CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION: EMERGING TRENDS IN THE WORSHIP OF FOLK CLAN DEITY IN JAMMU REGION

Overview

The present research has made an attempt to understand the relationship between clan unity and folk deity worship among the Jamwal-Pandits of Jammu region in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The study has specifically looked into the folk dimension of the deity worship and the interface between its folk and Sanskritic forms. It has tried to explore the functions of deity worship for the clan unity, the beliefs and rituals related to the worship, and the changes coming about in the worship of the folk clan deity of Jamwal-Pandits. The study is divided into six chapters.

The First Chapter Introduction deals with the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research methodology, study area and the significance of the study. The Jamwal-Pandit is the clan of Dogra Brahmins living in different locations of Jammu region. The maximum of the 492 families identified live in Jammu district followed by Udhampur, Reasi and other districts. Primary data were collected through fieldwork. In all, 200 respondents were purposively selected to know their socio-economic background of the respondents who are the believers of their clan deity and come to worship her regularly. The cases identified from them helped in knowing the views of devotees of the folk deity. Interview schedule, in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, observation and case study methods were employed during the study, besides review of literature and use of the secondary sources for data collection.

The clan deity of Jamwal-Pandits is known as Satyavati Ji or Datti Ji. She is their principal presiding deity worshipped on all important occasions by the members collectively, and at times individually. These occasions range from birth of a child, marriage in the family or as thanks giving to the deity by performing votive ritual or simply for seeking her blessings. The most important occasion where the unity of the clan is seen is in the biannual congregation called ‘Mel’ in which all or most of the clan or biradari members participate. During ‘Mel’ among Jamwal-Pandits Datti Ji is worshipped, there is a bhandara (feast) and
people interact with each other and discuss about the issues of their community and the development of their place of worship. Such congregation of ‘Mel’ is a common and unique folk feature of almost all clans and castes of Hindus in Jammu region.

The Main temple of Datti Ji is in Purmandal in Samba district about 40 kms. from Jammu proper. There are other local temples also of Datti Ji in Jammu region like at Ghanjansoo, Akhnoor, Katra, Reasi and Udhampur. People visit their local temples frequently whenever there is any ceremony or also otherwise to seek the blessings of Datti Ji like when they get job, pass in examination, or wish of getting good marks is granted. Besides these thanks giving gestures, they also take her blessings when they start something new or appear in some examination. The members of Jamwal-Pandit clan have to visit their Main temple located at Purmandal during certain occasion like after the birth of the child and marriage, along with the bride. Their biannual ‘Mel’ is also held at Purmandal attended by a large number of members of Jamwal-Pandit clan or biradari.

The Jamwal-Pandits are Dogra Brahmins belonging to Saraswat sub-caste of the Brahmins. Though Kashmiri Brahmins are also Saraswats, the Dogra Brahmins are closer to Punjabi Brhamins and their language Dogri is also akin to that of Punjabi rather than Kashmiri. The Dogra Brahmins are divided into several clans, mostly endogamous, but also hypergamous and arranged hierarchically. The Jamwal-Pandits were probably the family priests of Dogra Rajput Rulers belonging to ‘Jamwal’ clan and thus came to be known as ‘Jamwal-Pandits’ (Drew, 2008). They are broadly divided into two classes, the purohits and the pundits, the former ranking higher than the latter. There is a group called halbaha Brahmins, derived from the word ‘hal’ (plough) who are basically the farmers and ranked lower than the other two groups (Dewan, 2007). Today, many of them are teachers, doctors, engineers, writer, administrative officers and in various other jobs. With these changes, in certain cases the traditional barriers of sub-caste endogamy and hypergamy are breaking down.

The several clans of Brahmins maintain clan as well as gotra, lineage and sapinda exogamy. Though clan, lineage and gotra are patrilineal descent groups here, there is a difference between them which has been brought out in the study. Lineage is called as vansh and is a group known by a living ancestor. When it becomes too big, it also breaks down in smaller groups. Clan on the other hand is a unilienal descent group that traces its origin from
a mythical or totemic common ancestor and is usually bigger in size (Majumdar and Madan, 1999)\\(^5\).

