The Jats of Village Munirka are principally from the Tokas clan and have, like Jats elsewhere, strong clan attachments. The Jats of the village are an endogamous caste but observe village and clan exogamy. The Jats are patrilineal and strongly patriarchal.

The history of the village reveals that the Jats came from Behraur in Rajasthan. The way of life of these Jats is quite unique in its own way. Initially, the village was largely constituted by one clan, namely Tokas. Subsequently, Jats belonging to a different clan namely the Rathis, also came to settle in Munirka. Apart from the Jats there are other caste groups namely Jatavas, potters, weavers, Brahmins and a small section of Muslims. Added to these are the increasing number of migrants from different parts of the
country that are now coming to reside in this urban village.

Initially, the members of the Tokas clan were tillers of soil, or peasants, working on field on which nothing very much grew. Cattle rearing was their main source of livelihood. As the villagers, the Jats and the non-Jats became part of growing and sprawling metropolis of Delhi, there has been swift change in their occupational status. No longer are the Jats peasants and those of other castes following their traditional path but have taken to different professions, from small scale entrepreneurship to owning shops, to taking up lower salaried jobs in offices. There has been alteration of behaviour, usages, forms of economic activity as the village has become a part of a rich urban neighbourhood of Delhi.

The Jats of Munirka, like the Jats of west U.P., Haryana and Punjab are proud of their cultural traditions and way of life. According to Gupta, "If one adopts the
varna system then he would be placed quite low in the hierarchy, perhaps even deserving the contempt that the Manusmriti accords to the Sudra. But try calling any of these proud and prosperous Jats Sudras to their face, and immediately another hierarchy will become readily visible. The proud Jat bows to no one, not even the Brahmin. As a matter of fact the Brahmin is a butt of ridicule in all of Jat land, especially in Punjab and west U.P. And his is not the only caste which is made fun of. Jat opprobrium falls abundantly on other castes as well: the unctuous and oil merchants, the lowly chamars, Nais, and Valmikis - in fact on everyone who is not a Jat.¹

The Jats of Munirka are however closer to west U.P. and Haryana Jats than to the Sikh Jats of Punjab on two important accounts. First, religion, the Munirka Jats are all Hindus, and second, the pattern of settlement. About the Punjab Sikh Jats Pettigrew writes,
The pattern of settlement in the Punjab had traditionally testified to the lawlessness of the province. The population was clustered in large nucleated villages and there were few isolated houses. Defence against invading armies had historically been the principal reason for concentration. In the field work area the villages were generally one or two miles distant from one another. Many of them had been founded by a number of Jat clan heads, who originally came from different areas and who had united for convenience against outsiders in order to defend the land they had seized. Village solidarity had traditionally depended on cooperation between these groups on the basis of mutual interest; it was not a matter of kinship. ²

The Munirka village and even elsewhere in U.P., it is generally one clan - one village, not different clans coming together, and kinship ties are very strong. In Munirka village it is the Tokas clan that bounds together. The Tokas are the majority and form solidarity on basis of patrilineal ties. They believe that their clan has a depth of eighteen generations in continuous residence in Munirka. The other Jat clan namely the Rathi, also live in the village but migrated from another village, namely Mehrauli, after having
fought and lost to a section of the Muslim population there.

It is not uncommon for the Jats of the village to boast of their tradition which is bound by and interwoven with cultural elements in which the factors of Jar, Jorro and Jamin are central. Jar means money, jorro for wife, and jamin is land. A Jat lives prosperously and even quarrels for attaining these attributes.

The ties among the members of clan group people are most of the times horizontal though we do realize changing relationship due to flow of money in form of muabja and rent. With other caste people like Jatavas, potters, Brahmins, weavers and Muslims there is a clear cut vertical relationship. This is because the Jats are the original inhabitants of the village. They tend to dominate because they belong to the landed class. With urban resumption of their land, they have become economically and subsequently politically powerful.
Jat villagers of different villages, on ritual occasions address each other through body metaphors where one village is the Dharbhai (Torso brother) of another. For instance, Mehrauli is Dharbhai of Tihar. This makes for an extra attachment between the two. In case of any dispute or emergency the two villages unite to form a consolidated front.

