CHAPTER IV

POPULATION STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL PRACTICES
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The social history of Kumaon and Garhwal is primarily the history of the Khaśas. They are supposed to have been an Aryan speaking group, who came to the region before the vedic Aryans. So their social practices have some resemblances with those of the latter but unlike the vedic Aryans the Khaśas remained in the Himalayas and were termed as vrāțya kṣatriyas by the law-givers of the early historical period. Since the Khaśas lived in a terrain quite different from the Indo-Gangetic plains which evolved the brahmanical system of social stratification, their social structure did not fully conform to the varṇa system. The Khaśas of some isolated regions are still unaffected by the brahmanic culture. It is generally believed\(^1\) that when Khaśas entered the Himalayan region they found the Kola, Bhil and other tribes already inhabiting this region. In the subsequent period, the Khaśas mingled with some of them but many of the aborigines retained their separate identities. So the social history of Kumaon and Garhwal is mainly the history of interaction among tribes of diverse origins and the people of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Textual Notices of Ethnic Groups

The ethnic groups who are located in this region from ancient times are the following:

1. Kirāta

The first textual reference to the Kirāta is found in the Atharvaveda:

"the young maid of Kirāta, a little damsel, digs the drug (bheṣajam), digs it with shovels wrought of gold on the high ridges of the hills".  

Obviously, Kirātas living during the later Vedic phase had become quite friendly with the later Vedic Aryans. The passage depicts them as a hill tribe having knowledge of medicinal herbs. In the story of Asmāti in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, two priests named Kirāta and Ākuli are shown as opposing Gaupāyanas. In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Kirāta is replaced by Kilāta.  

However, according to Macdonell and Keith the priests are so named not because they came from the Kirāta and Ākuli tribes but to indicate their nature, and the terms are used as adjectives. However, the association of the Kirāta with the later Vedic people may show that they lived somewhere in the western Himalayas. As the Vedic Aryans moved eastward we find Kirātas mentioned in more easterly regions of the Himalayas. Thus in the early Purāṇas they are placed in the udīcya division and they are described as parvatāsrayinaḥ, i.e. living in the mountains or taking shelter in the mountains. In the Mahābhārata the Kirātas are said to have been living in the mountain caves. They were employed in the armies of both sides and hence we find references to the Kirātas being killed by the heroes of both sides. They were vanquished by Karṇa and were also employed in the army of Yudhisṭhira. They formed a part of Bhāgadatta’s contingent. We are told that thousands of Kirātas were killed by Śaṭyaki. Arjuna is said

3 Macdonell and Keith, The Vedic Index, s.v. Kirāta.  
4 Vāyu Purāṇa, I, 45. 120, 136; Vāman Purāṇa, 13.43,58; Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 57. 40, 57, etc.  
5 Mbh. V.62.26, girigahvare; himvaddurgavāsinām, VII.87.38; VII.4.6, himvaddurganilayaḥ kirāta.  
6 VII. 4.6.  
7 V.196.7.  
8 V.19.15.  
9 VII. 95.38. VIII. 95.13.
to have vanquished the Kiratas along with other mlecchas when he followed the sacrificial horse and saw it reaching the Kirata country.\textsuperscript{10} Bhima is said to have defeated the seven chiefs\textsuperscript{11} of the Kiratas. They were employed in the army of Duryodhana and killed by Arjuna.\textsuperscript{12} At one place\textsuperscript{13} the Kiratas are shown to be in the employment of Yudhishṭhira, and as bringing him tribute.\textsuperscript{14} The Mahābhārata also mentions that the Kiratas, originally of kṣatriya\textsuperscript{15} origin (kṣatriya jātayāḥ) and great warriors, became śūdras because of the absence of brāhmaṇas\textsuperscript{16} amongst them.

In the Markandeya Pūrṇa, Kiratas are placed in north,\textsuperscript{17} southwest,\textsuperscript{18} and north-east\textsuperscript{19} and in the Padma Purāṇa\textsuperscript{20} in udīcya and prācyya\textsuperscript{21} divisions. Thus, by the Gupta period Kiratas were found in the whole of the Himalayan region from north-west to north-east. In the Vāyu Purāṇa,\textsuperscript{22} the Kiratas are mentioned along with Keṭas, Lampākas, Khaṣas, Daradas, Sulikas, Barbaras, Cīnas and Tuṣāras while in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa\textsuperscript{23} with Huṇas, Yavanas, Kaṅkas and Khaṣas. Some of the Purāṇas refer to the river Gaṅgā as watering the territory of the Kiratas before entering the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item XIV, 84.4; XIV, 72.24.
\item II.27.13.
\item VIII. 51.19.
\item V.196.7.
\item II. 48.9-11.
\item VIII. 4.6.; Kirāṇīśca ugra vikramāḥ.
\item VIII. 35.17-18.
\item 58.41-47.
\item 58.30-32.
\item 58.48-52.
\item Svargakhaṇḍa, 6.64.
\item Ibid., 6.46,52.
\item Vāyu Purāṇa, I, 58.78-83; II, 37.106-9.
\item Bhāgavata Purāṇa, IX, 20.31.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Kuruland. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* mentions that Īsvara, the king of the Kirātas ruled between the Ganges and the Yamuna and the territory of the Kurus lay to the south of this kingdom. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* has a detailed description of the Kirātas inhabiting Pragjyotishā and the region lying further east. We also find the Kirātas living near the Vindhya mountain. The stone inscription of Yaśovarman (A.D. 953-54) locating the Kirātas in the Vindhyas, says that its peaks “are charming with the sweet notes of his excellences sung by Kirāta women seated on spotless lotuses.” Thus, from the *Athravaveda* to the early medieval period the Kirātas are described as living in wild tracts and mountains. In the *Mahābhārata*, they are described as wearing skins, living on fruits and roots and using deadly weapons. In *Kālikā Purāṇa*, they are said to be savage and ferocious, meat eaters and fond of wine. The articles presented by the Kirātas to Yudhīṣṭhira included *candana, aguru, kaliyaka, carman, ratna, perfumes, woman slaves, and a large measure of gold*. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* calls them *mlechas* and *Manu* has included them in the list of degraded people (*vrātya*). In the list of people given in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the Kirātas or Kirātis are said to have occupied the country to the east of the Bharatas as the Yavanas dwelt in the west. The Kirātas

30 *Mbh.*, II 48.9-11.
31 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, IX, 20.31.
32 *Manu*, X.44.
33 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, VII. 130, Wilson’s translation.
according to S.B. Chaudhuri\textsuperscript{34} were the most ancient of the aboriginal peoples and were distributed over different localities. It is highly probable, according to him, that initially the term stood for a particular tribe, but later the meaning of Kirāta expanded so as to signify any hill tribe. Ptolemy's\textsuperscript{35} description of the country of Airrhadoi, covers a number of settlements of the Kirātas. According to Nepalese usage,\textsuperscript{36} the country between the Dudh-Kosi and the Arun rivers in Nepal was known as the Kirāta country. S.B. Chaudhuri suggests that a branch of the Kirātas established a kingdom in the medieval period, as an inscription\textsuperscript{37} refers to a Kirāta king. In this inscription of the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Mihira Bhoja, it is said that Nāgabhātta II had forcibly seized the hill forts of the kings of Ānartta, Mālava, Kirāta, Turuṣka, Vatsa and Matsya.\textsuperscript{38} The earliest insessional evidence of Kirātas comes from Nagarjunakonda.\textsuperscript{39} Belonging to the Gupta period, it mentions the dedication of a shrine to the fraternities of Ceylonese monks who had converted to Buddhism Kāśmira, Gāndhāra, Cina, Cilāta, Tosāli, Avaraṇta, Vaṅga, Vanavāśi, Yavana, Dāmila and Tambapanāti. Cilāta, according to Vogel, is the Prakrit from of Kirāta. The \textit{Milindapanha} speaks of the Kirāta country visited by people for purposes of trade.\textsuperscript{40} In a verse from the \textit{Pañcatantra}, Kirātas are characterized as dishonest traders.\textsuperscript{41} We have references to a king of Kirātas in

\textsuperscript{34} S.B. Chaudhuri, op.cit., p.131.  
\textsuperscript{35} Quoted ibid.  
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., b.108, verse 11.  
\textsuperscript{39} J.Ph. Vogel, "Prakrit Inscriptions from a Buddhist Site at Nagarjunikonda", \textit{EI}, vol.XX, 1929-30, pp.6-35.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{41} Quoted ibid.
Varāhamihira's *Bṛhat Samhitā* (Kirāta-bhartuḥ and Kirāta-pārthivam). In the *Raghuvaṃśa*, we find Raghu crossing the Himalayas, proceeding eastward to the Brahmaputra valley and then meeting the Kirātas. The *Rūpakaśaṭakam* of Vatsarāja (twelfth century) composed under the patronage of the Candellas, refers to the Kirāta as treading the path of the kṣatriyas. In the *Sth. Kedārakhaṇḍa*, the Kirātas have been identified with the Bhils and mentioned interchangeably. However, this may only be a reflection of brahmanical prejudice or ignorance, which led to the mixing of aboriginal tribes. In this *Purāṇa*, we are told that Vāsiṣṭha with his wife Arundhati lived in the Himadāvāśrama amongst the Bhils and acted like the Kirātas. The goddess Durgā acquired her name Kirāti from her association with the Kirāta tribe. Similarly, Gāṅgā also acquired her name Kirāti.

