Chapter – I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Clan and the manifestation of its unity in the form of deity worship are intrinsically connected. All over India and in Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) State, worship of folk deity of different clans within several castes and sub-castes among Hindus is a near universal phenomenon. Among the Jamwal-Pandits, a clan of the Brahmin caste in Jammu, the folk-deity called Satyavati Ji or Datti Ji is worshiped by the clan members during various occasions at different times of the year. This research study has been an attempt to understand the relationship between clan unity and folk deity worship in the context of Jamwal-Pandits of Jammu region. More specifically, the study has tried to explore the ways in which clan and deity worship are related, the functions of deity worship for clan unity, the manner in which beliefs and rituals related to deity worship strengthen the clan unity, the changes coming about in the functions of clan, and the factors that affect these changes in transforming the culture of deity worship in Jammu today.

Jammu and Kashmir with a population of 1.25 Crore (Census 2011)1 is the only Muslim majority state in India. The Muslims constitute 68.3 percent of the total population of the state, the Hindus are 28.4 percent while the rest are the Sikhs (1.9 %), and the Buddhists and the others (.90). The state comprises of three main regions – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. These regions are diverse in their locations, religious diversity and cultural ethnicity. Kashmir region is known as paradise on earth because of its natural beauty. It is rich in the production of different varieties of apples, walnuts and almonds. It is famous for the production of saffron particularly around Pampore Tehsil under Pulwama District. It is said that Kashyapa Rishi was the first to set his feet in the valley. Kashmir is inhabited mainly by the Kashmiris, most of whom are Kashmiri Muslims constituting nearly 96.4 percent of the population of Kashmir today, while some
are Kashmiri Hindus known as Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus are 2.4), Buddhists and Sikhs. The Brahmins of Kashmir are Saraswat Brahmins (Kaul, 2011). The population of Hindus was 5 percent in 1961 (Madan, 1989:14) which is now reduced to less than 2 percent, particularly since their mass exodus in 1989-90 from the Kashmir valley.

Ladakh, a cold desert in the Himalayas consists of many ethnic and tribal communities, mostly populated by people of Indo-Aryan and Tibetan descent. Ladakh Buddhists are in predominance in Leh district and Shia Muslims in Kargil district. The overall percentage of the Muslims in Ladakh is 46.4 percent, the Buddhists are 39.7 percent, the Hindus constitute 12.1 percent and the Sikhs are .82 percent. It is one of the most meagerly populated regions in Jammu and Kashmir and its history and traditions are very much connected to Tibet. It was ruled by the mild form of monarchy by the ruler or the King called Gialpo with the strong minister or Kahlon for a long time before it was taken over by Raja Gulab Singh of the Dogra dynasty in the first half of the nineteenth century and thus became the part of Jammu and Kashmir State of India (Lawrence, 2010 [Reprinted]: 96-7).

In Jammu region the Hindus constitute 66.5 percent while the Muslims are in sizeable number forming 33.4 percent of the total population of the region, the Sikhs are 3.30 percent and Buddhists and others are .70 percent as per 2011 census. The Jammu region is populated by four main communities, the strong Dogras from the plains, the Pahadis from the hills and the itinerant Gaddis and Gujjars. These four communities genuinely comprise the ethnic culture of the state. Most of these communities, particularly the Dogras are believed to have descended from the famous and legendary family of the Aryans and speak Dogri language. They consist of several castes and sub-castes. The presence of clans in most of these castes and communities and worship of their deities constitute an important component of the Hindu Dogra culture of the region (Ibid: 32).

The socio-religious history of the Jammu and Kashmir state suggests prevalence of Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Sufism and its local version
Rishism, as well as Shakta tradition. Many shrines related to these religions are visited by a large number of people from all the religions. The Shivalinga of ice at Amarnath in Kashmir region and Mata Vaishno Devi in Jammu region are the most often visited shrines of the state. The interconnectivity is seen in the religious entertainment and recreational tourism that has only grown popular over the years but has united the three regions. When tourists visit Kashmir, more than 80 percent go via Jammu or are called ‘transit tourists’. When there is conflict in Kashmir or disturbance in Ladakh or agitation in Jammu, the entire social and economic life of people gets affected (Dewan, 2004).

The deities may be defined as those Gods or Goddesses who are revered and considered divine and believed to possess powers greater than those of ordinary human beings. The deity worship in Jammu region is an ancient and important phenomenon of the religious life of the people. There are deities ranging from the popular Sanskritic Goddesses as Mata Vaishno Devi to the folk deities like the Kul Devi (lineage or clan) or the village deities. Deity in religious connotation is a supernatural being which is considered to be sacred and divine. They are a link between people and the other world and occur in various forms and in different regions. Though there are male and female deities, it is the feminine form that is considered as more divine and is much more prevalent across the country. They are the Devi, Mata or Sati. In India, the deity worship has been associated with the caste system with different castes arranged hierarchically having their own deities. Some of them are consolidated with more Sanskritic features through horizontal spread while others at the folk level have acquired vertical mobility through adopting more Sanskritic forms of worship (Srinivas, 2003 [Reprinted]).