The term ‘clan’ is much closer to ‘gotra’ in the sense that they are both unilineal descent groups, and have a common mythical, totemic or saint as their original ancestor. They are exogamous unit and all members are related by blood and therefore marriage alliances are arranged outside the group. Gotra however, is the concept associated with Hinduism whereby the descent is traced through common mythical ancestor known by the term Rishi. This is true of all castes, particularly the Brahmins. However, there is a categorical difference between ‘clan’ and ‘gotra’ which is not emphasized in many studies on caste and religion in India (Madan 1989)\\(^6\).

Firstly, clan is associated with almost all groups in different parts of India irrespective of region and even religion; gotra is more specific to Hinduism and castes within it. Secondly, the clan can be much wider term than gotra and is also associated with territory at times. It is possible that there are more than one gotra in a single clan, though usually every clan has one gotra. Thirdly, it can be said that gotra is a real group that is revoked for arranging marriage alliance. In no case could the rule of ‘gotra exogamy’ be violated.

The gotra of Jamwal-Pandit is Kaundinya who was a great Rishi. Thus they have a single clan and a gotra. If there happens to be more members who join the Jamwal-Pandit clan with a different gotra, there could be a possibility of an alliance across gotras within the Jamwal-Pandit clan. But as was evident on the basis of interviews with the respondents, it was clear that they have one clan and one gotra, both being exogenous and trace their descent in a male line.

Hinduism is understood as an amalgamation of faiths and confederation of communities. It is polytheist religion with pluralistic tendencies (Madan 2004)\\(^7\). According to Srinivas (1952)\\(^8\), Hinduism consists of various forms of worship and absorbs all - from Classical Sanskritic All India Hinduism to local cults and folk deities. He was of the view that Sanskritic Hinduism, has spread throughout the country horizontally mainly among the Brahmins and vertically by absorbing various folk elements into its fold. This has happened at All India, Regional and Local levels. Every caste in every region has both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, or folk features, more Sanskritic in higher caste according to him. The concept
of Little tradition and Great tradition, and the process whereby Little traditions acquire the characteristics of Great traditions, and vice-versa are seen as processes of universalization and parochialization (Marriott, 1955).

Yogendra Singh and A.M. Shah viewed the process of Sanskritization in a different manner and occurring for different reasons. For Yogendra Singh (1986)\(^9\) rather than emulating the higher castes as a part of Sanskritization, it could be that this process of social mobility was the only option available to the lower castes. A.M. Shah (2005)\(^10\) pleas for revisiting the concept of Sanskritization for the reason firstly, that caste rituals in modern India have declined, and secondly, many non-caste structures and institutions have emerged in the contemporary times propagating Sanskritic beliefs and practices.

It simply means that Sanskritization need not always be looked as related to the caste system. The changes can also be seen as structural and not only as cultural as envisaged by Srinivas (1952)\(^11\). In the context of spread of Sanskritic Hinduism also, he shows it more in the context of caste system wherein folk Hinduism was related more with the lower castes, classes, peasants and tribal groups. This study has broadly employed structural-functional approach to explore the case of Jamwal-Pandits, the Brahmins of Jammu region and to show the prominence of folk Hinduism among them through the worship of their clan deity. It has also made use of phenomenological perspective to understand the views and perceptions of members and devotees regarding folk deity worship.

The Chapter Second Folk Hinduism and Sanskritic All-India Hinduism: Understanding Relationship tries to understand the relationship between folk and Sanskritic Hinduism in India in general and the state of Jammu and Kashmir and Jammu region in particular. It explores the basic tenets of Hinduism historically which incorporates all forms of worship from Sanskritic to folk form and brings out the relationship between the two. Various examples are given and studied quoted to show how several folk observances have acquired Sanskritic forms over the years. Similarly, the chapter gives the historical religious background of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and of Jammu region tracing since the first century BC.