Thus, we find that the Kirāta tribe kept moving eastward and reached Nepal by the early medieval period. It is a strong probability that they migrated under the pressure of the Khasa tribe who were gradually occupying the more fertile valleys of the Himalayas. In the *Atharvaveda* we find them in the western Himalayas. Pliny found them along the lower course of the Ganga and in the early medieval texts they are shown as living in north-east and central India. In Nepal, they established the Kirāti Kingdom in the early medieval period. Those who migrated to central India were integrated into the sudra category, and that is why Vatsrāja referred

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42 *Bṛhat Samhitā*, IX. 17.
43 Ibid., XI. 54.
44 IV. 76.
46 181.33-56.
to the Kirātas ironically as treading the path of the kṣatriyas. However, in the Himalayan region, Kirātas remained outside the brahmanical social order. Interestingly, a very powerful king of the Canda dynasty was named Kirāti Canda, who ruled the region from A.D. 1488 to A.D. 1503.49 We have already seen that the Bageshwar stone inscription50 of Bhūdevadeva mentions Tribhuwanarājadeva as an intimate friend of the son of a Kirāta (kirātaputra). This kirātaputra donated some land to the gods Vyāghresvara Deva and Gāmbiyapiṇḍa. This shows the close relationship between the Katyuris and the Kirātas, and the brahmanic influence on the elite groups of the Kirātas.

2. Bhils

Presently, Bhils live in the Vindhya hills, in the forests of Malva, Mewar, Khandesh and the Deccan. The Kathāsaritasāgara51 mentions a king of the Bhils. Bhilīcakrēsvāra52 is an epithet of Viṣṇu. Many of the Rajput clans of Gujarat claimed that most of their principal cities and fortresses were founded by Bhil chiefs,53 and most of them were conquered by the Suryaṇapīṇḍi Rajputs.54 The Bhila and Kola tribes are connected with the rise of new dynasties55 of central India in the post eighth century period. The Jhansi stone inscription56 of Sallakṣaṇaśimha mentions the

49 ATK, p.533-34. It seems that there was intermingling of two tribes, i.e. the Khaṇḍas and the Kirātas at some point of time, hence the Canda ruler gave his son the name of Kirāti Canda. Or, alternatively it could be a reference to goddess Durga in her Kirāti form.
50 'Bageshwar Stone Inscription' in ATK, pp.469-470.
51 Monier - Williams, SED, s.v. Bhilla.
52 Monier-Williams, SED, s.v. Bhilli.
54 Ibid.
suppression of the Bhillas. Another inscription\textsuperscript{57} of the thirteenth century informs that Ananda, the younger brother of the governor of Jaipur fort, subdued the Bhillas, Sabaras and Pulindas. Thus, in early medieval sources the Bhillas are mainly a central and western Indian tribe, but their existence in Kumaon and Garhwal is attested by the fact that a tributary of Gaṅgā is known as Bhillāṅganā,\textsuperscript{58} and we have reference to Bhilleśvara, the god of the Bhīṣ. The \textit{Sth. Kedārakhaṇḍa}\textsuperscript{59} mentions the existence of several lineages (\textit{kula}) of the Bhillas. It\textsuperscript{60} also mentions that a Bhilla called Tuṇḍīṇ was made a gāṇa of Mahādeva after he reposed his faith in Śiva. A mountain was named after a Bhilla called Sihla who was a worshipper of Śiva.\textsuperscript{61} It also narrates the story of a vaiśya\textsuperscript{62} who became a Bhilla on his rebirth. But as we have remarked earlier this text uses both the names of Kirāṭa and of Bhīṣ, interchangeably. This may be seen in its Kirāṭa-Arjuna narrative\textsuperscript{63} and the legend of Vaśiśṭha and Arundhati. There is a group of people known as Raṅī or Raṅg Kirātas who are at present living in Pathoragarh which borders Nepal. They claim to be descendants of the ancient Kirāṭa tribe. The \textit{Varāha Saṃhitā}\textsuperscript{64} places the Rājya-Kirātas between Amaravana and Cīna i.e. between Jagesar and Tibet. Sometimes, they are also equated with the Ban-Raṅī. The Ban-Raṅī\textsuperscript{65} now claim Rajput origin. Pretending to have the rank of rājās, they refuse to salute anybody and do not allow their women folk to be seen by outsiders. They

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Sth. Kedārakhaṇḍa}, 202.34; 44.1-4.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Nānābhillasatāvakūṭā}, 105.13.
\textsuperscript{60} 162.33.
\textsuperscript{61} 172.10-11.
\textsuperscript{62} 203.37.
\textsuperscript{63} Chapters 181 and 206.
\textsuperscript{64} ATK., p.365.
\textsuperscript{65} Stephen Fuchs, \textit{The Aboriginal Tribes of India}, Tribal Studies of India Series, T-1152, Inter-India Pub., New Delhi, 1992, pp.95-96.
speak a language which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, and practise polyandry.

3. **Thārus**

Thārus are the inhabitants of the foot hills of the Himalayas, running from the Kumaon hills to the Bagamati river in Bihar. S.P. Dabral\(^6\) connects Tira-bhukti and Tirhuta with this aboriginal tribe. They live in swamps and are great rice cultivators.\(^7\) Thārus do not find mention in any of the texts, but are mentioned in a Kalcuri inscription of the twelfth century.\(^8\) It states that the king of Ratanapura, Jājjaladeva II, was emancipated from the clutches of the Thīru (Thāru) tribals, and on this occasion he donated a village to two brāhmaṇas. However, the place of this conflict is not mentioned.

4. **Bhadras**

Bhadras or Bhadrakāras are an ancient tribe mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*\(^6\) and the *Matsya Purāṇa*.\(^7\) Both texts testify to the close association of the Bhadrakāras with some well known names of the ancient period such as the Salvas and the Surasenas. In the *Mahābhārata*,\(^7\) reference is made to the horses of the Bhadrakāra country, in conjunction with Yodhā.\(^7\) In another passage,\(^7\) it is said that Karṇa, in the course of

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\(^7\) ATK., p.371.
\(^6\) *Surasena Bhadrakāra bodhāḥ saṃvatsaḥ* II, 13.25.
\(^7\) *Surasena Bhadrakāra Bāhyāḥ*, 114.35.
\(^7\) VII, 22.61.
\(^7\) *Yodhāśca Bhadrakāraśca*, VII, 22.68.
\(^7\) *Bhadraṇ Rohitakāṁśe tvā Agneyaṃ Malavāṇapi Garāṇ sarvāṇ vinirjītya*, III, 253.19-20. This is not found in the critical edition.
his conquests in the west, overpowered the *ganas* of the Bhadras, Rohitakas, Āgneyas and Mālavas. It is clear that the Bhadras were a *gana* like the Mālavas. In Bharata’s *Nātyaśāstra*, Bhādra and Mālavya are described as two of the five types of *Mahāpuruṣas*. The geographical location of this tribe is indicated by the allusions contained in the passage cited above, where they are linked with other Punjab tribes. The collocation of the names indicates that the people lived somewhere to the north of the Rohitakas, probably in the upper Gangetic basin. The river Ganga was known as Mahābhadra. This, according to S.B. Chaudhuri, suggests that the people who lived around the Mahābhadra, i.e. the upper stream of the Ganges in the Dehradun Kumaon region, were considered as ‘the Blessed ones’ and consequently earned the name ‘Bhadras’. However in our opinion, the Gaṅgā got its name Mahābhadra because it flowed through the regions inhabited by the Bhadras and not as suggested by S.B. Chaudhuri. That the Bhadras lived in this region is suggested by the fact that the names of the writers in all the Katyuri grants end in Bhadra. The writer of the plates of Lalitasuradeva was Gaṅgā Bhadra, and in the case of the plate of Padmaṭadeva and Subhikśarājadeva the scribe was Nandā Bhadra. He was also the scribe of Desatadeva. The writers of some of the Pāla grants were also Bhadras. Atkinson observed that the coincidences in order and position cannot be accidental, and clearly show that all came from one common family of professional scribes whose surname was Bhadra, perhaps indicative of their tribe. Some of the references in the *Mahābhārata* suggest that the Bhadras were divided into several branches, as distinguishing epithets prefixed to the name Bhadra frequently occur. Thus, we have Prabhadras, Uttamabhadras, Śravanabhadras, Mūlabhadras,

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74 Quoted by S.B. Chaudhuri, op.cit.
75 ATK., p.402.
Virabhadras, etc. in different inscriptions of western and central India. Varāhamihira mentions Bhadra as a people placed in the middle country and in the eastern and southern divisions. Kern interprets Bhadra as ‘blessed’, and thinks that the Bhadras are probably the same as the Bhadrāśvas whose origin can be traced to the ‘blessed horses’ of the Sun described in the Ṛgveda (I.115.2). However, it is clear from the above that the Bhadras originally lived in the Kumaon-Garhwal region, and from there they migrated to different parts of India.