T. N. Madan considers Hinduism as an amalgamation of faiths and confederation of communities having pluralistic tendencies (Madan 2004). For Srinivas, Hinduism consists and absorbs all - from Classical Sanskritic All India Hinduism to local cults and folk deities (Srinivas 2003 [Reprinted]). The folk Hinduism thus is an important aspect of Hindu religion though associated with oral, local, regional, specific households or cult deities and is often at the periphery and linked with those at the margins of caste society. Classical or Sanskritic Hinduism, which Srinivas calls All-India Hinduism is largely
elitist and Brahmanical, and based on scriptures and classical religious texts. It centres around the worship of the trinity of the three Great Gods – Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh and their consorts considered equally divine benevolent and usually worshipped in magnificent temples maintaining ritual purity and following Sanskritic rituals. There is a similar distinction between the Sanskritc and the folk deities.

The deities that have been largely associated with tribal, peasant and lower caste culture are described as folk deities. They are local and regional figures that are propitiated for practical needs or some emergent problem like good harvest or cure of disease. They are supernatural, yet more human-like and get angry or pleased quickly. They must be offered food and sacrifices and adequately compensated and properly venerated. They are feared and could be revengeful and change their forms, live or appear in stones, trees, fields, streams or ponds and at times when reach a more benevolent form they can find a dwelling in a house or a temple. Therefore, regionalism (specific location), pragmatism (specific end), human personality (getting angry, jealous, lustful, impulsive, pleased, benevolent), variation of form (appearing in natural objects or taking a human form), and lack of concern for caste (worshipped by people of any ritual or social status) are important characteristics of folk deity (Article on ‘Folk Hinduism in West Bengal: pg. 2)\textsuperscript{10}.

‘Clan deity’ worship is a common feature of all folk religions and of folk Hinduism in particular where it is worshipped as \textit{kul devi} or \textit{kul devta}. The word clan is derived from ‘clann’ (family) and ‘cland’ (offspring) in the Irish and Scottish Gaelic languages respectively. It is learnt that a clan is a group of people united by actual or supposed kinship and descent. It is organized around a founding member, a common ancestor that is a symbol of clan’s unity. In general, clan refers to a unilineal descent group which traces its origin to a common apical ancestor, real or mythical and includes several distinct types of lineages usually in a male line. In most societies of the world it is exogamous group that regulates marriage alliances and unite people into an integrated group (Parkin, 1997: 18-19)\textsuperscript{11}. Robin Fox defines clans as ‘descent groups whose
members claim to be descended – on one principle or another – from a common ancestor’ (1996: 90-91).

The study of clans, lineages and other descent groups came to be the focal points of what came to be known as ‘descent theory’ in social anthropology through the writings of Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, Evans-Pritchard and Goody (Parkin, 1997: 149)\textsuperscript{12}. For Radcliffe-Brown (1952)\textsuperscript{13} unilineal descent groups were corporate groups. These groups were concerned with inheritance, residence rules and exogamy. They were also seen as having functions, the chief of which was that they distributed rights and duties of all kinds to and among their members.

In British and American (US) social anthropology, the term ‘clan’ has been used differently (Seymour-Smith, 1986:3)\textsuperscript{14}. Following Morgan, the American Anthropologists have used the word ‘clan’ to signify a unilienneal descent group recruited through a female line, while the unilineal descent group recruited through the male line is called ‘gens’. In Morgan’s earlier work these two groupings were called ‘matriclan’ and ‘patriclan’ (Morgan, 1871)\textsuperscript{15}.

In British Social Anthropology, the term clan is used in lineage theory as a descent group whose members trace their ancestry to a common apical ancestor/ancestress but do not know the precise links with him/her. Rivers (1906)\textsuperscript{16} defined a clan as an exogamous division of a tribe, the members of which are tied together by a belief in common decent, common possession of a totem or habitation of a common territory. Some scholars like Lowie omit totemism, as it is largely absent in American, Africana and some Asian clans. The use of the word ‘clan’ in this sense includes several distinct types of lineages. These may all be generally defined, but unilineal descent groups are united by a known link to a common ancestor. According to Murdock, the term ‘sib’ could be used to designate the group referred to in British Anthropology as clan. For him clan is a compromise kin group, because it combines the principles of consanguineal kinship and common residence (Murdock, 1949)\textsuperscript{17}. According to Lowie, there is a close
connection between exogamy and clan and it is the exogamous character of a clan that makes it a distinctive group (Lowie, 1921).

The Jamwal-Pandit clan mainly inhabiting the hilly side of Chenab River, especially the areas of Akhnoor, Gajansoo, Udhampur, Reasi, Katra and Jammu, is a patrilineal clan among the Dogras of Jammu region. A patriline is literally a father line; one's patriline is one's father and his father and his father... ad infinitum, one's nearly infinite line of fathers. Jamwal-Pandit is basically a patrilineal unilineal descent group with patriarchal family where the father or the eldest male is the head of the household, having authority over women and children. There is patriarchy in general and an overall dominance of men in their social or cultural systems. The clan is exclusively exogamous and all marriages are arranged outside it.

The word ‘Jamwal’ represents a clan of Dogra Rajputs in Jammu region. It is one of the ruling clans of J&K State and the bulk of erstwhile princely State rulers were the Jamwal Rajputs. The clan is largely exogamous following the rule of caste endogamy. In fact, most of the marriages take place among ruling clans of Rajputs, though there have been a few cases of hypergamous marriage as well. It is interesting to note that why a people of Pandit clan acquired a name of Rajputs. A large number of people consider the status of Jamwal-Pandits ambiguous. However, the study has shown that Jamwal-Pandits are purely Brahmins and have probably acquired the name as they were the priests of Jamwal Rajput rulers. They were engaged in all the religious activities of the ruling family like birth of the child, mundan (tonsure) ceremony, marriage or any other rituals. Being associated with the ruling clan, their status was higher among the Dogra Brahmins as well and they married among Brahmins of the equal status (Drew 2008 [Reprinted]: 44).