Kashmir has been ruled by various Hindu dynasties in the ancient period and during the medieval and modern periods by the Mughals, Pathans, Sikhs and the Dogras. Hinduism,
Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism Great religions have been present in a syncretic manner. Kashmiri Shaivism became famous patronized by the rulers in the Sanskritc form. At the same time, its folk form continued to exist. Later on, in the 14th century Lalla or Lal Ded emerged as a great mystic ascetic poetess, and became exponent of Trikha Shaivism in the folk form. The Shaktic tradition in which the worship of Goddess is central has been popular since time immemorial. In the 14th century, coming of Islam and simultaneously of Sufism from Central Asia along with the development of local Sufism played an important role in making religious pluralism possible in Jammu and Kashmir (Hangloo, 2000)12.

The Dogra rulers (1846-1947), as different from Shiva and Shakta traditions, were great believers of Vaishnavism and promoted it to the hilt. They belonged to Suryavanshi clan of Rajputs and got the temples of Lord Vishnu and his incarnations built, celebration of festivals related to their births also became important. Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of the Dogra rule, and his son and successor Maharaja Ranbir Singh were able rulers. The huge and beautiful Ragunath (Rama) temple complex was constructed in Jammu in 1860, the Royal Dharmarath Trust was formed to manage temples, and Vaishnavi shrines like Mata Vaishno Devi in Jammu region and Kheer Bhavani in Kashmir region were promoted (Madan 2006)13.

The chapter describes in detail the characteristics of both Sanskritc and folk Hinduism. The Sanskritc Hinduism is classical and textual, philosophical and spiritual; while folk refers to immediate and pragmatic concerns of people. The Sanskritc Great Gods and their consorts are worshipped in a Sanskritc style and they dwell in magnificent temples often decorated beautifully. The folk deities are rudimentary, and reside in stones, trees or streams and are respected and feared at the same time. The Sanskritc is more prevalent among higher castes and dominant groups, while folk is more related to local, peasant, tribal and lower caste people. However, rather than opposition, an interface between the two were highlighted in Jammu region.

The folk Hinduism in the form of worship of kul devta, kul devi, village deity, ancestors, shaeed (martyrs) devta, the revolutionary leaders and those who sacrificed their lives for the well-being of the masses is practiced by the people at the local level (Dewan, 2007)14. Worship of kul devi or kul devta, i.e. clan deity in particular is very important. Their
annual or biannual congregations called ‘Mel’ are unique and specific feature of folk Hinduism of Jammu region.

The Third Chapter **Socio-economic Status of Jamwal-Pandits** goes into the details about the background of the respondents selected for the study. It also brings out the changes in the temple complex and reasons for growing number of pilgrims.

The chapter shows that most of people who come to worship the clan deity at Purmandal are middle aged and elderly people, though young people also come. More than half are from rural areas and are largely males and married. Most of them are educated and their earning is also in the middle range. Maximum are self employed or in business, though a significant number of them are in government job as well.

The chapter also brings to light that a larger number of people come to worship the deity and also attend the ‘Mel’ congregation. The income and the expenditure incurred at the temple have increased many times. The increasing levels of communication and technology and better facilities of transport and accommodation have resulted in this increase.

The Chapter Fourth of the study **Folk Deity of Jamwal-Pandits and ‘Mel’ Congregation** is based on the fieldwork carried out at the shrine of Datti Ji, the folk deity of Jamwal-Pandits at Purmandal in Samba district about 40 kms. From Jammu city. It also brings out the occurrence of ‘Mel’ Congregation and among them and its significance for the people at large.

The chapter highlights the aspects of folk Hinduism and prevalence of clan deity worship in Jammu region. It brings out the historical significance of Jammu city and its surrounding region and different forms of deity worship. The chapter brings to light the worship of Datti Ji, her legend and the ‘Mel’ Congregation at her shrine. It explores the frequency of people’s visit to the shrine of Datti Ji and the reasons for attending ‘Mel’.