It is not uncommon for women to differentiate themselves on the basis of dress. Whereas the Jat women wear a salwaar and a kurta, the Gujjar normally ties a ghagra. As Gujjars are cattle keepers they are seen by the Jats as being inferior to them. The Gujjars also have a reputation among the Jats for being cattle thieves. The lifestyle of Gujjars resembles closely to 'banjaras' or gypsies. They keep moving from one place to another with their cattle. It is not uncommon for them to settle in a new place which is uninhabited and which belongs to no one.
Let us now look at the effect of muabja and rent, to reflect further on changing relationship among the Jats. Muabja is compensatory payment for purchase of land through government authorities. Rent is money derived out of renting shops to business and commercial classes or entrepreneurs, and providing residential accommodation to migrants who are mainly salaried office workers and labourers. There are mainly two kinds of classes which have emerged due to the inflow of money in form of muabja and rent among the Jats. There is today even a third category that is of the migrants or the rent givers. The two main classes among the Jats are those who have been able to reemploy the money they received for their land in other gainful avenues. They are the section of Jats who have more land to begin with and are now property dealers, truck/bus owners and owners of large houses meant for renting. The other section is made up of those who had less land or were not able to reemploy the money gainfully and fell prey to habits like excessive
drinking. This group of people are taxi, bus/truck drivers. The better off among them are owners of petty shops or live on rent from small shopskeepers. The third category as we have mentioned earlier is made up of low salaried office going employees where they work as constables, peons, bus conductors, employees of Delhi Development Authority or Municipal Corporation. This third category holds good mainly for Jatavas, Valmikis and potters of the village, though there are some Jats too among them.

The settling of migrants as rent givers has resulted in giving a mixed ethnic character to the village today. There are people who have migrated from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab and live peaceably in Munirka. This has resulted in congestion with the number of houses increasing, and the neighbourhoods getting more clustered.

The one time strong relationships based on kinship,
emotional and we feeling among Jats is today showing signs of weakness because of the inflow of money. Though the Tokas clan still remain horizontally tied to other, and in times of need like a ritual/marriage, or a feud arising at the village, they still demonstrate examplery solidarity. When a feud arises within the Jat community between clans, help of elderly people are sought to resolve the issue before the matter escalated.

We shall examine some of the other traditional institutions in Munirka in order to understand the nature of transformation taking place within the village. For this purpose the institutions of marriage, caste, religion and wrestling will be examined in this chapter.

A. MARRIAGE

Marriage as an institution plays an important role in determining descent and affinal ties. During the past three
decades, metropolitan Delhi has undergone massive and rapid expansion, in terms of both population and area. The pattern of steady but gradual population growth that had characterized the period between 1901 to 1941 showed a marked acceleration in the forties, due in part to the necessity of housing over 480,000 refugees displaced by Hindu-Muslim conflict in the immediate pre and post-Independence years. Since that time the rapid upward trend has continued, so that whereas in 1941 the population of urban Delhi was slightly under 700,000, it is today estimated at almost five million. In spite of the general urban development the urbanized villages retained many of their characteristic. According to Sylvia Vatuk: "Although often outwardly undistinguishable from the general urban sprawl, such 'urbanized villages' still retain some degree of continuity of population and sense of country identity". This is demonstrated best in terms of changing patterns of marriage and family. What we wish to contend here is that marriage among Jats,
and for other castes too in village Munirka, has elements of continuity and past identity, but even so it has been rapidly changing under the influence of the processes of urbanization and development.

Marriage among the Jats and the non-Jats alike has become a matter of show, pomp and ostentatious consumption. Jats in their earlier history were known for the practice of polygamy, until the Marriage Act of 1955 made it illegal.\(^5\) Apart from polygamy, the practice of fraternal polyandry is occasionally practiced among them. Munirka village has however no instance of this kind.

Descent is patrilineal and marriage is based on gotra or clan rules which are strictly exogamous. In addition, similar to what Tiemann Gunter\(^6\) realized, the Jats of Munirka traditionally proscribed for marriage the gotras of the mother, father's mother, and mother's mother, or with a person any of whose corresponding 'four gotras' coincide.
with one's own. Even outside the specified clans, marriage with any known consanguine is proscribed, and indeed marriage with certain non-cousanguines who are terminologically equated with consanguines is also avoided. Marriage within the village even with a member of a different gotra is regarded as a kind of incestuous union. "Marriage rules of this kind are typical of northern India, and one of their consequences has been asserted to be the extension of marriage and affinal ties over a wide area and within a wide social field, in contrast to their intensification in regions in India in which cross-cousin marriage or patterns of kindred endogamy are present," writes Iravati Karve. 7 To modify Karve partially, the villagers in our case do not wish to cover a wide area, a close neighbourhood district or another village is the usual preference. When marriages take place in remote parts of U.P. it is not very welcome. As for social field, she is right, it encompasses a wide zone.
Having given the general outline of existing marriage relationship we wish to illustrate some of the changes that are taking place due to the influence of urbanisation. We can observe these transformations in aspects like dowry, the over valuation of political ties in marriage alliances, the emphasis on pomp, and show, and some flexibility in intercaste marriage.