5. Tanganas; Paratanganas

In a passage of the Mahābhārata we have a reference to the lumps of paipilika gold sent by the northern tribes to king Yudhiṣṭhira. These tribes living on both sides of the river Sailoda are enumerated as ‘Tangaṇas, Paratangaṇas, Khasas, Kulindas and other Himalayan tribes.’ The epic accounts connect this river with Uttara Kuru and Meru. According to the Matsya Purāṇa, the river Sailodaka rises at Mount Aruna which is west Kailasa. L. Petech on the authority of Hermann wrote that the tale of the gold - digging ants of Asia, as mentioned by Herodotus and later Greek travellers Nearchus and Megasthenes, was based on the knowledge of gold-washings in Ladakh and Baltistan. However, in S. Chattopadhyaya’s view the gold producing desert in India is a myth. In

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77 Ajay Mitra Shastri, India as seen in the Brhatsamhita of Varahamihira, MLBD, Delhi, 1969, p.72.
78 Ibid.
79 Mbh. II 48.3-4.
80 Khaśa ekásaṇa jyohāḥ pradara dirghavenaṣṭi/Pasupasca kuṣīnādēca tanganāḥ paratangaṇāḥ/Te vai pipilikaṁ nāmā vardattam yat pipilikaṁ. Mbh, 48.3-4.
the Bhīṣma Parva list, the Taṅgaṇas and Parataṅgaṇas are closely associated. Pargiter says that they were intermixed with other mountain tribes, and inhabited a country in the middle portion of the Himalayas. They are described as expert in slinging stones. All these, according to S.B. Chaudhuri suggest that they were carriers of gold from Tibet to India. Taṅgaṇas and Parataṅgaṇas have been identified with the Tangnoi of Ptolemy, who were the most northern of all peoples along the Ganges, occupying also the upper portion of the Sarabas identified with Sarda.

In the Purāṇas, they are located in udīcya and parvatāśrayin divisions. The Garuḍa Purāṇa has included them in its janapada list as Taṅkaṇas. In the Brahma Purāṇa, the country of Taṅgaṇas is said to be unfit for the performance of śrāddha. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa mentions the excellent quality of horses found in the Taṅgaṇa country. Bāṇabhaṭṭa also speaks of the superior quality and high stature of the horses of Taṅgaṇa country. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (Chapter 49) limits the Taṅgaṇa country as stretching from the Ramagaṅga river to the upper Sarayu. At one place, the Mahābhārata seems to suggest that the Taṅgaṇas were the neighbours of the stri-rājya identified with Kumaon and Garhwal. According to the Sūtra Kṛtāṅga, the Taṅgaṇas lived in hilly

84 Mbh., VI. 10.63.
85 Quoted by S.B. Chaudhuri, op.cit., p.129.
86 Ibid.
87 ATK, p.353.
88 Vāyu Purāṇa, I. 45.120, 134; Brahmāṇḍa Parana, I, 2.16.51,67; Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 57.41; Vāmana Purāṇa, 13.57.
89 Garuḍa Purāṇa, 55.18.
90 Brahma Purāṇa, 110, 8-9.
91 M.R. Singh, op.cit., p.185.
regions. The horse of the Āśvamedha sacrifice of the Pāṇḍavas reached the dominion of the Taṅgaṇas after crossing the territory of the Kirātas. The Āvaśyaka Cūri mentions them as mlecchas. It further says, “they, with gold, ivory and other commodities, exchange the commodities of dakṣināpatha. As they do not understand the language of each other they arrange their goods in a heap and cover it with their hands which they do not remove till their demand is fulfilled”. The literal meaning of Taṅgaṇa is borax. M.P. Joshi is right in saying that the name Taṅgaṇa for borax was derived from the community trading in this item, the Taṅgaṇas. In the plates of Padmaṭadeva and Subhikṣarājadeva, Taṅgaṇapura is mentioned as a viṣaya which shows that the Taṅgaṇas formed an important part of the local population.

6. Kulindas

The term is a variant of Kuṇinda. This tribe has been discussed in detail in chapter II.

7. Khaśas

In the Himalayan region the Khaśas are the most important tribe in terms of their number and predominance. Linguistically, the Khaśas are speakers of an Indo-Aryan language. Grierson locates them in north-west India, on the Hindu kush and the mountainous tracts of the south, and in

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95 Bh., XIV, 84.4.
97 Monier-Williams, s.v. Taṅga.
98 M.P. Joshi, Morphogenesis of Kuṇinda Society: A Numismatic Overview, p.16.
western Punjab. He records that the Khašas were regarded as kṣatriyas, and of “Aryan origin”. They spoke a language “closely allied to Sanskrit, but with a vocabulary partly agreeing with that of the Eranian Avesta”. Grierson wrote that the Khasia tribe which came under Rajput influence at some point of time was assimilated and lost their original language, which was more akin to Kashmiri, Khower and Shina. The transformation, according to Grierson, was so complete that a section of the tribe came to be known as brāhmaṇas and another as Rajputs and the features of their language changed so much that from a dialect of Pišācī it changed over to Western Indic. Supporting Grierson’s view, S.K. Chatterjee wrote that the origin of Central Pahari language could be traced to Pišācī, Darada or Khaša, which was later influenced by western Prakṛt and other apabhraṃśa languages of Northern India. Grierson distinguished between the Aryan and Indo-Aryan languages. According to him, the earliest immigrants were the Khašas who hailed from Central Asia and speaking an Aryan, but not necessarily Indo-Aryan language. After a detailed study of the vocabulary of the different Pahari languages and dialects, he found that there were traces of the old language of the Khašas whom Sanskrit tradition relates to the Pišācas. D. D. Sharma studied the formation of Kumaoni language in detail, and came to the conclusion that the linguistic elements showing their excessive affinity with other Dardo-Pahari languages confirms the view that the sub-stratum of the Kumaoni language is the language of the Khašas, who dominated the region for centuries.

Apart from the linguistic considerations, the social institutions of

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100 Ibid. p.16.
some of the Khaśa groups have preserved some very archaic practices. These will be discussed later. We shall now examine how the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and other texts have viewed the Khaśas.

Almost all the Purāṇas divide the Khaśas in parvatāśrayin division. In the Divyavadāna, Asoka is said to have entered the Khaśa-Rājya after putting down the rebellion in Taxila. Sagara, the legendary king of Kosala is said to have defeated the Kelisparsas, the Mahiśakas, the Darvas, the CoJas and the Khaśas. Interestingly, unlike many other tribes, Khaśas, are hardly ever shown to have been living outside the parvatāśrayin division. This shows that the Khaśas were never pushed out of the Himalayan region. They kept moving from western to eastern Himalayas, and in the process settled in the most fertile areas subjugating the earlier inhabitants. Some of the Khaśa clans had established janapadas, as the Vāyu Purāṇa, Brahmapurēya Purāṇa, Märkanḍeya Purāṇa, and Vāmana Purāṇa mention the Khaśas in the Janapada lists.

The Mahābhārata contains an interesting legend regarding the origin of the Khaśa and Kirāta tribes. According to this legend, these tribes along with some others originated from the different limbs of the mythical cow Kāmadhenu. This was perhaps an attempt to supplement the Rgvedic origin myth of the four varṇas. Existence of a large number of ethnic
groups outside the varṇa stratification and growing contacts with them, perhaps necessitated the invention of this explanation by the brahmanical theorists. In a similar fashion, Nīṣādas were given an origin myth through the story of Vena in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa speaks of Khaśa, the daughter of Dakṣa who was married to the sage Kāśyapa, the son of Mārīci and gave birth to Yaksas and Rākṣasas. The same legend appears in the Mānasakhaṇḍa as well. The notable point here is that it is the Khaśa woman who is supposed to have united with the brāhmaṇa sage, the myth indicating the lower status of Khaśa implied in the hypergamous union, and is comparable to similar myths prevalent in other regions where new dynasties or communities are supposed to have originated in a similar fashion. This is a typical Purānic motif which need not be taken literally, but is merely a brahmanical device to explain the existence of aboriginal communities and assert their lowly status. The acceptance of females may also be seen as symbolic of the assimilation process of the Khaśa tribe through hypergamous unions, and as such underlines the lower rank of the Khaśas.