The important functions of ‘Mel’ for the people were outlined. Most of the people were found to be attending ‘Mel’ regularly because of their firm faith in Datti Ji. Nearly all of them said that it is mandatory for them to come to Purmandal on important occasions, especially after marriage. Some case studies discussed in the chapter showed how the faith in
her miracles has increased which made people attend it more regularly. It was also shown that, the ‘Mel’ congregations provide opportunity to people to meet and discuss their issues. In this sense it binds people together and the unity of clan is expressed during such congregations.

The chapter also discusses in detail about the new changes that have come about in the temple complex at Purmandal which has increased the number of devotees. The Committee with the President and other office bearers has been formed which looks after the functioning of the shrine and the facilities of the pilgrims. In recent years those related to food, accommodation, shops, washrooms etc. have been added. The shift is towards development and modernization of the shrine.

The idols in the temple are of both Datta Ji and Datti Ji, therefore women maintain distance from the shrine. The puja is done and the offerings which are purely vegetarian are made by men. The role is men is larger and more important than that of women, but women also participate in puja and attend ‘Mel’ congregations enthusiastically. It is seen that the puja conducted, offerings made and the rituals performed at the shrine of Datti Ji are largely Sanskritic in form. Earlier her worship was confined to small dheri (small temple like structures) but shifted (sthapith) later on to the temple dedicated to her with proper procedure (vidhi) reflecting a move from a folk to Sanskritc form. There is a priest in the temple and the puja is held regularly. However, it does not have a typical arti as in the temples of Great Goddess and she is not a universal Pan-Indian deity or a consort of Great God of Hindu pantheon. There are no written texts or scriptures to be followed. She is very much local and folk and satisfies the pragmatic and urgent needs of her worshippers.

Thus, this chapter concludes that even though the Jamwal Pandits are Brahmins by caste, they follow the folk tradition of clan or Kul deity worship like any other clan of any other caste. It may be more Sanskritic than the worship of some other folk deity as shrine of Datti Ji is purely vegetarian with people even avoiding onion and garlic in food, and it has no history of animal sacrifice or offering of meat and liquor. But it is still a phenomenon of folk Hinduism.

The Chapter Fifth Rituals associated with the Folk Deity Worship among the Jamwal-Pandits explains the concept of rituals in sociological and social anthropological
studies, rituals among Hindus and Brahmins, and rituals among the Jamwal-Pandits. The chapter elaborates the various rituals related to childbirth, tonsure (Mundan) ceremony, marriage and death among the Jamwal-Pandits.

It is seen that most of these rituals are Sanskritic in form performed by the pandit (priest) following proper vidhi (procedure). Though many castes among Hindus follow the similar rituals, among Brahmins they are more elaborate and follow ritual purity and pollution for longer days and in stricter measures. There are also differences in rituals for the boys and the girls and the roles played by the girl’s relatives on every occasion, i.e. wife-givers always give to the wife-takers.

It was observed during the fieldwork that many Jamwal-Pandit respondents offered animal sacrifice at the place of Baba Pehad, near Nagrota in Jammu, a devsthan, literally the place of deity or God. People generally come here to perform the mundan (tonsure) ceremony of their son. Baba Pehad is regarded as the son of Vasuki Nag who brought river Tawi to this region. All the places of Nag devta (serpent God) whose worship is quite common throughout Jammu region are near some water resource. It was informed by the respondents that they were told that if they are non-vegetarian, they should offer animal sacrifice to Baba Pehad. Therefore they started sacrificing animal and offering its’ meat as prashad (offering). Today, nearly 35 percent of the Jamwal-Pandit clan members follow this.