Every clan has a representation – a species, totem or a deity. Durkheim (1912) saw totemism among the Australian tribes as the original ritual basis for the existence of clans. Totems for him were representative of clans constituting sacred group symbols or ‘things set apart and forbidden’ in a ‘unified system of beliefs and practices’ called religion. According to Durkheim, rituals served the function of maintaining social order.
and upholding the community while renewing the sense of belongingness to the group. Radcliffe-Brown (1952)\textsuperscript{21} preferred to use the word ‘ritual relation’ between person and their totem. As argued by structural-functionalists, social function of rituals or sacred is to express and maintain the solidarity and continuity of the structural system. For Srinivas (1952, Reprinted 2003)\textsuperscript{22}, the social function of these rituals is to express and maintain the solidarity and continuity of the structural system.

In every clan-culture therefore, rituals are vital components which are largely connected with religion. Each clan has a body of rituals and each ritual action has its meaning and the totality of such meaning constitute the expression of that system. Rituals may be defined as a kind of patterned activity oriented towards control of human affairs, primarily symbolic in character with a non empirical referent and as a rule socially sanctioned (Firth, 1971: 222)\textsuperscript{23}. Rituals are the ways of expressing the religious sentiments and deal with performance, expression as well as with symbolic communication (Bowie, 2006)\textsuperscript{24}. They consist ‘in the observance, according to a prescribed manner, of certain actions designed to establish liaison between the performing individual and the supernatural power, or powers’ (Majumdar and Madan, 1999 [Reprinted]: 131)\textsuperscript{25}.

Along with ‘rituals’, ‘beliefs’ are important characteristic of every religion which provides supernatural and sacred definitions for its followers. ‘Beliefs are a charter for the rituals, as also rationalization of the same. These beliefs ensure that the rituals will be observed’ (Ibid.)\textsuperscript{26}. They are Statements to which members of a particular religion adhere. The body of beliefs may be very simple and loosely organized or very complex and elaborately organized (Ralhon and Lambat, 2006:51)\textsuperscript{27}. Religious beliefs and rites have generally been organized around objects and activities that are held to be sacred because they are seen as having superior power or dignity to the objects and activities of everyday life (Fulcher and Scott, 2003:407)\textsuperscript{28}. These beliefs and rituals are exhibited in the worship of folk clan deity and one of the aims of the study had been to look into this aspect.
Among the Hindus of India, the *gotra* and *sapinda* are more commonly used as exogamous groups similar to clans, while *vansh* is used for lineage. Lineage is a kind of extended family consisting of four to five generation members living together or closely and sharing many things in common. It is a consanguineous unilienal descent group whose members trace their link and origin to a known and a real common ancestor. It is an exogamous group, its’ members do not intermarry and are considered to be related by blood. It is based on more or less precise genealogy. The members who live alongside usually participate in social and religious functions, and worship the same deity as well as follow the same rituals. Most of these common beliefs and rites bind the lineage together often sharing and cooperating in economic and political fields as well. In rural India earlier the lineages were politically powerful groups and the headman played an important role. Now their significance has declined but they are still important in arranging marriage alliances and serving as a unifying feature of the group solidarity (Ahuja, 2010 [Reprinted]: 78-9).29

Lineage or *vansh* is quite similar to clan or *gotra* as both are unilineal descent groups and are exogamous. The Marriages are arranged outside one’s lineage and clan or *gotra*. In many situations hypergamous marriages are allowed, while in certain marriages *gotra* exogamy also follows a rule. For instance, rules of kinship in Central India follow clan exogamy of hypergamous nature whose clans are arranged in hierarchical groups. To prevent a woman from losing caste and becoming ritually impure, Manu and other law-givers prescribed hypergamous marriages in which a man from higher group could marry in his own caste or could take a girl from one below his but a woman could marry only in her caste or above (Majumdar and Madan, 1999 [Reprinted]: 73).30 In the Indian context hypergamy and hypogamy are referred to as *anuloma* and *pratiloma* respectively. In the former the father is of a higher caste, *varna* or clan and the mother is from a lower one and in the latter it is vice versa. This form of hypergamous or *anuloma* marriage was allowed (though not preferred) and considered legal. The hypogamous or *pratiloma* marriage was regarded as illegal and condemned. For instance, the son of a Shudra father and a Brahmmin mother was designated as a *chandala*, the lowest of all (Kapadia, 1966: 104-06).31
At the clan or gotra level, hypergamous marriages occurred among some Brahmin castes like Kulin Bengali Brahmins, Audich, Khedaval and Anavil of Gujarat, and among some non-Brahmin castes such as Marathas, Rajputs, Leva Patidars of Gujarat and Namboodri Brahmins of Kerala. Among some of these castes like the Rahri (Kulin) and Anavil Brahmins, the hypergamous marriages became notorious involving huge expenses and dowry with older men marrying very young girls, numbering at times 20 or 30. When the groom died many of them became widow at young age and were forced to live the life of austerity and seclusion. This also created adverse differential sex-ratio and difficulty for young men in other lower clans to find bride. This also showed that poygynous marriages were allowed, though not all polygamous marriages were hypergamous (Ibid)\textsuperscript{32}.