**Changing Marriage Patterns**

A marriage deal usually begins with the bride's father looking for a suitable groom. The age at which girls are married is not very high. It is usually with the onset of puberty that the bride's father starts talking to others inside the village, and among his kith and kin to look for a suitable boy. The two major considerations in such cases are the respectability of the prospective mate's family, and the extent of their property holdings. The family of
the girl which initiates the search for a husband are particularly concerned to settle her in a household in which she would be well fed and clothed, at least relative to the situation in her own home. From the point of view of the social position of their own family and lineage, the groom should be of a higher status. This is what, hypergamy in a Levi Straussian sense means. A family whose members had not made any improper marriages in the past would be strongly preferred. This would not allow others to cast doubt on the purity of the potential groom's descent line or on the offsprings which would otherwise make it difficult for their daughter's children to make good marriages when the time came. Preferably a potential bridegroom's family should be one with resources and connections that might prove beneficial to the family of the bride as well.

Two points need to be stressed here. Though family property is still at a premium but as a sign of changing times the Jats have also started looking for grooms who are
employed in jobs, for example in police, in the administration, and so forth. This is particularly pronounced among those who are not substantial property holders. The same holds true for other castes where possession of property is not significant for both parties. Secondly, the propertied classes have started focusing on alliances for political benefits and strategising accordingly. These are some of the salient and crucial points of the changing order.

Now we look into the aspect of dowry. Its earlier existence was in the form of land or cattle gift. Among the Jats, 'dowry' has an assymetrical role. M.N. Srinivas had talked about how the flow of cash, and goods, including the bride herself is in one direction. As for bride's going along with cash plus goods is conceived best as 'kanyadan', that is a gift from the bride's father to the groom. The Hindu conception of marriage as a gift of a 'virgin' (kanyadan) from the bride's father to the groom has been well
dealt in the past of studies like that of Dumont or Sylvia Vatuk.  

How does dowry function among the Jats at present? Though cash transactions exists, it is the material goods which are preponderant in the unidirectional flow from the "kanya" to the groom. Marriage thus demands both consumer goods and money. The insistence of material goods as dowry was most prevalent in Munirka even among the Muslim Jats of the village.

The list of material or consumer goods include almost everything required to set up a new home though the family remains a joint family. The material goods that are given as dowry are commodities like scooter, refrigerator, T.V., sofa set, double bed, dressing table, central table, almirah, cooler, sewing machine, gas equipment, iron, mixer, washing machine, utensils, suits and sarees for the bride, wall clock, and jewellery and so on.
B. CASTE

The Jats of the villages are the dominant caste. The other castes of the village in order of numerical preponderance are the Jatavas, the potters, the sweepers or valmikis, the Brahmins and also a small section of Muslims.

Embree describes Jats as, "a large group of agriculturists in North India, variously classified by anthropologists and writers as a caste, a tribe, a race and an ethnic group. Although it is not easy to define the Jats in terms of characteristics that hold throughout the whole area where they are found they nevertheless have a sense of self identity and are recognized by others as forming a cohesive group...."

During Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707) there were a number of Jat uprisings particularly in the area around Mathura. In the eighteenth century the Jats emerged as a
strong military power as Mughal authority weakened. Embree also suggests that the Jat chieftains often saw themselves as defenders of Hinduism against the depredations of Muslim rulers. In the middle of the century under Badaun Singh, Mathura emerged as a seat of Jat power with a great fortress at Bharatpur. The Jat rulers were successful in opposing the British advance until 1826 when their fort was finally stormed. 12

The Jats have often been regarded as being of tribal origin and thus outside the four varnas. But the Jats claim to be descendants of Aryans and Kshatriyas and certainly their life style and power today bolster such a claim. 13

The different castes of the village by and large live in different areas of the village. Each section of the village is more or less segregated on caste lines. There is however a rising conflict or anatagonism mainly between Jats and Jatavas. The conflict often seems to have a super-
ficial cause such as access to drinking water. The drinking water supply taps are very few. The village has no other source like wells through which drinking water can be managed. Though it has a pond, the pond water is dirty and is mainly used for bathing buffaloes. The water supply is very scarce. The demand is very high. Water has many uses from drinking, cooking, bathing etc. The villagers, like, for instance the Jatavas have to queue up to gain an access to the limited water supply. It results into the tiny passages getting blocked during water supply hours. The blockade is due to earthen pitchers, buckets, tubs along with people standing on way. The supply is twice a day once in the morning and then in the evening. The supply lasts from half to one hour. On one particular day a Jat family travelling on a tractor carrying house construction materials wanted to cut across the path in order to reach their home. The general insistence of the villagers who were there to collect water was to use some other path and not break the queue.
The Jat families insisted that the road was public property. The parties failed to convince each other and the matter deteriorated to verbal abuse, then brick batting and then physical assault. Nevertheless these conflicts have a deeper basis. Such caste conflicts have occurred before and were analysed on the basis of 'pure and impure' or as a conflict between 'economic classes'. But are we to judge these tensions solely on these grounds? My answer would be to look for an alternative explanation. The most probable logic behind a phenomena of this kind can be expressed through the logic of "shifting dominance". According to this logic the dominated have been straining to rise up the ladder of social mobility. In this process they have made use of state programmes and policies, like reservations.