This shows that the ritual of mundane followed by Jamwal-Pandits reflect the folk dimension of worship. Similarly, the marriage ritual and that of the death reflect folk aspects, despite their following many of the Sanskritic features. Marriage ritual is performed by priest with all the proper Sanskritc procedures with rituals like phere, kanyadan, bidai etc. The death also involves many Sanskritic rituals and observance of restrictions and pollution of the entire agnatic household. For the dead ancestors shradh ritual is performed and pinda dan (offering of food to the souls of ancestors) is done. All these rituals of clan and gotra are performed at the level of lineage and joint family. They help to strengthen ties and enhance solidarity of the group.

This is the Sixth and the Last Chapter of the study, Conclusion in which important and main points of all the chapters are summarized and analyzed. This chapter brings out the main findings of the study discussed as below:
Findings of the Study

- There are 492 identified families of Jamwal-Pandits with a population of 3500 (approx.) spreading over different districts of Jammu region. From this, a sample of 200 respondents was selected for the study through purposive/convenient sampling technique.

- The spread of Jamwal-Pandits is in the districts of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi, Rajouri and Doda with maximum households (266) in Jammu region (there are 10 districts in Jammu region). Some of the families also reside in neighbouring states like Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

- The Jamwal-Pandit is a clan of Brahmin caste in Jammu and Kashmir State, though there Surname suggests a name of Rajput clan. The Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir (1846-1947) were ‘Jamwal’ Rajputs belonging to Suryavansh (lineage of the Sun) clan, and it is possible that Jamwal-Pandits’ were the priests of the ruling royal family.

- Jamwal-Pandits are Dogra Saraswat Brahmins and it is largely an endogamous group marrying within the Brahmins of their own group.

- The gotra of Jamwal-Pandit clan is Koundinya and marriage alliances follow the rule of both clan and gotra exogamy.

- The Kul deity of Jamwal-Pandits is Satyavati Ji or Datti Ji which is worshipped on all auspicious occasions by the Jamwal-Pandits like marriage, birth of a child, mundan ceremony etc. Various rituals are followed during these ceremonies.

- The Main temple of the Satyavati Ji, deity is at Purmandal, a place in Samba district, some 40 Kilometers away from Jammu city.

- There are other temples of Satyavati ji deity in the fringe of some villages like Ghajansoo, Akhnoor, Katra, Reasi and Udhampur where members of Jamwal-Pandits pray and perform rituals of everyday life.
The Socio-economic background of the respondents shows that out of 200 respondents 68 percent are educated. Out of which, 31 percent are graduates and above, and 26 percent respondents have monthly income more than Rs. 20,000.

Out of the total sample of 200 respondents, 44 percent respondents are self employed or in private jobs and 21 percent respondents are still dependent on agriculture.

‘Mel’ congregation is an important feature of Jamwal-Pandits like other caste and sub-caste in Jammu region. It is organized twice a year. In all 57 percent of the respondents said that they attend the ‘Mel’ twice a year, while nearly 22 percent said that they attend at least once a year. Important rituals are performed here like offering of new produces like food grains and fruits etc.

Though many of them come for performing various ceremonies and rituals like tarage (deity worship immediately after marriage) or after the birth of the child or even for some other reason, 80 percent of the respondents were of the view that they come for ‘Mel’ congregations.

It has been observed that such ‘Mel’ congregations have functions in strengthening the unity of clan as members meet and discuss various issues and problems pertaining to their clan. A total of 56 percent respondents said that the main and the first reason of their coming is the complete faith in the blessings of the deity Satyavati ji. From the rest 20 percent said that their first reason is the strengthening of the clan unity, followed by those who said that it’s a family’s tradition and that it gives them the opportunity to meet each other and discuss their issues.

Case studies undertaken of some of the respondents show their experiences regarding Datti Ji and how they strengthened their beliefs.

Changes are identified due to modernization like media, communication, education, infrastructure development, rate of increase in annual income, interaction with believers from other castes as well as communities.

The number of pilgrimages have increased manifold and both income and expenditure incurred during ‘Mel’ congregations have increased.