However, there is a clear-cut difference between the two – the ‘clan’ and the ‘lineage’. Clan is a much larger group, i.e. a collection of a few lineages. Clan has a mythical ancestor, who may be human, human-like, animal, plant or even inanimate; and a story or a legend related to it whereas the founder of the lineage is often known. ‘Lineage group’ includes those members of a lineage who are alive at a particular time (Majumdar and Madan, 1999 [Reprinted]: 97-8)\textsuperscript{33}. Among Hindus, the ancestors of the gotras are the Rishis, and the person inherits the gotra of his father and a woman when unmarried of her father and after marriage of her husband. Though some primitive and tribal groups like the Andaman Islanders or the Kadar do not have clans, they are found to be present in nearly all the tribes of India, including the backward tribes as the Kamar, the Chenchu and the Birhor in Central India as well as those of the South and the Northeast (Ibid: 102-04)\textsuperscript{34}.

Many of these are totemic clans which are represented by a common totem incorporating the feeling of social solidarity within the clan. The Middle Indian tribal belt, consisting of people of Proto-Australoid origin is the totemic region \textit{par excellence} (Ibid: 106)\textsuperscript{35}. Thus it can be said that lineage relations are limited in space and time, while clan relations endure through time and space. The lineage when becomes too large
(maximal) usually breakup in the course of time and new lineages are formed. This is usually a slow and gradual process as ties of mutual support and cooperation begin to dwindle (Madan, 1965: 225). The use of the term *gotra* as synonymous with clan however is erroneous according to Madan. It is done by Sociologists under the influence of Indologists, and it is doubtful if the Brahmanic *gotra* is a grouping of kin, or a clan (1989:91). The two groups ‘clans’ and ‘gotras’ are different as the latter seem to be more closely related to lineages (Levi-Strauss, 1970: 417-18). Among Hindus most of the clans have different *gotras* and where there is more than one, the exogamy operates at the level of *gotra* and not clan. Nearly all castes have clans and *gotras*, and the concern in this study is on Brahmanic *gotras*. Jamwal-Pandits follow both clan and *gotra* exogamy.

The rule of exogamy among the Hindus operates at the two levels, *sapinda* and *gotra*. The *sapinda* exogamy prohibits marriage between persons related to each other within certain generations on the father’s and mother’s side. The *gotra* exogamy prohibits marriage between the same *gotra*. These terms are included in various religious scriptures which also mention the strict punishment in case of violations of these rules. The measures of outcaste or excommunication, degrading the position of women and even of children born of such marriages were followed. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 later on allowed inter-caste and intra-*gotra* marriages and considered them as valid marriages. However, the Act lays down that ‘the parties are not *sapinda* of each other unless the custom or usage governing each other permits of a sacramental marriage between the two’. According to the Act, marriage between two persons related within five generations on the father’s side and three on the mother’s side is void unless permitted by local custom (Kapadia 1966:128-30).

The *gotra* system is part of a system of classification or identification of various Brahmin families in early times which is believed to have taken during the Yajur Veda period, after the Rig Veda period and started to consolidate around 10-8 Century B.C. The *gotra* denotes all persons who trace descent in an unbroken male line from a
common male ancestor. Each person inherits the gotra of his father. Panini defines gotra for grammatical purposes as 'apatyam pautraprabhrti gotram', which means 'the word gotra denotes the progeny (of a sage) beginning with the son's son'. According to the Baudhayanas' rauta-sutra there are eight sages - Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, Gautama, Atri, Vasishtha, Kashyapa and Agastya; the progeny of these eight sages is declared to be gotras. This listing of eight main gotras seems to have been known to Panini. The offspring of these eight are gotras and others than these are called 'gotravayava' (Kapadia, 1966: 128-30).

The current gotra classification is formed from a core of these eight Rishis. Over the years the number of gotras increased as the descendents of these Rishis also started new family lineage or new gotras, inter married other Brahmins, and new groups like Kshatriyas were taken into its fold by some Rishis. The gotra of Jamwal-Pandit is Koundinya. Koundinya was a great Rishi (sage) and was known beyond Bharat. He was a master of Vedic knowledge and was a worshipper of God Ganesha. He was also linked with Noble Buddha. His name is well-known in Thailand and Cambodia. Nothing is known about his children or more about his wife, except that her name was Ashraya. The families of Koundinya gotra use the family names or surnames such as: Sharma, Shastri, Achari, Acharya, Dikshit, Joshi, Katke, Majumdar, Patwardhan etc.

These Rishis belonged to different sects like Shakti, Shavites and Vaishnavites and had different deities for worship. Such deities came to be known as the Kuldevatas. Almost every clan of Hindus of Jammu region worships their Kuldevata or clan deity. The worship of clan deity is a collective action of the community whose aim is the preservation and well-being of the clan group. In India, through this participation, a person thinks of oneself as a member of the caste and widespread Hindu religious community as a whole (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952: viii-ix). This study is about Jamwal-Pandits who are Brahmins by caste. The word Brahmin means the one who knows God and has the knowledge of Vedas, a priest, a teacher, a superior person and so on. The principle that people born in Brahmin caste, automatically become a Brahmin, is a much later idea. In the past, a Brahmin was a
person who had attained maximum spiritual knowledge. The case of Vishwamitra, who was a warrior (*Kshatriya*) is a great example of this practice (that a person becoming a *Brahmin*, rather than born as one). He became a *Brahmin* after attaining maximum spiritual knowledge and composed the *Gayatri Mantra*, the most sacred *mantra* of the Hindus.