In the Harivamśa, the Khaśas are described as mlecchas and in the Manusmṛti they are described as vrātya kṣatriyas. Nevertheless, this shows that the Khaśas were an influential group comparable to kṣatriyas. Manu acceded them this status because they did not fulfil their sacred duties. In the Vāyu Purāṇa, the Khasas along with the Śakas, Yavanas Kāmbojas, Pahlavas, Pāradas, Kalisparśas, Mahiṣikas, Darvas and Coḷas

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111 H.H. Wilson, VII.75.
112 ATK., p.299.
113 Manu, X.20-22.
114 Vāyu Purāṇa, 88.142-143; 88.126 ff.; D.R.Patil, Cultural History from the Vayu Purana, MLBD, Delhi, 1973 rpt. p.31.
are mentioned as Ṛṣṭhitarian-ganaśas. An early medieval text, the Triṣaṣṭiśālakā-puruśa-carita\textsuperscript{115} of Hemacandra, mentions Kirāta, Bhilla and Khaśa as the mlecchas along with foreign immigrants such as Śabarasa, Pulindaśa, Udṛas, Śakasa, Yavanaśa, Suhmaśa, Kamaropa, Śabaraśa, Khara, etc. as the sons of mleccha. Perhaps the description as `sons of mleccha', and not simply `mleccha' is not just a case of pleonasm, but a reference to the varṇasaṅkara theory pointing to their present lowly rank being a matter of inheritance from the founding members of their caste. Manu places them in the varṇasaṅkara category, which could also be the consequence of non-observance of brahmanical rituals.

The Khaśas are also associated with Kāśmīra and appear to have been the principal inhabitants of that region in the early period. They lived in the regions comprising the valleys lying immediately to the south and west of Pir Pantsal range, between the middle course of the Vitasta on the west and Kastavata on the east. Many other parts of Kāśmīra, such as the valleys of Candrabhaga and Vitasta, Khaśalaya and Rājapuri, bear traces of the settlements of the Khaśas. The Khaśa chiefs of Rājapuri intermarried freely with the kṣatriya rulers of Kāśmīra,\textsuperscript{117} and later on they began to claim the status of Rajput. In Kāśmīra, the Khaśa Tunga\textsuperscript{118} rose from being a buffalo herdsman and letter-carrier to the position of a minister and favourite of queen Diddā, virtually ruling the kingdom till his murder following a defeat outside Kāśmīra by Mahmūd of Ghazni about 1013 A.D.


\textsuperscript{116} III.13. Quoted by B.N.S. Yadava, ibid., p.102, fn.611.

\textsuperscript{117} B.N.S. Yadava, op.cit., p.57.

\textsuperscript{118} Rājatarāngini, 6.318-328, Quoted by D.D.Kosambi, "Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir", p.134.
Atkinson on the basis of the evidence provided by Herodotus links the Khasas to the gold trade with Tibet. According to him the reference to Paipılıka gold presented to Yudhisṭhira in the Mahābhārata can only refer to the trade in gold dust with the miners of Thok Jalung in Tibet, indicating that at this early date the Khasias were the chief carriers of the commodity. This is shown by the diffusion of names having the common root ‘Khas or ‘Kho’, in such names as ‘Khophene’, ‘Khoas’ and ‘Khoaspes’ given to rivers of the Kabul valley by classical writers. The names of ‘Hindu kush’ and ‘Kashkara’ also suggest their occupation of the regions of the north. Colonel Wilford attempted to trace the Khaṣas from Kashgar through Kashmir and Kumaon to the Khasia hills in Assam. According to Atkinson, this shows a very wide distribution of the Khaṣa peoples in pre-historic times. Kissia, mentioned by Herodotus as an old name of Susa, is also connected with the Khaṣas. Strabo calls them Kissii, and Diodorus and Quintus Curtius mention the Kossaei amongst the principal troops of Darius at Arbela. The Caucasus of Pliny and the Kasian mountains of Ptolemy are supposedly related in the same manner with the Khaṣas. Interestingly, even today a sub-region in the Caucasus is known by the name Carkasa, and the main tribe inhabiting this sub-region is known as Abkhaz, bearing a phonetic similarity with Khaṣa.

Regarding their presence in different parts of India, Atkinson says that the Khaṣas were present in the Kashkara country at the head of the Kunar valley and in the tracts adjacent to Kashmir. The Kunets of Kulu are still divided into two classes called Khasias and Raos, and we have the

119 ATK., p.377.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
Khasias in Kumaon, Garhwal and Nepal. A section of them may be traced along the Vindhyan range and in the Bikaner desert as nomadic tribes under the name Khosa, who according to Tod were a branch of the Sehraes. "They occur again as Musalman in the desert around Thar and Parkar in Sind and in Baluchistan under the same name Khosa and are particularly numerous between Bakhar and Shikarpur".\textsuperscript{124} Atkinson further argues that the fact that the Khosas belong to the same stock as the Khasias of Kumaon, is supported by the fact that the dialect of Hindi now current in Kumaon has a close affinity with the dialect spoken in Marwar and the adjoining parts of western Rajasthan. However, Grierson does not agree with this view and he attributes this similarity in the dialects to the movement of a later group called Gurjars in Rajasthan. Grierson\textsuperscript{125} points out that the Gurjars at one point of time occupied the whole of western India, and became absorbed into the general population giving it their own language. But this is supposed to have happened quite late. The first inscription\textsuperscript{126} in Kumaoni language appeared in the early twelfth century, when the regional languages of western and northern India were already well developed. Regular use of Kumaoni and Garhwali, as the language of the inscriptions appears only in late fifteenth century. The rise of regional languages was probably the result of changes in the local population because of migrations from northern and western India. Because of these migrations, many concepts of mainland society reached the region, and the local tribal elites began to claim Rajput status. However, a subtle difference was maintained by the immigrants who had cornered political

\textsuperscript{124} ATK., p.397.
\textsuperscript{125} Grierson, op.cit.p.14.
\textsuperscript{126} This inscription was found at Digans in Pithoragarh district. Dated in 1027 of the Saka era (A.D.1105). It mentions the establishment of Mahesvara by one Mahindra Bhat. Devasingh Pokhariya, \textit{Kumaoni Bhasa, Sahitya evam Sanskrit}, Almora, 1994, p.20; M.P. Joshi, \textit{Uttaranchal (Kumaon-Garhwal) Himalaya}, p.98.
power for themselves.\textsuperscript{127} That is why we find the mixture of Sanskrit and regional languages in the inscriptions. It was only after the eighteenth century that local literary traditions started taking shape in the region.

On the other hand, the use of regional languages in other regions began around the sixth century A.D., and by the tenth century A.D. high class literature began to be composed.\textsuperscript{128} Thus, the earliest inscription\textsuperscript{129} in Telugu belongs to the sixth century A.D., and Telugu became the literary language in the eleventh century A.D. Similarly, the earliest inscription in Kannada belongs to the fifth century A.D. and it became a literary language in the ninth century A.D. However, the Kumaon and Garhwal region has been in continuous flux which impeded the growth of a vernacular language. Even in the early twentieth century, the situation was such that S.K. Chatterjee\textsuperscript{130} could not find any literature worth mentioning. S.K. Chatterjee is factually wrong in his conclusion, because we have literary traditions in Kumaoni from eighteenth century onwards in the writings of Molaram (1743-1833), Gumani Pant (1790-1846), Krishna Pande (1800-1850), Gaurda (1872-1939), etc. However, these writers were primarily Sanskrit scholars, except for Molarama who wrote in Kumaoni. So the regional languages which were used as the language of inscriptions from twelfth century A.D. onwards could become a literary language only in the eighteenth century. From the sixteenth century onwards, the regional languages, i.e. Kumaoni and Garhwali, became the main language of inscriptions. The geographical structure of the region, as discussed earlier, is such that no single language could become the lingua franca of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127} R.D. Sanwal, \textit{Social Stratification in Rural Kumaon}, OUP, Delhi, 1976, pp.38-40.
\item \textsuperscript{128} S. Nagaraju, "Emergence of Regional Identity and Beginnings of Vernacular Literature: A Case Study of Telugu", \textit{Social Scientist}, vol.23, Nos. 10-12, Oct.-Dec. 1995, pp.8-23.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\end{itemize}

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whole region. We find marked variations in the two languages depending on a multiplicity of factors such as intensity of contacts with other regions, the linguistic association of the contiguous regions, level of economic development in different sub-regions, etc.