Though Jamwal-Pandits have adopted Sanskritic features, at the same time they have retained some folk elements. Datti Ji is purely a vegetarian deity, but her origin is in
the folk worship. She is revered for meeting people’s immediate needs. Her worship
does not involve elaborate arti like of pan-Hindu religion, nor is she a consort of some
Great God. At Baba Pehad Devta temple, approximately 35% respondents agreed that
they offer goat sacrifice since last few years. Before this, they were totally vegetarian
and offered halwa instead of goat sacrifice. However, it was informed by the
respondents that before this, goat sacrifice was a common feature.

Conclusions of the Study

From the above findings it can be concluded that:

- Folk deity worship has enhanced the clan unity among Jamwal-Pandits.
- ‘Mel’ congregation of Jamwal-Pandits held twice a year and other ceremonies have
  played a major role in this. They proved to be functional for bringing solidarity
  among people.
- People expressed complete faith in the worship of their local deity Satyavati ji. Their
  belief revolves around her.
- During the study, it was revealed that even though the digital divide has hampered the
  gatherings of people, believers, visitors and followers in ‘Mel’, still the prior
  intimations of ‘Mel’ congregations and advancements in technology like mobile
  services, Whatsapp, SMS etc. have played a major role in gathering or assembling the
  worshippers at one place during the ‘Mel’ congregation.
- The other reason behind the increase in the devotees is mode of transport, which is
  now easily available. Earlier it was very difficult to move from one place to other, as
  no private transport was available. At present, accommodation is also available for
  devotees, who want to stay there. New and modified ways of cooking the food, types
  of dishes prepared as well as the serving procedures have been adopted.
- The major reason behind the larger number of devotees is increased faith in folk deity
  due to complexities of life and search for peace and prosperity. Migration of people to
  outside world has given them opportunity to meet each other at least once or twice a
year on the day of ‘Mel’ congregation. By attending ‘Mel’ congregations the devotees also get platform to discuss about their social needs and problems.

- Large donations are coming up now thus resulting in an overall development in the infrastructure and other facilities. In this way, we can say that with modernization process, the Indian traditions are getting a new form and image as people across the community and region participate in gatherings and congregations of others strengthening the network of relationships in society.

Along with modernization, the process of Sanskritization (Srinivas, 1952) is also seen in the worship of clan deity among the Jamwal-Pandits of Jammu region. Most of the characteristics acquired in the worship of folk deity in recent years suggest a move towards Sanskrit form, though some folk features are also maintained. In fact in certain instances, some folk elements are being incorporated, like adoption of animal sacrifice at the shrine of Baba Pehad by the Jamwal Pandits suggesting de-sanskritization. It is thus a case of both universalization and parochalization at work among Jamwal-Pandits, to use Mckim Marriott’s words (1955).

However, Datti ji or Satyavati ji has not become a global or universal Goddess like Mata Vaishno Devi as she is still not associated with the Sanskrit form of Hinduism like Vaishnavism or Shaivism, or Great Gods and their consorts (Chauhan, 2011). She is still a folk deity that is confined to a particular clan and caste of a region. She is a local Goddess that caters to the everyday needs of her worshippers albeit acquiring certain Sanskritic features. The case of Satyavati ji of Jamwal-Pandits nevertheless suggest the increasing significance of folk deity worship among several castes and sub-castes in Jammu region of J&K state, and hence of clan, caste and religious unity.

In this way, the study brings out a point that the worship of folk deity has experienced a horizontal spread in almost all castes of Jammu region. It is a special and unique regional phenomenon that incorporates both Sanskritic and folk dimension of Hinduism. But even when Dogra Brahmins’ practices are more Sanskritic than other castes in certain matters, the folk dimension of Hinduism in the context of deity worship among Jamwal-Pandits remains more important.
End Notes

1. See Map in Chapter 1

2. *Biradari* derived from the Persian word meaning brotherhood or fraternity is used more frequently by the people to denote their clan and their sub-caste. Often the term ‘Mel’ *Biradari* is heard in the local parlance in Jammu region.