According to some *Shashtras* and popular belief as mentioned in "Hindu Castes and Sects" (Bhattacharya, 1896)\(^43\), the Indian sub-continent’s Brahmins are divided into two main groups: *Panch Gaur* of the North and *Panch Dravida* of the South. Each of them has five divisions. The five classes of Northern India called *Panch Gaur*, constitute the following: Saraswat, Kanyakubja, Gaudra, Utkala, and Maithila. Further, each of the provinces are considered separately, such as, North Western Provinces, Gandhar, Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh, Rajputana, Kurukshetra, Oudh, Central India, Trihoot, South Bihar, Orissa, Bengal, Assam etc. The five classes of Southern India called *Panch Dravida*, constitute: Andhra, Dravida (Tamil and Kerala), Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Sarasvat, one of the subdivisions of *Gaur Brahmins* is named after the river Sarasvati which is believed to flow underground from where it loses itself in the deserts of Rajputana till it joins the Ganga and the Yamuna at Prayag (Allahabad). The Sarasvat Brahmins are found in Kashmir, the Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarart and along the western coast of Maharashtra, Goa and Mysore (Madan, 1989: 13-4)\(^44\).

The Brahmin is a *varna* consisting of several castes and sub-castes. For example, the Kanyakubj, Saryupari and Gaur are the examples of castes, while Shrimati, Purohit and Pushkarya Brahmins are examples of sub-castes, and Bhardwaj, Gautam, and Kashyap Brahmins are examples of *gotras*. Approximately 45 percent of Punjabi Brahmins belong to the *Bharadwaj Gotra*, a Saraswat Brahmin group which is the same as the one found in Jammu and Kashmir. Caste and sub-castes are both endogamous group and *gotra* is an exogamous group. In many situations endogamy exists at the level of sub-caste which is considered as the real and ultimate unit of analysis (Ahuja, 2010: 235-36)\(^45\).
The Brahmins of Jammu and Kashmir regions are *Saraswat Brahmins* (Madan, 2001). Historically, the *Saraswat* Brahmins are those people who lived on the banks of the former Saraswati River that once flowed in northern India. The historian writings suggest that it is possible that before the advent of Ashoka, a stream of Brahmans made their way to Kashmir after the river Saraswati dried up in the plains of Punjab and Sindh (Kaul, 2011: 7). It is believed that around 1900 BC, the river Saraswati started vanishing underground and the people on its banks started migrating to other parts of India thus forming sub-communities. These are (Singh, 2003: Volume XXV):

- Rajasthan Saraswats
- Kutch Saraswats
- Uttar Pradesh Saraswats
- Uttarakhand Saraswats
- Konkan Saraswats
- Kashmiri Saraswats
- Dogra Saraswats
- Punjabi Saraswats
- Sindhi Saraswats
- Oriya Saraswats

The Brahmins of Jammu are known as ‘Dogra Saraswats’ and they are a sub-category of the larger Saraswat Brahmins. Though ethnically they are similar to the other Saraswats, culturally and linguistically they are closer to Punjabi Brahmins than to the Kashmiri Brahmins. Dogri is the language of the Dogra Brahmins and is much similar to Punjabi language. The Jamwal-Pandits are the Dogra Brahmins of Jammu region. The Dogras are of the great Aryan race that settled in plains and mountain areas called *Dugar*. Regarding the origin of the name it is said that there are two holy lakes near Jummu, Surainsar and Mansar. The area around these was called *Dvigartdesh* or the ‘country of the two hollows’, from this came Dugar, and from that Dogri. The Dogras are divided into various castes which include Brahmans, Rajputs, Khatri, Thakar, Jat, Bania and Krar and various other service providing and menial castes. The highest among them are the Dogra Brahmins, considered to be learned and having knowledge of religious scriptures...
and texts. However, they have taken various other occupations and many of them are cultivators (Drew, 2008: 43-4).

The Dogra Brahmins of Jammu region can be broadly divided into two classes: *purohits* and *pandits*, the former ranking higher than the latter. There is also a sub-group called *halbaha* Brahmins, or those who plough. Many of them are farmers, but they are also teachers, astrologers, music experts, doctors and some are scholars, scriptures and writers, while a few of them are in government administrative services and in army and other para military forces. The Brahmin community is highly stratified in hierarchical order maintaining endogamy within certain *gotras* and not entering into marriage alliances with groups of *gotras* placed below. Those who claim to be the descendants of King Porus occupy highest place in the regional hierarchy like Datta, Bali, Vaid, usually the martial clans. At the top of the hierarchy of the non-martial clan are Badiyal, Bhanotra, Dharmatt and Khajuria (Dewan 2007:388-89).

The other Dogra Brahmin clans in the top rung are Baru, Balkarhiya, Dave and Dube (their ancestors probably came from Maharashtra); Garoch, Goswami, Jambal or Jamwal-Pandit (perhaps originally from Uttar Pardesh), Kesar, Lalotra, Mangotra, Padha or Upadhaya, Raina, Saddotra, Samnotra, Tagotra, Vaid, Pant etc. Other Brahmin clans of Jammu are Bakshi, Budgotra, Bansotra, Dutt, Gautam, Kalsotra, Pandotra, Misra, Modi and Rasgotra. At present one does not come across many of these surnames anymore because many people from the lesser known class have chosen the general Brahmin surname ‘Sharma’. Some of the *purohit* (priest) Brahmins whose are believed to have descended from Brahmin men and Rajput women enjoyed special favours of the ruling Rajput clan and received royal patronage. The Jamwal-Pandits probably are the Brahmins of this category being the priests of the royal family of Jammu.

