building adobe walls; they often stay in mosques during the night and beg their meals from door to door.

<sup>3</sup> A common sitting room of a *patti* or village, where villagers sit together usually during the evenings or mornings. Common guests of the *dera*-owning families are entertained here.

<sup>4</sup> Hubble bubble, or water-pipe.

<sup>5</sup> A game, usually played in summer noons in Punjab villages. 8—12 persons can play together.

<sup>6</sup> A caste without any codified religion; they sometimes eat the meat of dead animals, are known for committing thefts, and have a special language of their own which they speak only among themselves. Economically very depressed. They live usually outside the main colony of the village. Now most of them have embraced Islam and are called "*Dindars*". Some of them have recently adopted agriculture as their profession.

the Sansi are Muslim and belong to the Sunni sect. There are 100 families (450 persons) in the village; 12 families with 46 members are refugees. Table 1 will show the caste composition of the village. The heterogeneous caste composition of the village is obvious from it. The castes can be divided, first into 2 broad categories: *zamindars* and *kammis*. The zamindar castes include all those agricultural castes who are landowners or whose ancestors were. They are called Jat. Jat in these villages is synonymous with agriculturists, and nobody understands it to be a separate caste. There are 14 Jat castes in the village, with 168 members. All except the Tarars came to the village

Table 1: Caste Composition of the Village

Name of caste	persons	families	Name of caste	persons	families
1) <i>Zamindars</i> :			2) <i>Kammis</i> :		
Tarar	38	7	Teli (Oilpresser)	21	6
Warraich	14	3	Barber	15	4
Cheema	7	1	Machhi (Water-carrier)	25	6
Gondal	2	1	Kumhar (Potter)	23	6
Hajra	9	2	Mochi (Shoe-maker)	28	4
Bawra	4	1	Lohar (Blacksmith)	7	1
Faqir	10	2	Tarkhan (Carpenter)	11	2
Joya	22	4	Julaha (Weaver)	24	4
Bhatti	6	1	Arain	7	1
Gakkhar	9	1	Mirasi	10	2
Rajput	23	6	Musalli	81	19
Awan	6	2	3) <i>Miscellaneous</i> :		
Sangrana	11	2	Sayyed	8	1
Lilla	2	1	Dindar (Sansi)	17	5
Mangat	12	1	Unknown	12	4

two or three generations ago. As already mentioned, the Tarar are a domineering caste in this as well as other nearby villages. All other Jats have no political influence in the area, except the Hajra; the others have their separate territories of influence in the district, though they are not influential in this specific area. All Rajputs are refugees; they have been allotted the land left by Hindus.

All non-agriculturist castes, i. e. craftsmen or unskilled labourers, are included in the *kammis*. Every kammi caste has a distinct social and economic function in the village. Kammis are stratified within their own group; for instance, the blacksmith and barber are regarded as higher castes than the Musallis.

There is one Sayyed family in the village which is revered by the whole village, although they do not own land and have no *murids*<sup>7</sup>.

Caste has a special significance in the rural life of Pakistan. The first question to be asked from a visitor is about his caste, as this information decides whether he is to be given a cot to sit on or he

<sup>7</sup> A person who accepts the religious guidance of a person for his whole life becomes his *murid* (pupil). Such a guide is known as a *pir* (see below).

is to seat himself on the ground; and whether a special meal is to be cooked for him, or whether ordinary food would be sufficient. If he belongs to a Jat caste, he will receive better treatment than a kammi. A Jat in dirty rags will be seated on a cot, while a clean, even fashionable kammi is to sit on the ground. The pot from which the kammi has eaten and drunk anything is essentially to be washed, before a Jat would use it. A Jat would never give his daughter to a kammi; the daughter of a kammi could be married by a Jat, if he liked it, but there is strong social pressure against it, and such a marriage may result in a boycott by the community. It will definitely lower the status of the person concerned. There is no such case in the village Tararwala.

Inter-caste marriages among the zamindars are permissible, but some castes disapprove an exogamous marriage, especially of their daughters. When there is no such prejudice, the economic position, the moral reputation and the caste of the family are taken into account. When both were not ideal, economic considerations would outweigh moral ones. A landowning family or caste would dislike to give their daughter to a non-landowning family of their caste or other castes. However, a bride could be taken even from a non-landowning zamindar.