Coming back to the Khašas, we find that they are not mentioned in the vedic texts. They find place in the Mahābhārata, Purāṇas and Smṛtis. Many secular texts of the early medieval period and inscriptions also take notice of the Khašas. Thus, Rājaśekhara in his Kāvyā Mīmāṃsā131 referred to a certain Gupta king who was defeated by the king of Khašas. Here, Rājaśekhara speaks of a Khaša king and Kārttikeyanagara, evidently Kārttikeyapura, the principle seat of the Katyuri dynasty.132 An inscription at Bodh-Gaya,133 recording the dedication of some votive offerings by Sahaṇapāla, an officer of Daśaratha, the youngetter brother of king Ašokacalla, records that Ašokacalla was the king of the Khaša deśa. The inscription is dated in the year 74 of the Lakṣamaṇasena era corresponding to AD 1194. In another inscription134 found at Gopesvara, Ašokacalla is said to have conquered the Kedarabhumi. Hence there is no doubt that the term Sapādalakṣaśikharikhašadeśa denotes Kumoan and Garhwal but the term Sapādalakṣa needs elaboration. Literally, the term denotes one hundred thousand and a quarter of it which means that a Sapādalakṣa region was supposed to have one hundred and twenty five thousand villages. But it was merely a stereotyped description meant to indicate the importance of an area and not an accurate tally. Sapādalakṣaśikharin is the

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131 Daṭṭha ruddhagatiḥ khaśādhipataye devīṃ Dhruvasvāminīṃ/Yasmat khaṇḍitasaḥhaso nibavṛte Śrī Sarmanagupto nṛpatayō/Tusminneva Hīṃḍāyay gurugathā kṣoṣat kvaṣat Kinnaraiḥ/Gyante tava Kārttikeyanagara-śriṃ ṣaṃ gnapaiḥ kirtayaḥ, 11.


133 Vinoda Vihari Vidyavinoda, “Two Inscriptions from Bodh Gaya”, EL, Vol.12. no.6, B, pp.29-30.

name of a mountain in the *Uttamacaritra Kathānaka*\(^{135}\) (prose-version). The *Kumāra Khanda*\(^{136}\) of the *Skanda Purāṇa* contains a list of the countries in India and we find that at least six of them were known as *Sapādalakṣa*. These are: Varendu, Sayambhara, Mewāḍa, Tomara, Karnāṭa and Piṅgala. Al Masudi,\(^{137}\) an Arab geographer of the tenth century informs us that the region around Multan contained one hundred and twenty thousand villages and towns. Hence, this part may also have been known as *Sapādalakṣa*.

*Sapādalakṣa* is also associated with the Cāhamāna dynasty.\(^{138}\) The term *Sapādalakṣa* is first mentioned on a coin of Sri Vāsudeva issued in 627 A.D. On the reverse of the coins, we have Śrī-Vāsudeva in Nagari characters and the Pahlavi legend, *Tukān Zaulāstān Sapardalakṣān*, i.e. Țakka, Zabulistān and Sapādalakṣa. D.R. Bhandarkar identifies this ruler Vāsudeva with Vāsudeva of the *Prthvīrāja-Vijaya*, the founder of the Cāhamāna dynasty. But, it does not seem probable that the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī even ruled such a vast region as indicated by the legend. The Sapādalakṣa region referred to on the coins may refer to the region around Multan which is mentioned by Al Masudi. The name of prince Vāsudeva appears on both sides of the coins. On the obverse he is called ‘Multan Malkā’, i.e. the king of Multan. So the legend on the reverse containing Țakka, Zabulistān and Sapādalakṣa seems to describe the component parts of his kingdom.\(^{139}\)

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\(^{135}\) Monier-Williams, *SED*, s.v. *sa*.


\(^{137}\) *Muru-ul-zahab*, of Al Masudi, extract translation in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, vol. I, pp. 18-25.


According to Bhandarkar, the whole hilly region between the Çamba state and Nepal was called Sapādalakṣa. Bhandarkar believed that the Cāhamānas were Gurjars who first occupied the country called Sapādalakṣa with its capital at Ahicchatra.\textsuperscript{140} When the Cāhamānas migrated towards the south-west they called their country Sapādalakṣa\textsuperscript{141} Bhandarkar connected the principal Rajput tribes with the Gurjars of Sapādalakṣa country. But if we identify Sapādalakṣa to be the original name of the Kumaon-Garhwal region, then we will have to dispense with Bhandarkar's identification of Cāhamānas with the Gurjars, because the region is predominantly a Khaśa country and the Gurjars are basically pastoral nomads in this region, accounting for a very small population. However, existence of as many as six Sapādalakṣa regions in the Skanda Purāṇa\textsuperscript{142} shows that it was used as an epithet of a region, and to distinguish them from each other some mechanism must have been adopted. As such we have the phrase sapādalakṣaśikharikhaśadesa.\textsuperscript{143} Interestingly, this is the only reference which indicates Sapādalakṣa as having been the name of the Kumaon and Garhwal region. The rest of the references\textsuperscript{144} pertain to western and central India.

Three Pāla inscriptions\textsuperscript{145} of the tenth and eleventh centuries mention Khaśa in the same way as the Katyuri grants. Thus, the Bhagalpur

\textsuperscript{140} According to Bhandarkar, there were three Ahicchatras and one of them was situated in the Himalayas.
\textsuperscript{141} D.R. Bhandarkar, op.cit., p.28-29.
\textsuperscript{142} C.V. Vaidya, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{143} Vinoda Vihari Vidyavinoda, op.cit.
Copper-plate inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla clubs together Gauḍa, Mālava. Khaśa, Hūṇa, Kulika, Karṇāṭa and Lāta. The Banagada Copper plate inscription of Mahipala I repeats the above list, and the Manahali Copper plate of Madanapāla adds Coḍa to the above list.

An inscription\(^ {146} \) of the reign of Someśvara I at Sudi, refers to shattering the pride of the powerful Coḷa, Aṅgas, Vaṅgas, Khaśas, the Vengī, Pāṇḍyas, Saurāṣtras, Keralas, Nepālas, Turuṣkas, Ceras and Māgadhas by the Cāulkya Trailokyamalla. The inscription was issued in A.D. 1060. Another inscription\(^ {147} \) of the reign of Someśvara II belonging to A.D. 1069, repeats the same set of people in the same context. The inscription\(^ {148} \) of the reign of Vikramāditya VI of A.D. 1084 gives a larger list of peoples. It mentions Kīra, Kaliṅga, Vaṅga, Magadh, Arbbuva, Gurijara, Pariyatara Nepāla, Turuṣka, Gauḍa, Khaśa, Koṃkaṇa, Keral. Cera, Coḷa, Kantarāja, Sindhu, Parasavarala, Surāṣṭraka, Lāṭa, Barbbar and Ābhīra. Although, enumeration of different peoples in this manner was only a routine exercise, it certainly shows the existence of these people.

It is generally believed that before the Khaśas entered the Himalayas, the region was occupied by the Kirātas and other tribes whom the Khaśas subjugated and forced to migrate to inner valleys. Đoms are supposedly the people whom the Khaśas subjugated and enslaved.\(^ {149} \) They are found along with the Khaśas from Kashmir to Kumoan. When the vedic Aryans entered India, the Khaśas had already spread themselves through the length and breadth of western and central Himalayas. A fairly well developed line of communication existed between the Khaśas and the

\(^ {146} \) Lionel D. Barnett, "Inscriptions of Sudi", EI, Vol.15, 1919-20, No.6, f, pp.86-87,91.
\(^ {147} \) Ibid. p.99.
\(^ {148} \) Ibid., p.104.
\(^ {149} \) ATK., p.370.
local population of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. But the real change occurred after their contacts with the vedic Aryans, sometime after 1000 B.C. This contact resulted in the introduction of agriculture and consequent settled life-style in the region. By the sixth century B.C., we have evidence of permanent and continuous settlements at some selected places. A group of the Khasas whose prosperity probably derived from trade, developed into a gaṅarājya, a tribal oligarchy. They were now called Kuṇindas.

Trade contacts may have also led to the introduction of Buddhism in the region. As early as the fourth century B.C., it was already an influential ideology in some of the tribal oligarchies of the neighbouring regions. As has been argued, the ideology of Buddhism was favourable to trade. It also helped in the processes of state formation by emphasising the importance of kṣatriya segments and as such helped in the emergence of elite groups among the tribal communities. In the Mahābhārata and other texts of a later period, a clear difference is made between the Kuṇindas and the Khaśas. Since Buddhism was the religion which the Kuṇindas accepted, it may be assumed following D.D. Kosambi’s thesis¹⁵⁰ that these tribes had not been fully brahmanized till then and the four class varṇa system did not exist among them. There are still certain segments of the Khaśas who do not require the services of a brahman priest. Thus, amongst the eastern Shaukas¹⁵¹ the work of a priest is performed by the son of a sister.

Social Stratification and Emergence of Varṇa Categories

The region experienced urbanisation due to trade under the Indo-


Greeks, and later under the Kuśānas. But, in the absence of any textual evidence it is difficult to reconstruct its impact on the social stratification in this region. However, it is apparent that the initial stratification was not based on the lines of the varṇa hierarchy. Differentiation was based on the superiority of elite groups, on grounds of wealth and social status within the tribal set-up. Wealth could have been acquired through profit from trade. Urbanisation, however moderate, does entail the development of social differentiation based on the control and utilisation of surplus by a ruling class. But, none of the urban centres known till now are large centres. The area covered by them is so small that they would have to be kept on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder of spaces and associated with lower level polities.