The Kashmiri Brahmins are supposed to be the offspring of *Rishi Kashyap*. Though many support the theory of Kashmiri Pandit migration to Kashmir in the advent of the region of plains drying up, some others give another interpretation of their origin. They link it to Saraswati, the Brahmanic Goddess of learning and claim that Kashmiri
Brahmins are distinct form Saraswat Brahmins elsewhere (Madan 1989: 13). The surname of ‘Pandit’ is invariably a Saraswat Brahmin surname and most of them are the Kashmiri Pandits, however, some Saraswats with this surname are also found in other parts of India. There are many Muslims in the state of Jammu and Kashmir with surname of Pandit as well, indicating that they are fairly more recent converts to Islam from Hinduism. Many Kashmiri Muslims have still kept their Brahmin surnames of Handoo, Bhatt, Itoo, Dar, Kak, Pandit, Malik, Raina, Waza, Kaul etc.

There are broadly two divisions among Kashmiri Pandits which was based on occupation but became endogamous groups in the course of time. Those who perform rituals and have devoted themselves to the study of the scriptures are known as the bhasha Bhatta or, more simply, the gor, the word derived from the Sanskrit guru; and those that continued to study the scriptures without taking up priestly activities were called the pandit or purohit. The Gor and Karkun thus form two important sub-castes of Kashmiri Pandits and marriages are performed within the sub-caste. The followers of secular occupations are called karkun (workers) who are by far a much larger group and have done remarkably well economically and occupy many higher positions in society today (Madan, 1989: 19-20).

The endogamy in marriage operates at the gotra level among Kashmiri Pandits. Madan notes 16 gotras in village Utrassu –Umangiri in Kashmir. Lawrence earlier noted 18 levite and 103 karkun gotra groups, while Koul gives the list of 189 gotra groups. Most of these overlap though some do not. The gotra is a patrilineal descent group where members trace their descent from a pseudo-historical or mythological founding sage. Though marriages follow the rule of gotra exogamy, the exceptional cases are tolerated among Kashmiri Pandits. A more important proscription is that of sapinda (literally, ‘connected by having in common particles of one body’) exogamy according to which a man should not marry a woman who is sapinda of his father or a mother. This means that an ego cannot marry his or her own agnates of six ascendant generations and his or her mother’s agnates of four ascendant generations (Ibid: 90-2). But as seen above, this has changed now according to the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 as applicable to the state which is also applied to the Hindus of J&K.
The role of the Kings and Rulers in patronizing the Sanskrit Hinduism and Great tradition has been significant. Srinivas notes that the Lingayat Rajas of Coorg have been responsible for the sanskritization of the customs, manners and rites of the Coorgs. The Rameshwara temple at Irpu and the Tala Kaveri structure are the stronghold of Sanskrit Hinduism in Coorg today (Srinivas, 1952: 226). In Manipur far in the northeast, the people of the State, the Meiteis adopted Vaishnavism as its State religion in the 18th century, even though they did not discard their local religion Sanamahism. The agents of sanskritization were the Bengali Brahmins. The Meitei Kings in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries themselves adopted different branches of Vaishnavism and promoted them to the hilt (Laishram, 2009).

In Jammu and Kashmir, the Dogra rulers, the Maharajas (1846-1947) belonging to Suryavanshi (Sun) lineage promoted Vaishnavism in various ways, including notably the construction of a magnificent complex for the worship of Lord Ragunath (Rama) in Jammu City, the tutelary deity of the Dogras, as different from the traditions of the Shaivas and the Shaktas popular in Kashmir. The early history of the state can be traced in classics like Nilmata Purana (6th - 7th centuries AD) and Rajtarangani (1148-1150 AD). Prior to the rule of the Dogras, Kashmir was ruled by the dynasties like the Naag dynasty, the other petty Hindu rulers, the Kushans, Guptas, Mughals, Afghans and the Sikhs. The Naag cult, Buddhism, Sahivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktta traditions flourished here both at the classical and the folk level, with former absorbing the local traditions at different points in time. Kashmir Shaivism and its one form the Trikha which gave primacy to the female deity became prominent around 8th - 9th centuries. The 14th century saw the arrival of Islam and the Sufis from central Asia. The Sufis along with the local version, the Rishi order played an important role in spread and conversion of a large number of local Kashmiri, mainly the Hindus to Islam (2004: 1-20).

The worship of Vaishnava Goddess, Ragnya or Khir Bhawani (milk Goddess) near Srinagar was encouraged as different from the ancient Sharika Bhagvati whose worship had traditionally included offerings of raw and cooked sheep’s meat (Madan, 2006: 189-90; 2008: 15-7). Similarly, one of the important reasons for the popularity of Mata Vaishno Devi shrine located in Jammu region is considered to be the spread of
Vaishnavism, mainly by the Brahmins to the hilly areas with emphasis on vegetarianism against meat eating and alcohol consumption (Chauhan, 2011: 124). Unlike other deity temples, the ritualistic history of Mata Vaishno Devi is ‘pure’ (without any instant of animal sacrifice) maintaining a high degree of ritual purity (Erndl, 1993: 70). However, many folk elements still survive in Jammu and are visible in different forms of deity worship like that of *kul* (clan or lineage) deity, village deity, worship of ancestors, spirits, totems, trees and plants in variety of ways. Every clan organizes its ‘*Mel*’ (congregation) gathering for worshipping its principal deity regularly. It is not only the case of Sanskritization alone, but equally of folk deities retaining their prominence, even though Sanskritizing some of its features.