A similar expression is also revealed in M.N. Srinivas's depiction of 'On Living in a Revolution'. Reflecting on the conflicts between dominant land owning castes and Scheduled Castes he writes, "The dominant castes have never been votaries of the creed of human equality, and they
are firmly convinced that they are superior to the others, and in particular to the Scheduled Castes. They were formerly used to receiving obedience and worked deference from their Scheduled Caste tenants, labourers and servants but are now discovering them to be 'disobedient', and occasionally even defiant. They are annoyed with the government for what they consider 'pampering' of the Scheduled Castes. The latter 'no longer no their place', a feeling reinforced by the assertiveness of their younger, educated men....

In rural India the situation is further complicated by the fact that no longer are the older dominant castes assured of their dominance. The numerically strong but poorer castes are now challenging the hitherto established dominant castes and the increased decentralization of power at several levels has dramatically raised the stakes for all the contestants. In other words, our villages will not only be the venues for conflict for dominance between dominant and Scheduled Castes but between rival caste groups of all kinds as well. Thus, in the Hindi region, castes like the hitherto undisputed Rajputs, Jats and Bhumihars are being challenged by castes as Yadavs, Kurmis and Koeris. These latter
are now trying to secure a share of power which was once the monopoly of the former group. In Gujarat, the Kolis went to displace the Patidars by depending on their numerical strength to capture power. This has been categorized by Srinivas as "shifting dominance", and foretells the limitation of the dominant caste framework.

Though in Munirka, shifting dominance is still not fully evident, nevertheless we realize that the earlier position of Jatavas has been changing due to their access to education, and getting jobs on account of government programmes and policies. This is not to say that reservations were not there in the past but they have just begun to make a difference after a sufficient gestation period.

The logic of shifting dominance does not entitle us, in the context of Munirka, to pronounce what the outcome between Jats and Jatavas will be like, but allows us to study the shifting nature of their inter relationship.
C. RELIGION

Religion as such forms an important aspect in the life of villagers as anywhere else. The village today has many temples and holy shrines. Every caste has its own temple, and the Muslims have a mosque, the Sikhs, a gurudwara. These places of worship could be categorized as follows: the Jats have their the Baba Gangnath temple; the Jatavas have Bodh Vihar, the potters Shiva temple, the sweepers or the Valmi-kis, pray in the Valimiki temple. Apart from caste specific temples there is also a Hanuman temple, and Mir Singh Ka Mandir which belongs to the richest Jat or Mukhiya of the village. Obviously, the temples of different castes would not have come up without the opportunities for mobilization that economic mobilization and the secularist policies of the government have provided.

In order to throw more light on the different religious
practices let us begin with the Jats. The Jats are ancestor worshippers. They also cherish the ideals of Arya Samaj. But they are at the same time believers of Hindu deities such as Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh or Shiva. The contraries or paradoxes do not get satisfactorily answered unless we look into Jat world view and how they give meaning to religion.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines ancestor worship as follows, "The term ancestor worship describes, in a broad and loose sense, a variety of religious beliefs and practices concerned with the spirits of dead persons regarded as relatives, some of whom may be mythical. Although far from universal, ancestor worship exists or formerly existed in societies at every level of cultural development."

The Jats of the village today, as in the past, are firm believers of ancestor worship. Baba Gangnath and the temple after his name is often visited by men and women particular-
ly Jats, for propitiation. Baba Gangnath according to village legend was a milkseller. Though it is difficult to trace his connection to the Tokas clan, Baba Gangnath was a soothsayer, an ordinary person much respected for his forecasts. He was neither a king nor a big chief whose spirits are often believed to have power over matters of concern to the entire society, such as for rain and for growth of crops and cattle, or spirits of head of families, lineages and clans influencing matters of immediate concern to the particular social groups. These ancestors were personified in ritual and appealed to for aid in providing rain, bountiful crops and for general well being. The worshipping of Baba Gangnath is also a form of ancestor worship. The Jats of Tokas clan participate in this, but not the other castes of the village. The relationship between Jats and the dead spirit of Baba Gangnath is to minimise the calamity which otherwise would fall on the villagers. As the Jats are dominant they have been able to save the temple site itself.
from the incursion of the profane in terms of shops which are otherwise in close vicinity as in the case of the other temples. The shops have grown close to other temples diminishing their sacredness. Instances of mutton shops or leather shoestore close to Bodh Vihar or Hanuman temple are vivid examples of this.