In Tararwala, the zamindar castes have no such prejudice against one another, but considerations of economic status make such inter-caste marriages within the village less frequent. There is one case of a marriage between Tarar and Hajra, in which the bride is a Hajra; in a second case, the bride is Tarar and the bridegroom is Mangat. This last marriage was strongly resented by the Tarars, but as the girl was a widow, she could not be dissuaded. An attempt to marry a Tarar girl by a Warraich was prevented by the caste. There is only one case of intra-caste marriage in the village in the Warraich caste.

Kammis have their own customs of inter-caste marriages. The Mochi, Machhi, Kumhar, the Barber, the Arain, Mirasi, Mussali and Teli would never marry outside their own castes. The blacksmith and the carpenter could, but the general tendency is towards endogamous marriage. There are a few cases of inter-caste marriages among the Mussali, but none in the other castes.

For the individual, caste has an emotional significance, too. Any honourable deed done by any member anywhere, is a source of pride to all caste brothers. A misdeed by a member, however, would be a slur on the face of the whole caste and members of the caste would feel it. This is specially strong, when any woman of the caste is charged with irregular sex relations. Usually, every member of the

caste feels it his duty to defend his caste against every sort of accusation and to live up to the traditions of the caste.

When a member of the caste is maltreated, the other members will try to defend him. In case he is the aggressor, support is expected but is not necessary, and the caste would not feel such negligence strongly. When both parties belong to the same caste, caste brethren would reproach both members. When any member of the caste is educated and thus has achieved higher status, he is expected to help his group without any moral scruples. Morality is too weak an excuse to override the rights of the caste.

Ownership of land is a sign of wealth and power. One who wants to become more powerful, should have more land. Most of the land in the village is concentrated in the hands of the Tarars. The other agriculturist castes could buy land, but prejudice against the sale of land is very strong; it is regarded as a preposterous step, a sign of a dwindling position of the family. Therefore, when someone tries to buy land, the demand usually remains unsupported by supply. But whenever there is such an opportunity, every family would try to purchase it, even if they have to sell ornaments, cattle and to mortgage their land. There has been no case of sale of land by the Tarars to the other agriculturist castes, though there are some such instances and several attempts to buy land from other castes. The kammi could not buy land, before the abrogation of the Punjab Land Alienation Act (1901); but even after the abrogation there is no case of purchase of land by a kammi in the village. Even if a kammi is able to buy, his status would not improve for two or three generations, unless he migrates over to some other place, where his original caste is not known.

### **Patti**

After the caste, the next important social group for the villager is his *patti*. Originally, it was an administrative division of the village for the collection of revenue. The revenue authorities appointed one member of the families who have an immediate ancestor in common for this purpose and he was called "*Lambardar*". All such families with the *Lambardar* as their head, constituted one *patti*. In any village, there could be one or several *pattis*, usually each having its own *lambardar*. Gradually this institution has become a distinct social group, and all those *moens*<sup>8</sup> and tenants who exclusively depend upon one such *patti* for five or six years become members of that *patti*. The landowning families are the nucleus around which

<sup>8</sup> The official designation for village artisans and labourers; a substitute for the discriminating word "kammi".

they rally. For the landowning families, however, membership is automatic and cannot be changed, while for the other classes it is a basically economic arrangement and can be severed at any time.

Usually, the village population is clearly divided among such pattis. But in some cases the non-landowning families could have relations with several pattis. Pattis tend to be self-sufficient economically and socially; every member, when in need of financial help, would first seek it from his patti. When he is teased or troubled by anyone, he would invoke the help of his patti. In any ceremony within the patti, presence of every member is expected. Frequency of visits is higher within the patti families. Between landowning and non-landowning families a special kind of relation is developed: the artisans and moeans of the patti could come into the house of the landowning families even if the women observe *purdah*. They can take fodder from their fields without prior permission.