There are certain criticisms to Srinivas’ view of virtually unqualified positive assessment of sanskritization as productive of socio-cultural cohesion. It provoked some criticisms of his failure to unmask the hegemonic character of the process. Bailey (1958) introduced the important notion of limits, showing that those below the barriers of pollution do not have this route of upward mobility open to them. Also in reality what is more important is what meaning people assign to their practices and how do they perceive their typical religious acts. Tanaka argues on the basis of the fieldwork carried out in a Tamil fishing village ‘Cattiyur’ in western Sri Lanka, rather than following the dichotomous framework, understanding of religious activities in everyday life as typically pragmatic or practical is much more useful (2003).

Yogendra Singh (1986: 196) argues that the process of sanskritization might not be a result of lower castes accepting the values of the higher castes, but it might be used as the only pragmatic means available to them for status mobility in a closed system of stratification. A.M. Shah talks about revisiting the concept of Sanskritization as caste rituals have declined in modern India and many groups and sects have emerged all over the country like Swaminarayan mainly in the South, and Radhaswami predominantly in the North which can be classified as non-caste structures having Sanskritic features. The emergence of a large number of god-men and god-women like *Babas*, *Bapus* and *Mata* have further acted as new agents of Sanskritization not confined to the hierarchical division of caste (Shah, 2005: 241-43).
Oommen (2007: 105-107) is of the view that the perspective of sanskritization ignores and delegitimization of the religious values of Dalitbahujans which do not subscribe to the notion of all India Hinduism. Then some of the so-called Sanskrit values are also followed by many higher castes, including the Brahmins. The effort on the whole is to provide centrality to Brahmanic perspective and make the ideology appear as an all India one. It is also said that as Dalits and such castes are organizing horizontally, the process of sanskritization is no longer important for them.

However, sanskritization is considered in the present study as an important concept to understand the dynamism of the spread of Sanskritic Hinduism (and not so much the dimension of social mobility within the caste system), particularly as the caste and clan under study are Brahmanic, though also useful to study the folk deity. Writing about folk Hinduism in West Bengal, McDaniel (2003) says that there is no sharp differentiation between tribal or village deities and Gods and Goddesses of Brahmanial Hinduism. Rather than a polarity, there is a continuum as these traditions worship many deities in common. Similar observations have been made on different parts of the country by various scholars. Following the similar track, this study has focused on the worship of folk clan deity of Jamwal-Pandits, by analyzing the spread as a ‘two-way’ process of how these values are consolidated at the caste (Brahmin) level on the one hand, and how the local (folk deity) phenomenon acquires a wider dimension, on the other.

**Study Area**

The State of Jammu & Kashmir is divided into three divisions; Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. These three divisions are further divided into 22 districts. There are 10 districts in Jammu region, 10 districts in Kashmir and 2 districts in Ladakh. The study area is Jammu region. As per the religious population data of Census 2011, released by the Central government, in Jammu, of the total population 15,29,958, there are 12,89,240 Hindus, while the number of Muslims is 1,07,489 and others are 1,33,229.

Jamwal-Pandits reside in certain areas of Jammu region like in Jammu city, Ghajansoo and Akhnoor in Jammu district as well as in Reasi, Udhampur and Samba.
districts. In all these places, a temple of their clan deity *Satyavati Ji* is located. Purmandal is the place where the Main temple of the clan deity is situated. The study has been carried out in Purmandal as well as in few other identified places where the temples are located. Purmandal is almost 40 kilometers far from Jammu city, 70 kilometers from Akhnoor, 105 kilometers from Udhampur, 115 kilometer from Reasi and 86 kilometer from Katra approximately.

The Map showing the locale of these temples and the distance of all these places from the Main temple at Purmandal is given below. This has formed the area of the present study and is understood as the ‘network-spread’ of the folk clan deity of Jamwal-Pandits.

![Outline map of Jammu province showing temples of Folk Deity of Jamwal-Pandits](image)

Figure 1.1: Outline map of Jammu province showing temples of Folk Deity of Jamwal-Pandits
Significance

The study has been carried out among Jamwal-Pandit clan of Brahmin caste in Jammu region of J&K State. Amidst plethora of literature on caste and sub-caste, this study on ‘clan’ as a patrilineal descent group is an addition to the existing literature in sociological and social anthropological writings. The study is significant as it has tried to clear the confusion between ‘clan’ and ‘gotra’ as well other concepts like lineage, extended and joint families, making some contribution to the field of kinship studies.

The focus of the study has been on the worship of folk deity representing various clans. This is a widespread phenomenon in Jammu and surrounding areas and reflects the cultural uniqueness of the region. The study has analyzed the social functions and impact of deity worship on clan unity as well as beliefs and rituals associated with it. By focusing on this practice among the Brahmin caste, the study has brought to light a point that Little Tradition through worship of folk deity has spread to the higher castes. Besides maintaining the Sanskritic tradition, the Brahmins have also adopted folk custom and as this worship is found in most of the castes, the hierarchical dimension is reduced with emphasis on what Srinivas calls ‘horizontal spread’. Such analysis have shown the plasticity and flexibility of Hindu culture even if it in some ways become hegemonic giving higher status and importance to aspects of Sanskritic Hinduism like vegetarianism and teetotalism.