Why did the Jats become followers of Arya Samaj? In reply, Kenneth W. Jones writes that Arya Samaj as we generally know grew to do away with the evils of several Hindu social practices. It opposed caste oppression, supported widow remarriage, condemned sati, and set up famine and orphan relief operations, performed shuddi as a ritual of purification, and performed reconversions back into the Hindu fold. The Jats found the Arya Samaj a good vehicle for cultural assertion as their traditional location in Hindu society was always a little controversial. Much of it therefore was to gain an identity and also to be able to
preach the ideals of doing away with the evils of a caste ridden society where the Brahminical supremacy was held in high esteem. Kenneth W. Jones further writes on how Arya Samaj grew among the Jat peasants under the leadership of Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ramji Lal. "One of the few English educated Jats, Ramji Lal was both a friend of Lajpat Rai and a prominent member of Jat biradari. His influence helped popularize the Samaj among the Jats of Hissar, Rohtak and Delhi districts." 17

Apart from ancestor worship and Arya Samaj, the Jats also believe in worshipping Hindu deities, such as Shiva or Hanuman. The great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata are often quoted as ideal reference points. An often quoted statement by Robert Redfield is, "The division of the total field of human experience in relation to God, to nature, and to man, is common to all world views." 18 In this connection, to quote M.C. Pradhan:
To the Jats, however, the relations of a person to his material environment, and to man, are more important than his relations to God. God as an impersonal, omnipotent and omnipresent force, does not occupy a very important place in the Jat rituals and religious ceremonies, though they believe there is only one God and others are but His incarnations.\textsuperscript{19}

Of ancestor worship Pradhan notes that:

ancestor worship runs, in a logical sense, counter to the ideology of reincarnation, the cycle of rebirth. Thus it is strongly criticized and discouraged by the Arya Samaj, but the Jats continue to believe in it while remaining faithful adherents of the movement. It is yet another example of a logical or theological conflict between two religious principles, namely the theory of reincarnation versus that of a spirit world.\textsuperscript{20}

Oscar Lewis remarks quite correctly: "At least some of the Jats are now aware of this inconsistency mostly on account of the teachings of the Arya Samaj, but neither do they care to reconcile these conflicts, beliefs, nor to leave these beliefs and discontinue the religious practices connected with ancestor worship; though they have abandoned some other
To do so would be to undermine lineage and clan solidarity, and the whole network of kinship obligations and responsibilities.

Now, we turn our attention to the Jatavas and to their form of worship, namely in the Bodh Vihar. The Jatavas of the village claim to be Neo-Buddhists. They are principally opposed to idol worship, and are non-believers in God and in divinity. The Bodh Vihar has however remained closed for the last ten years or even more, as one group of Jatavas of the village wanted to convert it into a trust and into a profit making institution, and the others not wishing to do so. The Jatavas religious persuasion further encourages faith in themselves rather than being fatalist. A small blackboard in the corner of their residential area reads:
The obvious translation of the above is "Do not believe in fate, believe in your strength". This strength is derived largely from the teachings of Buddha. Buddha's philosophy of Panchsheel is often elaborated by some of the elderly educated members of the Jatav community. For instance, in Jatav exegesis the Panchsheel emphasis to following principles:

1. Prani Hinsa Nahi Karunga  (Shall not kill living beings)
2. Chori Nahi Karunga  (Shall not steal)
3. Nasha Nahi Karunga  (Shall remain a tetoteller)
4. Vaibhav Vichaar Nahi Rakhunga  (Shall not be corrupt)
5. Jhooth Nahi Bolunga  (Shall not speak lies)

These virtues are found in mainstream Buddhism. "The
ten fold path of good and evil... prohibits killing, stealing, adultery, lying, slandering, abuse, frivolity, greed, malice and false ideologies and enjoins saving lives giving gifts and so on".22

In spite of their conversion to Buddhism, the Jatavas of Munirka complain about the treatment meted out to them by the Jats. As ex-untouchables whose profession was leather work, they find that traditional stigma and prejudice still haunt them. They see themselves as Dalits, or oppressed, and are rejecting the incubus of lowliness that was placed on them.

To quote Barbara Joshi:

Characteristically, many Untouchables no longer accept being described as 'Harijans' (Children of God). The euphemism was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi during the 1930's as upper caste nationalists sought Untouchable support for the Independence movement and the Congress organization. The term is now commonly rejected as a patronizing symbol of high caste efforts to control untoucha-
ble protest through manipulation and essentially empty forms of charity. Today one is far more likely to encounter the term "Dalit" (the Oppressed), a self identification that expresses bitter pride in centuries of struggle....

What the villagers fear most is that in spite of education, political mobilisation and other changes taking place among them, the psychological mind set continues to linger and has till this day an everlasting impact on their fellow beings who are scared of the dominant section of society. The dominant section in our case are the Jats who in their attitude in relation to Jatavas are superior and domineering. Thus the Jatavas are despised and most of the times seen as downtrodden and untouchables, even though they are now Neo-Buddhists and outside the Hindu fold.

The other castes like the sweepers, and the potters also have their own deities and temples. The sweepers or the churas have the Valmiki temple and the potters the Shiva temple.
The purpose of talking at length on the religious domain was to understand the departure from norms and values in the present circumstances or realities. Today most of the temples, with the exception of Baba Gangnath and the Mukhiya's temple, are surrounded by shops of different kinds. The temple is deeply embedded amidst the surge of shops which have grown around it. Close to Bodh Vihar and the Hanuman temple there is a mutton shop and shoe shop respectively. Establishment of shops leads us to realize the kind of economic proliferation, which is at the level of the profane, which is encroaching on the sacred precincts of the temple. But only the dominant caste i.e. the Jats, because of their economical and political power do not allow a similar kind of desecration to take place as far as their Baba Gangnath temple is concerned.