Table 2: Patti Composition of Tararwala

Name of caste	Patti	M	N	G	S	Family common to pattis			Total
						2	3	4	
Tarar	2	3	2	—	—	—	—	7	
Warraich	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	3	
Mangat	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	
Cheema	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Gondal	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Hajra	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	2	
Bawra	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Faqir	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	
Joya	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	
Bhatti	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Gakkhar	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	
Rajput	1	—	—	3	—	—	2	6	
Awan	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	
Sangrana	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	
Lilla	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Teli	3	1	—	—	1	—	1	6	
Barber	1	—	2	—	1	—	—	4	
Machhi	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	6	
Kumhar	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	6	
Mochi	1	—	2	—	1	—	—	4	
Lohar	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	
Tarkhan	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	
Julaha	1	—	—	—	—	3	—	4	
Arain	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	
Mirasi	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	
Mussali	16	—	1	—	1	1	—	19	
Sayyed	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	
Dindar	2	1	—	—	1	1	—	5	
Unknown (refugee)	1	—	—	2	—	1	—	4	
Total families	52	7	14	5	8	8	6		

There are four such pattis in Tararwala; they are in Table 2 denoted by the first letter of the respective patti lambadar's name. As can be seen, 78% of the families are attached to one or the other patti. The rest are linked to more than one. But out of 35 agriculturist families, only four are associated with more than one patti. These families are of peasant-proprietors-cum-tenant origin, who by virtue of their being landowners belong to one patti, but due to their being tenants belong to another patti. Among the artisan castes, 24 out of 34 are exclusively attached to one of the 4 pattis. Only ten families have relationships with more than one patti. 17 out of 29 labourer families are associated with one patti. The Mirasi and Sayyed castes have relations with all the pattis, and the carpenter and blacksmith also belong to all.

Patti M is the largest in the village. It is more than ten times larger than the smallest patti. It is comparatively more heterogeneous in respect to castes. Moreover, almost 70% of the cultivated area belongs to this patti. 16 out of 19 labourer families are attached to it. Heterogeneity is the weakness as well as the strength of this patti: it makes it more extensive, while at the same time it weakens its internal unity.

### Factions

The social and economic life of the village cannot be understood with the help of only these two groups of caste and patti. The faction has a far deeper influence. It is a secondary group, super-imposed on the other primary groups, sometimes running parallel, sometimes across them, seeking cohesion in order to ascertain power or to meet a similar challenge from another group.

Faction, thus understood, is mainly a product of the agricultural rural life. Its membership is more or less optional and not automatic like that of the family, caste and patti; it sometimes breaks these groups. Unity among heterogeneous membership is sought in order to meet a threat to the economic interests, social status or political supremacy of a member family or group. A temporary division in the village population over some minor dispute is not yet a faction, as the life of a faction is for relatively longer periods.

The faction in its climax becomes a strongly totalitarian group. Efforts are made to harmonize the economic interests and social activities of every member family to that of the group through social control till no aspect of the individual life remains uncontrolled.

Within the faction, each member family is assigned a definite role. Some guide and lead the faction. Some finance it in times of trouble. Others provide the hands to fight. Social inequality which is quite

sharp otherwise, is reduced within the faction, as it is less determined by birth or caste privileges and more by devotion to the cause of the group. Desertion of one's faction lowers the moral credit of the family. It is usually regarded an unpardonable offence. As reported by M. L. Darling 23 years ago, such factions existed in almost 75 % of the villages of the Punjab. Now, they are declining. Tararwala is one of these unfortunate villages which still have factions.

There are three distinct factions in it. The two great factions, M and G, emerged twenty years ago. In the meantime there have been several defections and shifts of loyalties and attachment. The third faction emerged only after the murder of the leader of faction M by faction G, as a split in faction G<sup>9</sup>. The leading group of faction G was arrested and some families of it who had not participated in