This helped us to understand that why and how worship of certain deities including Mata Vaishno Devi has become so popular in the recent years. The study in this sense has provided a framework to understand and analyze such changes and to look at these aspects more critically adding on to the theoretical and methodological issues. It is hoped that this work will be useful in the studies of various topics related to religion, culture and even gender.
The study has helped us to understand better the socio-cultural scenario of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, its religious, cultural and historical background and the recent changes and development.

**Objectives**

- To examine the relationship between clan unity and folk deity worship.
- To explore in what way the worship of clan deity emerged in Jammu and how it constitutes the part of folk or little tradition of the region.
- To understand the interface between Sanskritic and folk Hinduism and the Great and Little traditions in the Jammu region.
- To find out the functions of deity worship of Jamwal-Pandits clan as well its’ other implications.
- To explore the rituals related to deity worship on different occasions and how do they strengthen the clan unity among Jamwal-Pandits.
- To analyze the changes coming about in the worship of folk clan deity and how and why the phenomenon is becoming important in present times.
- To investigate the factors that affects these changes in transforming the culture of folk deity worship in Jammu today.

**Research Methodology**

*Theoretical Perspective:*

The study has been carried out from the theoretical perspective of structural-functionalism. It has broadly followed the methodology of Radcliffe-Brown and M. N. Srinivas. In this study various functions of folk deity worship and how they help to maintain the unity of the clan have been analyzed. Like Radcliffe-Brown’s study among Andaman Islanders and Srinivas’ study of the functions of *mangla* idioms among Coorgs,
it has attempted to understand the functions of clan and roles of rituals that are performed on various occasions in the Main temple as well as in the peripheral/satellite temples of the clan deity ‘Datti Ji’ throughout the year by members of Jamwal-Pandit clan.

As Jamwal-Pandit is a Brahmanic clan, Srinivas’ framework of ‘Sanskritic’ and ‘Non-Sanskritic Hinduism’ as well as All-India and Regional Hinduism has been used. The phenomenon has been understood, through both the processes, i.e. how Sanskritic-Hinduism is followed by Brahmin castes in worshiping of deities at their temples by maintaining ‘ritual purity’ on the one hand; and how the worship of ‘folk’ local deity has percolated to all the castes and absorbed by them, making it a phenomenon of regional Hinduism. At few places wherever found relevant, the concept like Little tradition and Great tradition, as well as processes of ‘universalization’ and ‘parochialization’ (Marriott, 1955) have been employed.

The study has also used the phenomenological perspective to understand the beliefs and practices about the deity – its origin, spread, functions and significance for the people. It has particularly focused on what deity worshippers do and feel when they participates in the various ceremonies and rituals.

Sample – Universe, Size and Sampling Method:

The Universe of the study includes the members of Jamwal-Pandits clan of the Brahmins and has been drawn from the worshippers at the Main temple of Satyavati Ji or Datti Ji in Purmandal and other small temples in different parts of Jammu region and nearby areas. These have served as different clusters and as they involved geographical units, the method of choosing the clusters has been area sampling.

In all, 200 respondents were selected for the study which constituted the sample size. The sampling method, usually called purposive or judgmental sampling has been employed to select the sample. No fixed criteria was delineated but it was kept in mind to include the deity worshippers, priests, the young and old, men and women from those who are frequent visitors to the Main and the other smaller temples of Jamwal-Pandits.
All the major events and occasions related to the deity worship of the clan taking place throughout the year were recorded. The size of the sample selected has been able to represent the Universe and understanding of the phenomenon of deity worship among them.

*Methods and Tools of data collection:*

The data were collected from both secondary and primary sources. For secondary sources besides books, journals, articles and reports, other documents in the form of any archival material, written stories, notices or pamphlets from the concerned temples were consulted.

For collecting primary data, field work was done by using qualitative methods – interviews and observation and related tools. *In-depth interviews* were conducted of both structured and un-structured kind. The former had specific questions as definite information on certain aspects like the origin of deity worship, beliefs and legends, and modes of worship and different occasions of worship among others. The unstructured interviews were necessary to keep the flexibility while talking to people to get in-depth information about various aspects of clan deity worship and their perceptions on these.

*Observation* was considered as the most important method for this study. A non-participant observation method was used in which observation of worshippers’ activities in the natural setting of ritual performance during various occasions of deity worship was made. It helped us to get the phenomenological insight to understand relationships and interactions between people and the symbolic meaning that they attach to their actions. In-depth interviews and focused-group discussions were useful in knowing the practice of deity worship in the past and into the present and were helpful in tracing the origin and genesis of deity worship and since when and how people are engaged in these.
End Notes

1. 15th Census of India, conducted in 2011.


5. Ibid.: 32


12 Ibid.


Chapter 1

Introduction


26 Ibid.


32 Ibid.


34 Ibid.: 102-04

35 Ibid.: 106

37 Ibid.


40 Ibid.

41 This information was given by some prominent Jamwal-Pandits during personal communication with them during ‘Mel’ congregations


Ibid.


Ibid.: 19-20


19-20
1-18, 21-29