In addition, the village often witnesses what gets termed as 'Bhagwati Jagran'. The literal meaning being
The Jagran is a means through which the deity, the goddess Durga, is pleased through offerings to bring in more wealth to the devotees. The ones who conduct these Jagrans are mainly the merchant class, or those who run the shops in the village.

Religion thus understood has several meanings. The earlier understanding of such concepts by McKim Marriott as 'universalization' and 'parochialization' or Robert Redfield's usage of 'Great and Little Tradition' and M.N. Srinivas's 'Sanskritization' are of relevance to the study of religion. The Jats adherence to Hinduism could be understood as part of its allegiance to universalizing tendencies, and ancestor worshippers to a kind of parochialism. In between they have even become part of the revival of Hinduism, claiming to be followers of Arya Samaj. The dialectic of great and little tradition can also be seen in operation here. Even Sanskritization, since Hinduism has to do with majority practices, sieves into the life of the vil-
lagers where tendencies to imitate the economically and politically powerful continues to occur.

Even so we must take note of the diversity found in Hinduism, as Milton Singer for instance brought to our notice in "Sanskritic to Popular Hinduism."\(^{27}\) Paul G. Hiebert explains the differences between the two rather lucidly. Distinguishing in between Sanskritic and Popular Hinduism, Hiebert writes:

the former embodies the practices and values associated with the Brahmans and the Sanskritic scriptures. It includes acceptance of Brahmanic rites, worship of high Hindu gods, avoidance of ritual pollution, belief in the doctrines of just rewards (karma), duty to the caste and task to which one is born (dharma), rebirth (samsara), and the goal of release from rebirths by merger back into the ultimate reality (moksha)....

As for the latter he opines;

Popular Hinduism is rooted not in the Vedic scriptures and in abstract theological discourses but in the myths of the Epics and Puranas and in local village histories. These myths are reenacted in
festivals, dramas and dances; sung by mothers to their children, by women working in the fields and by families and friends in devotional song services; and told and retold by passing bards and beggars. They are depicted in polychrome pictures hung in the homes and in the sculptures that adorn the temples. Their message is that there are many gods and that the devotee should worship the one of his choice in order to obtain divine blessings on earth and escape from hell after death. 28

Popular Hinduism, centring around local village histories seems to be working well and thriving even in the case of an urban village like Munirka. We recall how Baba Gangnath was according to lore a milkseller, whose antecedents were not known with any certainty. S.C. Dubey, quite rightly points out, "Hinduism as it is practiced in the village is not the Hinduism of the classical philosophical systems of India, for it possesses neither the metaphysical heights nor the abstract content of the latter. It is a religion of fasts, feasts and festivals in which prescribed rituals cover all the major crises of life." 29 Let us recall Milton Singer comment which becomes relevant here. "In the
switching over tendencies to Popular Hinduism or a shift away from ritual observances and sacred learning to popular religious and cultural performances communicated through the mass media has had a significant role to play. "^{30}

The different temples at the village are managed by the people belonging to the particular community that patronises and finances the temples. The village has, as we noted earlier, caste specific temples. Though entry to the temple, like Baba Gang Nath temple of the Jats is not strictly prohibited for the Jatavas, the religious adherence, of the Jatavas to Buddhism keeps the two castes mutually away from each other.

The daily routine of looking after the deities, and other religious performances like ringing the bell, sounding the conch shell, lighting the lamps at Baba Gangnath is carried on by a sadhu or a wanderer who often happens to be a passerby. There is no specific group of people chosen or
kept to perform different activities at the temple. As the worshipers come it could be anyone from the village who could ring the bell, sound the conch shell or distribute the prasada, voluntarily and in an impromptu fashion. The Hanuman temple has a Brahmin pandit to look after its affairs. The Bodh Vihar and to Valmiki temple however are not looked after well. Bodh Vihar has been closed for the last few years. In the Valmiki temple, some one from the community occasionally comes to light a candle in the evening and goes away. The space surrounding the temple for Bodh Vihar and Valmiki has today become a venue of either playing cards or acts as a children's play ground. There is also the fact of shops of all kinds growing around the temple. In the Shiva temple of the potters one finds more worshipers usually on an auspicious day like the birth of Lord Krishna or Jhoolan. On that particular day one also witnesses village children performing cultural programmes and activities. There are also troops which come from Mathura to perform the
various dance recital programmes portraying the various sequences of Lord Krishna and Radha relationship.