Table 3: Caste Composition of the Factions in 1957

Name of caste	Faction M	N	Families connected with		
			G	two factions	all factions
Tarar .....	3	2	1	1	—
Warraich .....	—	—	3	—	—
Mangat .....	—	—	1	—	—
Cheema .....	1	—	—	—	—
Gondal .....	1	—	—	—	—
Gakkhar .....	—	—	1	—	—
Faqir .....	1	—	—	1	—
Hajra .....	—	—	—	2	—
Sangrana .....	2	—	—	—	—
Bawra .....	1	—	—	—	—
Joya .....	4	—	—	—	—
Lilla .....	1	—	—	—	—
Awan .....	2	—	—	—	—
Rajput .....	2	—	—	1	3
Bhatti .....	1	—	—	—	—
<hr/>					
Teli .....	3	—	—	2	1
Barber .....	2	—	2	—	—
Machhi .....	4	1	1	—	—
Kumhar .....	5	—	—	1	—
Mochi .....	1	—	2	1	—
Lohar .....	—	—	—	—	1
Tarkhan .....	—	—	—	1	1
Julaha .....	1	—	—	1	2
Arain .....	1	—	—	—	—
<hr/>					
Mirasi .....	—	—	—	—	2
Mussali .....	15	—	1	2	1
Sayyed .....	—	—	—	—	1
Dindar .....	3	1	—	1	—
Unknown (refugee) ..	1	—	—	3	—
<hr/>					
Total families .....	55	4	12	17	12

<sup>9</sup> Each faction is denoted with the initial letter of the name of the respective leaders of the 3 factions.

the murder were driven out of the village. Later, these families were admitted back into the village on promise to join the faction M. But in fact, mistrust and suspicions remained always present. When the arrested members of faction G were released, they did not re-admit the deserting families, as the latter failed to prove their loyalty to the faction. This social isolation has developed in them a faction consciousness with distrust towards faction M and hatred towards the parent faction G.

From Table 3 it can be seen that factions extend their hold over 71% of the families of the village. These families are exclusively attached to one of the three factions. All families belonging to M and G have a hostile attitude towards one another. But this hostility is most intense among the families which are the nucleus of the factions and decreases among the outer, "parasitic" families. In faction M the nucleus families are of the Tarar caste, while in faction G Mangat, Warraich and Tarar together constitute the base of the faction.

The nucleus families of each faction would not have any social or economic relations with one another; no member of these families would speak to his counterpart. They would not sit, play, or smoke *huqqa* together; wherever any member of one of the nucleus families of one faction is sitting, members of nucleus families of the other faction would not sit. They would not exchange greetings. Everybody would try never to let his cattle nor himself go to the fields belonging to the other faction. They would not sell to or buy things from one another. They would not rent or borrow land. They would not participate in any social ceremony with them. They would not even perform the "Id" and the usual prayers together. Even on sad occasions like a funeral, the hostility would persist. Attempts would be made to cause harm to the other faction whenever possible, openly or secretly: false rumours, damaging the honour of the other group would be spread; stories of sexual infidelity coined and circulated. Efforts would be made whenever possible to turn any benefit of the others into a loss. False evidence and sometimes fictitious suits would be lodged to harm the others.

In the inner families of both main factions some families are Tarar. But the caste ties have been disrupted by faction fights. Caste attachment and feeling for each other are totally absent. The attitude of the "caste brothers" belonging to different factions is not different from the general pattern of hostility. If a fight starts between 2 factions, caste brothers would not spare one another. This hostility is weaker in the outer, "parasitic" member families. These parasitic

families, like the tenants, artisans and labourers, are ceremonially and economically dependent upon the nucleus families. Out of the 28 castes of the village, only three castes: Tarar, Mangat and Warraich, are nucleus families, the other castes are parasitic. They side with the nucleus families in every crucial matter, but normally they sit, speak and smoke *huqqa* together with members of another faction. Sometimes, however, the faction leadership would not allow even these parasitic families to attend social functions or have economic transactions with the others. The outer families would not act in a manner harmful to their group, and wherever there is a quarrel or fight, they would side with their respective factions.

### Caste and Faction

As stated above, the third faction N is still in its infancy: the parent faction G is strongly against them, but M is indifferent towards them.