The brāhmaṇa presence in this region may be seen from the first century A.D., as Sanskrit began to be used in official records. A terracotta seal has been found at Dehradun with a small inscription\textsuperscript{152} in Sanskrit, in the Brahmi script of the Śuṅga period. The seal belonged to an officer called Bhadramitra who perhaps collected cesses at the river crossing. This throws light on the way the trade was supervised by the state. From the second century A.D. onwards, we get pilgrim’s records in Sanskrit written in Brāhmi script. We have an inscription\textsuperscript{153} of the third century A.D. in Sanskrit, informing us about the performance of Asvamedha sacrifices in the region. All this shows an increased brahmanisation of the region during the early centuries of the Christian era.

Inroads made by the Kuśānas and brahmanical elements resulted in the break-up of the Kuṇinda ruling clan. Some of the Kuṇinda families might have derived their prosperity from the agricultural tracts owned by

\textsuperscript{152} The inscription reads: Bhadramitrasya droṇi ghāte.

\textsuperscript{153} Ind. Arch. AR., 1953-54, pp.10-11.
them. The Almora type of coins perhaps belong to such chiefs,\textsuperscript{154} whose names are given as Śivadatta, Śivaṭalita, Haridatta, Āseka, Gomitra, Vijayabhūti, Śivarakṣita and M-g-bh-t-sa. These names show growing influence of brahmanism. The legend on the Amogabhūti type of coins\textsuperscript{155} reads: Rajñāḥ kuṇindasa amoghabhutis mahārājas, i.e. of the Kuṇinda rāja Amogabhūti who is a mahārāja. This clearly indicates the existence of a plurality of rājas among the Kuṇindas.

The main Kuṇinda line seems to have broken into several smaller lines. It seems that one of them founded the large monarchical state of Brahmapura. Another line is perhaps represented by Kapilāydvhana, whose granddaughter Īśvarā’s inscription\textsuperscript{156} has been found at Lakhamandal. Marriage of a Kuṇinda princess into the royal family of Śīnghapura (85 miles from Taxila) suggests that they formed part of the ‘kṣatriya’ aristocracy. According to Manu, Khaśas belong to that group of kṣatriyas who have gradually sunk to the condition of śūdras. To quote Manu,\textsuperscript{157} “but in consequence of the omission of the sacred rites, and of their not consulting brāhmaṇas the following tribes of kṣatriyas have gradually sunk in this world to the condition of śūdras, viz., the Paunḍrakas, the Coḍas, the Draviḍas, the Kāmbojas, the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Pāradas the Pahlavas, the Činas, the Kirātas, the Daradas and the Khaśas”. The commentaries\textsuperscript{158} of Medhātithi, Govindarāga, Nādanācārya and Kullukabhaṭṭa have tathā at the end of the verse in place of Khaśa, but the commentaries of Sarvagña Nārāyaṇa, Raghavaṇaīda and the Kashmir

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\textsuperscript{154} M.P. Joshi, \textit{Morphogenesis of Kuninda Society}, pp.51-52.


\textsuperscript{157} X.43-45.

Manuscript mention the Khaśas after the Daradas. Whatever the case may be, it certainly shows the changing perception of the Khaśas in the eyes of brahmanical theorists. At another place, Manu\textsuperscript{159} considers Khaśa along with Ghalla, Malla, Licchavi, Naṭa, Karaṇa, and Dravidā as the progeny of the vrātya kṣatriya.

By the third century A.D., the brāhmaṇas emerge as the highest status group in this region, but the number of immigrant brāhmaṇas could not have been very large. By the ninth century, inscriptions begin to refer to brāhmaṇas coming from different regions and settling there. Thus, the plate of Padmaṭadeva,\textsuperscript{160} year 25, describes Desaṭadeva as having given offerings of gold to the brāhmaṇas coming from east, west, north and south. The inscription of Lalitasuradeva of the year 22 records a grant of land to Lord Nārāyaṇa in various areas, and it is expressly stated that the land which is already in the possession of the gods and the brāhmaṇas is to be excluded. This shows that by the 9th century A.D., the brāhmaṇas coming from various parts of the country were already in possessions of land and had their own colonies. Their numerical strength seems to have increased with the absorption of tribal priestly lineages in their ranks. This may be inferred from the fact that links of the tribal priestly families with the Khaśa population were maintained through hypergamous unions, the priestly families continued to receive brides from the Khaśas.\textsuperscript{161}

The brāhmaṇas who lived at the king’s courts were granted cultivable lands. Thus, villages were granted to the temples with pasture, trees, gardens, springs, cascades, but the lands and properties which were

\textsuperscript{159} X.22.
\textsuperscript{160} D.C. Sircar, \textit{El}, vol.31, no.38.II.
in the possession of the brahmanas were excluded.\textsuperscript{162} This means that the brahmanas were already in possession of landed properties. The Katyuri records\textsuperscript{163} are also addressed to the people “headed by the brahmanas”. This means that there were brahmana landlords already in existence where the grants were being made. The hand of brahma priests is evident in the fabrication of fictitious genealogies of ruling kings. Thus, the Paurava-Varmans claimed\textsuperscript{164} to have belonged to the ‘illustrious royal lineage of the Purūravās’. They also claimed to have belonged to the lineage\textsuperscript{165} of Sun and Moon. The kings proclaimed themselves to be the well-wishers of cows and brahmanas.\textsuperscript{166} The power of learning, and the ability to create genealogies of the kings, legitimising their right to rule and extract surplus in the form of taxes, ensured the superior status of the brahmanas. The kings created agrahāras,\textsuperscript{167} and the power of the brahmanas grew and they were able to consolidate their high status.

Although, a three-fold stratification of brahmanas, the ruling elite and common Khaśa in the region seems to have started quite early, stratification on varṇa/caste lines could not take firm root at least during the period of our study. Later, with the influx of the Rajputs into the hills around the thirteenth century, the ‘kṣatriya’ presence becomes more noticeable. Prior to that although three strata of people is noticeable, the use of the kṣatriya concept is not seen. However, the ruling elite had the title of rāja, which was the continuation of a practice from Kuṇinda times. Thus, the grant of Dyutivarman mentions the grant of land by ‘many

\textsuperscript{162} El. vol.31, no.38, i.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Śrī-Śūravāḥ prabhṛty-āvicchidyamāna-Paurava-rāja-vaṃśo = gnir=iva. El. 13, no. 34, Line 2.
\textsuperscript{165} Soma-divākara-vanśa - vaṃsa-pradīpaḥ, ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} go-brahmaḥ hitaiṣī, ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Tamrapatī-pata - vrstāpa-pattraiḥ abhiliḥky = agrahārāḥ-pratipāditakas = tāni, ibid., Line 11
kings" who were perhaps not related by blood to the ruling king. The term used here is *avanipati* which may be translated as landlord. So, there were at least two strata, the land-owners and the landless, but our sources do not provide any information about whether caste/varṇa organisation had penetrated this region. The landlords may have had administrative functions as well at different levels. Thus, bhogika Gellaṇaṇāka, bhogika Varāhādatta, balādhyakṣa Lavacandra, divirapati Dhanadatta and kāyastha Naṇṇāka appear as landholders in the grant of Viṣṇuvarman. The Siroli inscription of Šarvavarman refers to *ksatriya* Naravarman as meditating on the feet of Šarvavarman, and as responsible for the construction of the temple of Mahālaya-Vṛddhesvara and of a water reservoir. The relationship between Šarvavarman and Naravarman is not mentioned. M.P. Joshi cites this reference to contend that varṇa organisation was established in the region. But G.S. Gai, who edited the inscription and assigned it to the middle of the sixth century A.D., had identified Šarvavarman of the inscription with the Maukharī king of the same name who is known to have ruled from circa 576 to 580 A.D. The characters of the inscription resemble those of the Harah inscription of the Maukharī king Isānavarman and the Barabar hill cave inscription of Avantivarman. So, it is possible that the *ksatriya* Naravarman was an outsider, and this particular inscription has no light to throw on the use of *ksatriya* status by the local population. The *Parāsara* (1.17) and the *Baudhāyaniya Gṛhya Śeṣa Sūtra* (I, 2.4-18), lay down that a brāhmaṇa’s name should end in ṣarman and a ksatriya’s name should end in Varman. According to this rule, the Paurava-Varmans may appear to have acquired a *ksatriya* status. Here, it would be pertinent to consider the concept of brahma-ksatra.