The visiting hours at the temples which are used by more people are usually in the morning or in the evening. On a day like Shivratri there is quite a rush and the Baba Gangnath temple gets crowded. The Baba Gangnath temple is also a place where old women get a chance to share in conversations of all kinds. Wrestlers too come to the temple to worship Hanuman, the Lord of strength. The family would come together to the temple on significant occasions, like when a new truck has been bought by one of the Jat families. The chasis is carried to the front of the temple gate and the women of the family pray at the temple, decorate the chasis with chandan and flowers.

The Jats are known for their ancestor worship. The Baba Gangnath temple contains the Samadhi of Baba Gang Nath. Today a road which runs adjacent to the temple, has been
named as Baba Gangnath Road. The Jats also incorporate beliefs and values of other streams namely, that of greater Hinduism and of Arya Samaj. The temple has almost all the Gods and deities belonging to the Hindu order. It has Hanuman, Durga, Shiva or Shanker, Rama, Krishna and others. The chanting of mantras is very Hindu belonging and bhajan like, "Jai Jagdish Hare, Swami Jai Jagdish Hare", are often sung.

Much of the changes in the perception of religious sphere in the wake of economic, professional and political activities have introduced new patterns of change alongside traditional ones. The followers and preachers of faiths tend to speak with multiple tongues and with pregnant ambiguity. What I wish to establish therefore is the 'amorphous' nature of the religious category. Or, put another way, religion is considered in the instrumental sense, be it political, economic or social, and thus religious rationalization are mainly aimed at suiting one's goals or
ends.

D. VILLAGE WRESTLING

Wrestling in the village is a traditional sport and continues to fascinate the residents of Munirka. Wrestling bouts are publicly held and viewers gather in large numbers when such tournaments are held. Usually they are scheduled to take place on special occasions, say a religious day like 'Amavasya' which lends the bouts a festive flavour. As for the wrestlers, wrestling for them is a way of life.

The wrestlers of Munirka practice in a large open ground in the village. This patch of ground is muddy in the centre, with green grass all around and is next to the Baba Gang Nath temple. The art of wrestling is not simply to do with the performance, or the mere fact of winning or losing, but speaks volumes for Jat tradition. In fact, wrestling is an ingress into the Jat way of life and helps us to under-
stand some of the facets of what it is to be a Jat. Judging the capability of a person depended largely on his physical attributes, and physical attributes are equated or treated synonymously with how much strength he possesses. Physical strength is related to ploughing land, and metonymically to the power of an ox or a bullock. All of this hearken back to a premechanised past. A mother, for instance would, feed her child to make him grow as strong as possible. Strength is conceived primarily in terms of male virility and had little to do with intellect. Because of the patriarchal nature of the society boys were expected to grow strong so that they could effectively, intervene in feuds between neighbours or oppose invasions by outsiders or even by invaders. The appreciation of wrestling has to be seen against this background.

When a wrestling event is held pamphlets are distributed in advance setting the precise date, time and the awards
that would go to the winners. A typical pamphlet would read as follows:

**INAAMI DANGAL**

Aapko yeh jaankar khushi hogi ki August maas ki amaavsy a to dinaank 17.8.93 ko Khaleefa Ranjeet Singh, Ber Sarai waale ke janmadin par Vishaal Dangal kaa ayojan kiya jaa rahaa hai. Aap sab pahalwanon tathaa darshakon se anurodh hai ki bhaari sankhya me padhaarkar kushtiyon kaa aanand lein. Kushtia dinaank 17.8.93 ko 2 baje dopahar to Shivshakti Aashram, Ram Talaab Mandir, Katwaria Sarai mein hogi.

Pehla Inaam  Rs.2100/-
Doosra Inaam  Rs.1100/-
Teesra Inaam  Rs. 500/-

Sabhi kushtiyan inaami hongi.

(You shall be glad to know that in the month of August, on the auspicious occasion of Amavasya dated 17.8.93 and also the birth-day of Khaleefa Ranjeet Singh, Ber Sarai, a grand wrestling competition would be hosted. All the wrestlers and viewers are requested to attend in large numbers and enjoy the occasion on 17.8.93, at 2.00 p.m. at Shivashakti Ram Talab Mandir, Katwaria Sarai.

First Prize  Rs.2100/-
Second Prize  Rs.1100/-
Third Prize  Rs. 500/

All winning wrestlers will be rewarded.)
Apart from date, and the name of the person in whose honour the wrestling was being conducted an auspicious day is usually chosen for the event. The venue is generally close or next to the Baba Gang Nath temple. Generally the last clause in the pamphlet declares the prizes that would be given away in cash in addition to the towel and a lungi (cloth around one’s loin), which are traditional trophies.

In earlier years wrestling did not come with cash awards. Wrestling as an art was considered to be a gift of God which a wrestler no matter how well endowed he may be with physical prowess will never misuse. His strength or virility were to be trained for his protection, for his family’s welfare and for that of the village too. Besides these a man’s job was procreation and a happy conjugal relationship with his wife. The fact that the venue is generally next to the temple signifies the prevalence of moral ethic based on restraint. One must not overuse or misuse
one's physical potentialities. Once misused, God would take away the strength that he has given.