Table 3 shows that out of three nucleus castes, the Mangat and Warraich have associated themselves with faction G *in toto*, but when both factions were in their infancy, the Warraich caste was split: one family associated itself with faction M. But when faction G murdered the leader of M, and thus became stronger, the Warraich in M shifted over to G. Since then it is with faction G. The third nucleus caste, Tarar, has been sharply divided into three factions. Before inception of the present factions, this caste had rarely any inter-marriage within themselves, but patti division had already stirred up rivalry among them; therefore, when the factions emerged, the caste ties could not prevent the Tarars from splitting up. In the parasitic zamindar castes, no such split within the caste is visible, except that some families of Hajra, Rajput and Faqir have assumed neutrality towards both factions. The neutral families are economically attached to one faction, but socially to the other. At this stage, such relationship is possible, but when factions move to more serious situations, neutrality is to be given up. This has been the case with the Hajra caste which had to move out of the village. They were tenants of faction M, but had marital relations with G, when the leader of M forced them to sever their relations with G, the caste moved out. Similarly, the Gakkhar caste was an old tenant of M, but when they married their daughter to one member of G, they were ejected from the land; then faction G gave them land. All Rajputs are refugees; out of their six families, 3 have adopted neutrality towards all, one towards two, and 2 families have aligned themselves with M. As the refugees have no past relation with the local population, neutrality in their case is possible. The two families that have exclusively aligned themselves with M are economically

dependent upon M. The Sayyed caste is by virtue of its sanctity common to all factions.

Splitting of castes due to factions is more common among the *kammis*, but as in normal times factions do not exercise a tight control over social or economic relations between parasitic families of different factions, this split does not necessarily go against caste ties. Usually, the faction leadership keeps an eye on the parasitic families' inter-family relations, so that they may not develop so strong ties as to weaken the unity of the faction. The faction leadership would, however, not tolerate such relations between parasitic families of their faction and nucleus families of the opponent factions. Some parasitic families which had other reasons to have such relations are usually placed in trouble; they show as if they do not have any inclination towards nucleus families of the other faction, but secretly they would have their own way.

Table 3 shows that only 29% of the families are such which are not aligned exclusively to any particular faction. 12% families can be called the "citizens" of the village, who would not find group loyalties stronger than claims of village unity, and who could be expected to unite for any common cause of the village. But as the majority of these 12% belongs to the lower class, they do not prove effective in village affairs. Moreover, within themselves, they are not bound by any strong social or economic ties and lack group consciousness. 17% families have relations with two factions. But that does not mean that they have a hostility towards the third faction; in fact, they are just indifferent towards it, and have no economic or social concern with it. But as again practically all these families are from the poor stratum, they play no role in village politics. This discussion indicates, that in Tararwala ordinarily the families and individuals have to pay some attention to the demands of the caste groups, but in important social and economic decisions the faction over-rides the caste.

#### **Faction and Patti**

We have above described the patti, which originally was a division for the collection of revenue, but which gradually assumed the character of a social institution. When twenty years ago factions emerged, they could not change the administrative set-up of the patti, but the social aspects of it had to undergo several re-shuffles. Patti N disintegrated. One nucleus family joined faction G and two joined M. The latter had marital ties with the nucleus family of M. Later, when the family which joined G deserted the faction and was temporarily admitted to M, this patti totally became a part of faction M. But

as the mistrust continued, one family of N felt socially isolated. When the leader family of M and this family together installed flour mills, the rivalry led to an antagonism and a third faction emerged. One of the remaining 2 families of patti N broke with M and joined the faction of its patti. The cause, it is said, was enmity between these two families on the basis of some sexual offence. When the landowning families of patti N were split up, the non-landowning families had no obligation to join any particular faction. They joined the faction suited best to their interests.

With factions patti G disintegrated, too: one family joined M. But later, when the conflict between M and G became more serious, it became neutral. Before Partition (1947), patti S belonged to the Hindus. They have now been replaced by Rajput refugees. It remained intact even after the emergence of factions. However, the majority of its families became neutral, while two families with less economic resources joined faction M. A juxtaposition of Tables 2 and 3 reveals that the attachments of the artisans, tenants and labourers remained to the same families. When a patti converted itself into a faction, their loyalties did not change. The study of patti and faction indicates another conclusion: that the patti division of the village which breeds more or less social exclusiveness, sometimes accelerates and supports the disintegrative process of the faction in the village.