171 Quoted by H.D. Sankalia, op.cit., p.102.
According to D.R. Bhandarkar,\(^{172}\) the *brahma-kṣatra* category indicates the adoption of rulership, the traditional occupation of a *kṣatriya* by a brāhmaṇa, the change in occupation finally leading to a permanent change in status. D.C. Sircar\(^{173}\) regards *brahma-kṣatriyas* as descendants of mixed marriages between the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas. The third view expressed by S. Sankaranarayanan traces the origin of the historically known *brahma-kṣatra* families to the line of Puru. According to him, the progenitor of the Viṣṇukūṇḍi branch of the Andhras was a descendant of Puru and therefore a *brahma-kṣatra*. The family of Puru\(^{174}\) has been credited with producing both *rājarṣis* (i.e., great kṣatriya rulers) and *brahmavamsiśīyas* (i.e., brāhmaṇas). The *Vāyu Purāṇa*\(^{175}\) contains a story in which the king Bharata of the Puru line performed the *Maruūṣṭoma* sacrifice to get a son. Consequently, the Maruts transferred Bharadvāja, a brāhmaṇa child of Māmatā and Brhaspati, to Bharata. This brāhmaṇa Bharadvāja thus became a kṣatriya and therefore, he and his descendants were both brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas and were dvāmuṣṭyaṇa-kaulīnas, i.e. belonged to the lineages of both the parents, viz., brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya. Paurava-Varmans in their inscriptions claim uninterrupted descent from the Puru line, and they also claim to have belonged to both the solar and the lunar lineages. They claim to have a *rājarṣi* among their ancestors. Although so far there is no evidence indicating that they formally claimed the *brahma-kṣatra*\(^{176}\) status, their origin myth brings them very close to this

\(^{172}\) D.R. Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*, p.26 ff.


\(^{174}\) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, IX, Ch.20, Verse 1, Quoted by S. Sankaranarayanan, *The Vishnukundis and Their Times*, Agam Prakashan, Delhi, 1977, p.25.

\(^{175}\) *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 99.138 ff ibid.

\(^{176}\) Regarding the origin of the category of *brahma-kṣatra* Suvira Jaiswal writes, "... the category of brahma-kṣatra seems to have had a multiple origin. It may have included tribal priests, who graduated to territorial kingship through internal developments within the tribe; it could also accommodate an occasional brahmaṇa immigrant adventurer who succeeded in establishing his power in a tribal territory by aligning himself with influential tribal segments. In some cases it could have been pure fabrication with necessary variations to provide for miraculous ancestry, hence prestige and legitimacy, for a ruling chieftain. This would be especially so once the device had become well known and conventional. The important point however is that the brahma-Kṣatra model like the later Rajput model is used in the context of state formation in the tribal periphery or partly brahmanized regions". Suvira Jaiswal, *Caste*, pp.63-64.
model. They are no doubt thoroughly brahmanized and claim to be the “well wishers” of the cows and the brāhmaṇas.\textsuperscript{177} The Katyuri kings too are not known to have claimed a kṣatriya status, but they assert to have been patrons of brāhmaṇas. The term kṣatriya does not occur in the Katyuri inscriptions. They certainly claim similarity with the legendary kings like Sagara, Dilipa, Māndhātṛ, Dhundhumāra, Bharata, Bhāgiratha, and Daśaratha. Although one cannot rely much on \textit{argumentum silento}, it does seem that tribal identities were not obliterated completely even when \textit{vārya} identities were superimposed upon the Khaśa population. Hence, we find in some sub-regions Khaśa Rajputs and Khaśa brahmanas who still intermarry.\textsuperscript{178} The cadets of the Katyuri royal family later came to be called rājābārs.

Thus, in terms of social stratification three groups are clearly marked, the brāhmaṇas, the ruling class, and the ordinary people constituting the peasantry. There are a few references to śresthin and \textit{vaṇik} categories in the Katyuri inscriptions, which indicate the presence of people engaged in trade. Thus, śresthi Jivāka has been shown as a land owner.\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Vaṇiks} were certainly petty traders or shop keepers in the capital city. But, it is highly doubtful if they formed a compact group having a distinct community identity. In early medieval times, the vaśya \textit{vārya} came to be associated with trade, and agriculture became the occupation of the śūdras.\textsuperscript{180} But in Kumaon and Garhwal, trade was basically carried out by the Bhotia tribals, who were outside any effective brahmanical influence and remained so till recently. This partly explains the absence of the third

\textsuperscript{177} go-brāhmaṇa hitaiṣṭ.
\textsuperscript{179} Plate of Subhikṣarājadeva, \textit{EI}, XXXI, no.38, p.291.
\textsuperscript{180} Suvira Jaiswal, “Changes in the Status and Concept of the Sudra Varna in Early-Middle Ages”, \textit{PIHC}, 1980, pp.112-121.
varṇa in the whole region. Another reason\textsuperscript{181} could be the general decline of trade in the early medieval period, which would account for the comparative absence of communities claiming vaisya status in our sources. When the brāhmaṇas migrated into this region, they probably found that trade was mainly in the hands of nomadic groups who had a distinct tribal identity and were not a part of the settled population. Hence, the four fold varṇa system could not be replicated in this region.

Similarly, our records are silent about the existence of śūdra category in this region. It is generally held\textsuperscript{182} that the earliest settlers of the region were a people akin to the Kols and Gonds of central India, who are at present known as Ḟom or Śilpakāra. The Ḟombs, according to R.S. Sharma,\textsuperscript{183} were an aboriginal tribe assimilated to the lower order of brahmanical society during the Gupta period in north India. However, they are not mentioned even in the Mānas Khaṇḍa and the Sth.Kedārakhaṇḍa which belong to a much later date. According to Atkinson,\textsuperscript{184} the Ḟoms in the hills are the descendants of an aboriginal tribe conquered and enslaved by the immigrant Khaṣas. They were apparently reduced to śūdra status due to their cultural backwardness and depressed state. However, rural Kumaon and Garhwal has always lacked castes belonging to the śūdra category.\textsuperscript{185} Nevertheless, Sanwal\textsuperscript{186} believes that throughout the Katyuri rule, the Kasi (common Khaṣas as they were called) were ranked as sudras.

\textsuperscript{183} R.S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India, MLBD, New Delhi, 1990 (3rd ed.), p.290.
\textsuperscript{184} ATK., p.371.
\textsuperscript{185} R.D. Sanwal, op.cit., pp.35-36.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid. p.43.
The largest segment of the local population was made-up of the Khaśa or Khasi elements. The brāhmaṇas and the local ruling elite had probably hypergamous relations with them, as is shown by fieldwork recorded by anthropologists.\textsuperscript{187} A reorganisation of Kumaoni and Garhwal society took place later with the influx of Rajputs, under increased Turkish pressure from northern and western India after thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{188} According to a tradition,\textsuperscript{189} the Rajputs and brāhmaṇas fled in great numbers to the Himalayas and settled in its valleys everywhere. But Sanwal thinks that this process began earlier. However, he does not cite any evidence. Sanwal’s overall understanding of the early medieval socio-political formation of Kumaon and Garhwal region is largely hypothetical. He attributes a kind of administrative structure to the Katyuris, which is not reflected in the inscriptions.

However, he is right in stating that the arrival of brāhmaṇas from outside added a ritual dimension to the principle of social differentiation in the region. But we may point out that the brāhmaṇas were present in the region even in the early centuries of the Christian era. Later hardening of the varṇa system and ritual hierarchy in this area may be explained on the ground that initially there were only a few immigrant brāhmaṇa families. Hence, hypergamous relationships with the local population was a necessity. But as demographic factors led to an increase in the population of the brāhmaṇas, ritual distancing may have become more marked. Sanwal says that the consolidation of bramanical influence had the effect of creating four broad hierarchically graded social categories: the brāhmaṇas, the ksatriya, the Khaśa and the Cāṇḍāla. This may be

\textsuperscript{187} R.D. Sanwal, op.cit., pp.39-64.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
assumed for the Katyuri period, but we do not have clear evidence. The
Khaṣas and Caṇḍālas seem to have still been ethnic groups and not part of
a varṇa hierarchy. Although, the Katyuri inscriptions mention the
existence of such occupational groups as goldsmiths, iron smiths, weavers,
washermen, guggula workers, herdsmen, etc., it is not clear that these were
caste groups or just members of the Khaṣa community following different
occupations.

Kinship And Marriage Practice

The nature and extent of brahmanical influence in this region in the
pre-Canda period may be assessed from the type of gender relations that
prevailed amongst the Khaṣas and other ethnic groups. Available
documentary evidence suggests that patriarchy was a well established
norm, at least from the Kuṇinda period onwards. But recent
anthropological studies190 have argued that the Khaṣa society was
originally matrilineal, and it changed over to patriarchal customs under the
influence of the vedic - brahmanic cultural traditions. However, as we
have seen, brahmanization of this region has been a slow process and
vestiges of old practices can still be found amongst many communities.
Thus, the Khaṣas of Jaunsar, Bawar, Rawain and Jaunpur, and the Bhotias
of the eastern region practise polyandry, which is against brahmanical rules
as given in the Smṛtis and later vedic texts.

Polyandrous marriage has received a good deal of attention from
social anthropologists, who define it in different ways. However, most of
them agree that polyandry refers to a situation in which a woman is married
to two or more men simultaneously. The men may be brothers or may not.