Wrestling as an art grew because the Jats are well known for their robustness/physical strength. A well known saying among them is -

Aath firangi nau gore, dono milakar bade jaat ka ek chora.

(Eight Indian British toadies and nine Britishers themselves would equal the strength of one Hindu Jat.)

The fact that the Jats enter the military services are recruited in Delhi Police as constables, or that they drive heavy buses are considered as befitting their attribute of physical strength. Of course there are a good number of Jats who have excelled in different spheres, as eminent politicians like late Charan Singh, Devi Lal, Mahinder Singh Tikait or as educationists and philanthropists like Sir
Chottu Ram, yet the popular self image endures.

To come back to the topic of wrestling. There are different 'akharas' where the gurus train their disciples in this art. Some prominent akharas are the Chandagi Ram Ka Akhara, Guru Hanuman Ka Akhara, Raghuvir Ka Akhara. There are also akharas named after the village where the wrestlers come from like Sonepat Akhara, or Munirka Akhara, as in our case. The disciple practise at their native village and remain associated as a disciple of their chosen guru. The guru shisya relationship is demonstrated par excellence here. Its idealized picture is that of a guru who picks up his blue eyed boy and trains him with the skills needed to make a mark in wrestling. The guru teaches him to do away with anger, instil a sense of fairness, cultivate healthy food habits, sexual control and all the other virtues needed to prove one's best in the sport.

Wrestling is an integral aspect of village life. The
wrestlers of yesteryears are remembered and a good many among them are held in utmost respect. Thus there are those wrestlers who are despised for their drinking habit, or for their proclivity for womanising. Tetotallers and those who exercise sexual abstinence, besides those who are already happily married, enjoy a high reputation. It is not just virility which counts but the overall character of the man, or the participants, is what is evaluated.

There is no age bar. There are wrestlers ranging from 14 to high up till 40 or even 45 years of age. The participation between two wrestlers is usually matched according to age. There are instances however when a younger wrestler is matched against someone many years his senior.

The patch of ground where wrestling takes place is dug with spade to make it soft so that the wrestlers will not get hurt. The bout begins with the referee calling out the name of participants. Beside the main referee there are

136
often three or four others to assist. The referee is generally from the village or an elderly person from some other village. This is to ensure a fair play in judgement calls and in deciding the winner. As the names of the wrestlers are called, particulars of their akhara membership are also mentioned. As the participants enter the arena ground they touch the freshly dug earth in the arena with folded hands. There is even hand shaking between the participants and then the final go of the whistle by the referee. The duration is important, it might be three minutes, five minutes or even seven minutes depending on the age of the wrestlers and on how many rounds have progressed. Among junior wrestlers the duration is less and as age increases, the time allotted also increases. For those who are very experienced the game lasts upto 7 minutes. If the result is a tie in spite of successive rounds then the award is shared between the two combatants.

The cash award increases depending on age and
expertise again. For the novice wrestlers the award carries lesser money. In the event which I witnessed the cash award went up as follows - Rs. 51, Rs.101, Rs.202, Rs.300, Rs.500, Rs.2,100, Rs.3,100 and in the last and final contest went up to Rs.5,100. The cash awards as we mentioned earlier generally comes with a towel and a lungi. Apart from the declared award, plus lungi and towel, the winner is given more money, largely from the elderly men who sit around. The amount they give varies from Rs.five to Rs.eleven or even more. After winning the wrestler from the village touches the feet of most of the elderly men who sit around, and as he touches their feet he either takes the money from them in his hands or generally in the new towel that he has just been awarded. This signifies the blessings he has received from the elders so that he may excel in the art and continue to win. Even if he loses and does not get the award, there are some from the village who still give money for the mere fact of his participation.
Along with the award in money betting on the sidelines adds another dimension or colour. The announcement of these wagers is made by well-known personalities, often political representatives of the Metropolitan Council, or the Mukhiya, or any other eminent member of the particular village or from elsewhere, but who were all present as spectators. Sometimes, one of these leading figures may declare that the cash award for a particular round is being personally put up by them.

Village wrestling is more in the nature of Masti ka Dangal (wrestling for fun) quite unlike Alter's observation on wrestling and is therefore not in line with Alter's interpretation of popular wrestling in North India. 31

Notes and References

1. Dipankar Gupta (1992), "Hierarchy and Difference:

2. Ibid., p.163.


6. Tiemann Gunter (1968), "The Four-got-Rule among the
Jats of Haryana in Northern India", *Anthropos* 6, 5205, Sankt Augustin 1, West Germany, Anthropos Institute, pp.166-77.


20. Ibid., p.239.


25. Robert Redfield (1956), Peasant Society and Culture,
Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp.79-83.