### The History of Factions

The village was not always in such dismal conditions as at the present time. Twenty years ago, it was a different village, in which people spoke more of peace, harmony and co-operation and less of conflict. At that time, the population was even more heterogeneous, as almost 30% of the people were Hindus, including 3 Sikh families. The ownership of land was then less concentrated as now. Cultivation of rice was not yet common, and canal irrigation had not completely replaced the earlier well-irrigation. After the day's work, the old people would all sit together in the *dera*, smoking huqqa and talking on every possible topic concerning village life; the youth would play various games until late at night. Exchange of implements and borrowing of seeds, etc. was common. Disputes would be settled within the village, and the *pareh*<sup>10</sup> would strongly take note of any quarrel. Whenever any villager was called by the police, everybody would be anxious about his return. And the police would not be able to secure evidence even against the guilty person. If there was a theft in the village, the whole village would unite to find it out. Every external

<sup>10</sup> An assembly of village leaders to decide any dispute in the village.

encroachment would be resisted unitedly. Women rose early in the morning, churned the milk, cooked the food and carried it to the fields. At noon, back from farm work, they would sit under the shady trees in groups gossiping about the prospective matches and prices of the crops. Whenever there was a rumor about a murder in the neighboring village, everybody would be terrified and women would say: "God save us from faction; they are a curse." The daughter of any person was the daughter of the village, nobody could dare to talk to a young woman going to the fields with her *bhatta* (noon meal). Such an offence would not be overlooked. Anybody talking against the character of a girl would be immediately checked and told: "You, too, have daughters and sisters." All sad or joyous occasions all villagers would share. Visiting marriage parties would be greeted by all. Everybody would be ready to work and offer milk, *charpoy* (bed) or fodder. At sad occasions the women would immediately visit the bereaved family. The men would join the *janaza* prayers and afterwards say the *fatiah*. The village mosque was thronged with faithful worshippers. The *maulvi* (religious scholar) would be frequently invited to the village. When the *maulvi* talked about the horrors of the Day of Judgment for the liar, backbiter, thief and murderer, the audience would be shuddered and the next day previous quarrels would be amicably settled.

At that time, Hindu and Muslim were two well-marked communities. Though they were socially separated, they were economically and politically interrelated. Hindus had their own *patti* and the Hindu agriculturists there usually preferred an harmonious life, never aligning themselves with any faction group even later. But the Sikh priest (*Bhai ji*) would not remain unconcerned towards village strifes. Once the Sikh priests slaughtered an animal in a way the Muslim population did not like. The leader of one faction mobilized public opinion against them. Some families of *patti G* sided with the priests. This aggravated the worsening relations of the two *pattis G* and *M*. Some time later, a quarrel arose over card-playing between a Sikh priest and the son of the leader of *patti M*. The priest attacked him with a sword. He received minor injuries. But the leader of *M* planned such a revenge that the priests had to run away. Later he brought with him the uncle of the leader who reconciled them.

Meanwhile, there were some changes in the socio-economic set-up of the village. Some of the Hindus who lived in cities and had land in the village wanted to sell it. The leader of *M* bought all such land. He received some land from the government also, which at that time was distributed in Multan District to farmers of this area. This im-

proved the economic position of the M leader, and as some parasitic families shifted over to his patti, it grew stronger as well as more prosperous. Later, leader M married his educated son to the daughter of a nearby landowner, who died after a few years and the ownership of his land was transferred to his son-in-law. Later, leader M gave his daughter to an influential landlord of another village and betrothed his son to another landlord's daughter. In this way, according to his own words "he took the hairs of his *sharik* (sharers of power and property) under his feet". Along with this, he made friendship with influential leaders of other villages. He would send grain to the police officers to win their support. Such a change increased the influence and power of patti M, and the role of others in village affairs became insignificant.

This change had some advantages to the village: the police could now not directly harrass the villagers, in fact, no outsider could coerce them. The village was safe from thefts, and if there happened such an incident, the leader of M knew how to tackle it. Patti G and the Sikh priest were jealous of this expanding influence, but they could not openly challenge his authority.

To achieve more unity between the pattis, M arranged a betrothal between a boy of the Warraich family and a girl of a Tarar family of patti N. But later he found this union a potential threat to his influence and he tried to undo it. The families concerned took it as a point of honour and refused to comply with his wishes. M, therefore, ejected the Warraich family from his land. The family survived this blow. Then he got a suit filed against them by a relative of them. On this, patti N, G and the Sikh priests and the "rebellious" Warraich family became allies: the factions took birth. This unity further heightened the fury of M. Strict social and economic measures were applied against all faction members, but especially the Warraich family. The artisans belonging to patti M were prohibited to work for the other faction. No person belonging to faction M could share common interests with any member of the other faction. G could not use the only indigenous flour mill in the village. They had to bake their breads at home, and could not get it any more from the common "*tandoor*". They were excluded even from collective religious practices. Participation in death or marriage ceremonies of the other faction was strictly prohibited. The friends of the enemy were a potential enemy according to M. As most of the land in the village belonged to M, the faction G had only limited pastures for grazing. If their cattle trespassed the fields of M, it would be sent to the Police Station. The crops of faction G might be drying, while on

the other side there would be abundant water in the land of faction M.

This boycott brought the Warraich family to knees. They offered an apology for their insubordination, which was not accepted. M wanted a public apology. The Warraichs went to his married daughter and "placed a cloth"<sup>11</sup> upon her. She recommended them to her father. Temporarily, the strict controls were relaxed, but the dark suspicions could not be cleared. Mistrust and doubts sustained the suspended hatred.

In the meantime, a dispute arose about claims to a particular period of water for irrigation between M and one family of patti G. M directed the water to his fields by force. To resist it, a woman lay down in the water channel, and when she was physically thrown out, a complaint was lodged with the police. But the police officers had friendship with M . . . Now the hostility between both factions was renewed with more intensity. M placed an unlicensed gun in the cattle-yard of the Warraich family and got it detected by the police. Some stolen animals were driven to the same cattle-yard, and the police challenged the Warraichs. One member of this family married a widow with property. M approached the widow's relatives and a case was filed against the married couple. Some other case was instituted against another member of the faction. Faction G approached the Senior Police Officers. Twenty members of each faction were bailed as a security measure. Other members of the faction rarely had disagreed with M in this policy, only his married daughter strongly disliked it and sometimes informed her father of the consequences. The old uncle of M told him that he feared that some day he would be hearing the news of his death. M would reply: "Dear uncle, the night I have to sleep in the grave-yard, I cannot live on the back of the earth. But my enemies are too weak and too coward for my life. Once they laid a trap for me on the way, but when the hooves of my horse resounded, they ran away."

Every day some member of faction M would come to M and tell him about some dangerous plan being hatched by faction G, but M was too strong for such news. One night, when M was preparing for a journey to the Sheikhupura District, his sons advised him to take his unlicensed pistol with him, but he did not. Only one person accompanied him with a stick, when he went to attend the court. When they left the village and were passing by a garden, seven persons belonging to faction G armed with sticks and knives murdered

<sup>11</sup> When a person finds no means to improve his relations with another person or no means to gain his favour, he would go to his daughter and place a cloth on her. This would prove invariably an effective device.

him. The dead body was brought back in a cart. When faction M knew the news, it besieged the houses of faction G. But all male members had fled. Seven persons were later involved in the case and jailed. All member families of G who had no member involved in the murder tried to achieve reconciliation. They were admitted to the village when they joined M. For two years, no male member of G was allowed to enter the village. Their fields remained uncultivated, and their houses unrepaired.

After two years the case was decided in favour of G. For three months the murderers did not enter the village. When they came, the old tussel was resumed with new fury. Members of each faction would walk in groups with rifles and sticks. They would place one person at night to watch. One of the leaders of the murdering gang was besieged in his house; he escaped somehow. Retaliation followed. Soon, the successor of M, his older son, was chased by an armed group. On this, faction M gathered all their strength to decide the question once and for all. Some wise mediation averted the clash. But it was gathered from this that faction G was no longer weak. The two families that had deserted G wanted re-admission to their parent faction. They had not yet become trusted members of M. The family belonging to patti G was re-admitted, but the other family belonging to patti N was refused admission. This laid the foundation for the emergence of a third faction N.

As faction G was growing stronger, it demanded back its supply of water, thus far forcibly used by M. Faction M resisted. It called reinforcements from relatives, and one dark night when about ten members of M were guarding the water supply, armed with rifles and sticks, G made a sudden attack and killed one prominent member of M. In this feud, a group of M incidently got hold of the leader of G. They killed him, cut him into pieces and threw him into the river. About 25 persons were challenged from both sides; after a year, all were set free. In the meantime, the village became poorer. The recurrent floods destroyed the crops for seven years. The litigation expenditure forced the nucleus families to sell their ornaments. Both factions after exhausting their energy decided to avoid any further clash. For 3 years life in the village was less turbulent. One day, somebody asked the sons of the murdered leader of G: "Where is the grave of your father?" At night the sons were detected when they placed a ladder to the house of the younger son of M. Both factions were re-alerted and alarmed, but no incident followed. As mentioned earlier there are further splits in G, and one prominent family has left the village for good.

The last time when I visited the village this winter (1956/57), a "pir"<sup>12</sup> had come to the village. The leader of M was requesting the *pir* to pray for the village, as there was such division and disunity in it. A proposal was made that all members of the factions would assemble in the presence of the *pir* and he would pray for them. Whether the prayer of the *pir* will be successful to wipe out from the minds of the successors of the three murdered persons the ugly past, is unpredictable. A villager, however, would answer this question with a categorical "no".

### Synopsis

#### Kaste, Patti und Faktion im Leben eines Punjab-Dorfes

Im sozialen Leben eines Dorfes im Punjab, das hier unter dem Namen *Tararwala* erscheint, sind drei Einteilungsprinzipien wirksam: Kaste, „Patti“ und „Faktion“. — Die Kasten zerfallen ihrerseits in zwei Hauptgruppen, die *Zamindar* und die *Kammi*, wovon die erste alle (auch die ehemaligen) Landbesitzer-Kasten umfaßt, die zweite alle übrigen, d. h., Handwerker und ungelernete Arbeiter. Die Zugehörigkeit zu einer landbesitzenden Kaste bringt — unabhängig vom tatsächlichen Vermögen — eine Reihe von sozialen Privilegien mit sich, während die *Kammi*-Kasten eine zweitrangige Stellung einnehmen. Heiraten zwischen beiden Gruppen kommen praktisch nicht vor; zwischen den einzelnen *Zamindar*-Kasten sind Ehen zulässig, doch wird auch hier meist die Endogamie bevorzugt. Die Mitglieder jeder Kaste sind durch ein starkes Gruppengefühl verbunden, das sich vor allem in Prestigerücksichten und Hilfsverpflichtungen auswirkt. — Das „Patti“ war ursprünglich eine Verwaltungseinheit, die zum Einziehen der Steuern geschaffen worden war. Daraus entwickelte sich ein eigenes soziales Gebilde, dessen fester Kern jeweils aus einigen Landbesitzer-Familien besteht, während Handwerker und Arbeiter in einer loseren, vorwiegend ökonomisch bedingten Verbindung einem oder auch mehreren „Pattis“ angeschlossen sind. — Die „Faktion“ schließlich ist eine weniger formale, jedoch sehr einflußreiche Gestaltung, zu der sich die einzelnen Familien nach ihren ökonomischen Interessen zusammenfinden, um in einer gewissen Aufgabenteilung eine Schutzgemeinschaft zu bilden. Zwischen den verschiedenen Faktionen herrscht gewöhnlich ein lebhafter Antagonismus, der sich als stärker erweist als die Zugehörigkeit zur gleichen Kaste. In *Tararwala* hat diese Feindschaft in den letzten Jahren zu mehreren Morden geführt, die eine teilweise Aufsplitterung der bisherigen beiden Faktionen und das Entstehen einer dritten Faktion zur Folge hatten. Die Aussichten auf eine Milderung der im Dorf bestehenden Spannungen sind als sehr negativ zu beurteilen.

<sup>12</sup> A spiritual guide, usually from the Sayyed caste, who is rarely disobeyed by his murid.