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190 L.D. Joshi, Tribal people of the Himalayas: A Study of the Khasas, Mittal Pub. 1984 (rpt.),
Delhi. Originally published in 1929 under the title, The Khasa Family Law in the Himalayan
Districts of the United Provinces of India, Government Press, Allahabad, p.VIII.
be related at all. Such a marriage system is prevalent in many societies, even in modern times. In India, at present polyandry is reported from ethnic groups inhabiting the Himalayas and South India. In the south, it is found among the Todas and the Kolas of Nilgiri, the Nayars, the Iravas and some other groups like Mannan, Panans, Vilkupas, Kaniyans, Pannikkams, Thandans and the Kammulans. In Arunachal Pradesh, some kind of polyandry is noticed among the Gallong, the Dafla, the Ramo, the Khampa and some other groups.\textsuperscript{191} In the Himalayan region,\textsuperscript{192} it is present among the Badh of Ladakh, the people of Lahaul and Spiti, the Kinnauras of Kinnaur, the Pangwala of Pangi valley, people of outer Siraj in Kulu, people of Sirmur districts, Khasas of Jaunsar, Bawar, Rawain and Jaunpur region, Jats of Punjab and the Bhotia and the Lepchas of Sikkim. Its existence in ancient India has been studied in a systematic manner by S.D. Singh.\textsuperscript{193} His study is important in the light of the fact that most of the earlier indologists had denied its existence in Ancient India. Macdonell and Keith\textsuperscript{194} declared polyandry to be a non-vedic practice. They could not locate a single passage in the whole corpus of vedic literature containing any clear reference to the custom of polyandry. Similarly, J.J. Meyer and P.V. Kane\textsuperscript{195} denied the existence of polyandrous marriages in ancient India. In Shakambhari Jayal's\textsuperscript{196} view, the polyandry of Draupadi was an isolated single case. Contrary to these views, B.S.Upadhyaya and S.C. Sarkar believe that polyandry was a known practice during the vedic

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} A.A. Macdonell, A.B. Keith, \textit{Vedic Index of Names and Subjects}, vol. I, MLBD, Delhi, p.479.
\textsuperscript{196} Shakambhari Jayal, \textit{The Status of Women in the Epics}, Delhi, 1966, pp.95-96.
period. B.S. Upadhyaya\textsuperscript{197} further stated that the \textit{Rgveda} refers to a stage of polyandry in the remote past. S.D. Singh\textsuperscript{198} after examining a good deal of evidence came to the conclusion that it was practised by the Aryans and the non-Aryans, the rich and the poor alike in ancient India. In the \textit{Rgveda}, we have the twin \textit{Aśvins} marrying \textit{Suryā}; Rodasī was married to the Maruts; and \textit{Viśvedevas} were also involved in the institution of polyandry. According to S.D. Singh, the \textit{rṣis} found nothing unusual and improper in the idea of two persons sharing a common wife and tracing their ancestry to such a union.\textsuperscript{199} Thus, the \textit{Rgveda} (VII. 33) refers to the celebrated sage \textit{Vāsiṣṭha} as the son of \textit{Mitra} and \textit{Varuṇa} from the nymph \textit{Urvaśī}, while the \textit{Ṛgvedic} (X.85.40) reference to the three previous \textit{ādive} husbands of the maiden, \textit{Soma}, \textit{Gandharva} and \textit{Agni} may be understood as a relic of a gradually declining custom of polyandry. The use of metronymics in the case of the first thirty-six Vedic teachers mentioned in the succession lists\textsuperscript{200} of the \textit{Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad}, has been interpreted as an indication of the prevalence of polyandry among the highest and the most orthodox of the vedic population.

Polyandry, according to S.D. Singh, was practised not only by the vedic Aryans, but also by other Indo-European groups. It was a well accepted form of marriage among the Medes of the upland country. The kings of the Medes were polygynous, but the masses were polyandrous and the women reckoned it an honour to have many husbands. To have less than five was accounted a misfortune.\textsuperscript{201} The \textit{Sth. Kedārakhaṇḍa}\textsuperscript{202}

\begin{itemize}
  \item B.S. Upadhyaya \textit{Women in the Rgveda}, Delhi, 1974, 3rd edn., p.124.
  \item S.D. Singh, op.cit., p.37.
  \item Ibid. p.51.
  \item Ibid., p.68.
  \item Ibid. p.70.
  \item XI.13.25,32 - \textit{Jātāsmi Mitra Varuṇayorayaṁena Manusattam: Aham Manusuiā Brāhmaṇa Mūravaraṇayostathā.}
\end{itemize}
mentions that Ilā was the daughter of Mitra and Varuṇa but claimed by Manu Vaivaśvata. This may also be an indication of polyandry.

In the post-vedic phase, there are scores of textual references testifying to the existence of polyandry in many localities, such as Madra, Sindhu-Sauvīra, Gandhāra, Bahlika and Uttara Kuru. Nilakaṇṭha, the commentator on the Mahābhārata, described the gaṇa of Utsavasaṅketa as a republic of seven promiscuous tribes with no fixed laws of marriage. The Mahābhārata mentions that the women of Matsyadesa hailed Paṇcālī, who served five great men, like Gautamī serving her rṣī husbands. Clearly they were familiar with the practice and hence, its acceptability. Similarly, Sudēṣṇā, the queen of the Matsyadesa knew the practice from the country of Kaikeyas adjacent to the Punjab hills, whence she herself belonged, and where polyandry is still practised. S.D.Singh has brought to light many such cases in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana which show polyandrous relationships current in the society. The Hūṇas of Central Asia who invaded India in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. were a polyandrous people. The prevalence of polyandrous traditions seems to have been mistaken as strī-ṛājya or rule of women by Hieun Tsang and some early medieval texts. In fraternal polyandry, property remains indivisible as the children are born of the same mother. Perhaps this was mistaken as the ‘rule by woman’ by the patriarchal people of the plains. However, it is well known that in fraternal polyandry the position of woman is no better, she is considered an item of property to be shared in common. But the strangeness of the custom may have led its interpretation

203 S.D. Singh, op.cit., p.81.
204 Mbh. XII. 38.5.
205 Ibid. p.108.
as \textit{strī-rājya} by the outsiders. Thus, the \textit{Brhatsamhitā}\textsuperscript{207} speaks of a \textit{Strī-rājya} located in north-western India, \textit{Rajatarāṅgini}\textsuperscript{208} mentions that Lalitāditya in the eighth century A.D. had conquered the \textit{Strī-rājya}. Kalhaṇa credits Lalitāditya’s grandson Jayāpiṇḍa, too, with the conquest of \textit{Strī-rājya}. The \textit{Agni Purāṇa}\textsuperscript{209} mentions \textit{Strī-rājya} to be a country in the west of India. Hieun Tsang\textsuperscript{210} talks of a country north of Gangādvāra called Suvarṇa-gotra which was ruled by women. Singh following Cunningham identified\textsuperscript{211} this country with the Kumaon and Garhwal region where polyandry is still practised by all sections of the society.

An analysis of the institutions among the polyandrous Khaṣās, according to L.D.Joshi,\textsuperscript{212} reveals a “rich find of primitive Aryan social organisation...” Presently, the Khaṣās of Kumaon and Garhwal are divided in two groups: polyandrous and non-polyandrous. The non-polyandrous Khaṣās are those who are organised on the basis of the brahmanical concept of \textit{varṇa} and \textit{jāti}. These people gave up the practice of polyandry under brahmanical influence and took-up monogamy. Between these two broad groups one can still find a third group, as reported by Berreman, members of which do not accept its presence, but whose customs clearly show that they practised it till a very recent past. The changes are also related to the material conditions in which people lived. Thus, higher the level of material culture, faster was the pace of integration into brahmanical socio-political system. From this perspective, the whole of Kumaon and Garhwal region can be divided into three segments. The first

\textsuperscript{207} XIV.22.
\textsuperscript{208} IV.165-185.
\textsuperscript{209} LV.17.
\textsuperscript{211} S.D. Singh, op.cit., pp.158-159.
\textsuperscript{212} L.D. Joshi, \textit{The Khasa Family Law}, p.70.
would be the core region with a large number of fertile valleys (Almora, Nainital, Southern parts of Pithoragarh and Garhwal), the second would be peripheral regions in which people live in primitive conditions (Rawain, Jaunpur, Jaunsar, Bawar), and the third could be placed between these two (parts of Garhwal, Pithoragarh, Bhotia valleys etc.). Accordingly, the social systems also show three stages. In the core region the brahmanical institutions are well established, whereas in the peripheral region the impact is much less, and in the third type the people are still living in a transitional phase.

L.D. Joshi has identified three stages in the development of Khaṣā social organisation. The first stage covers the period up to thirteenth century in Kumaon and Garhwal. In this period, all the people had probably the same kind of family organisation, and there is no means to establish if there were any variations in terms of locality. However, it can safely be assumed, according to Joshi, that Khaṣā family organisation was the common law of the whole region. The second stage is represented by the Canda period characterised by changes on account of the coming of the brāhmaṇas and others from the plains, while the third stage is represented by the coming of the British. In the second stage, the immigrants, who were in minority and were mostly employed in courts and recipients of land-grants, were instrumental in bringing about some changes in the tribal customs. However, those immigrants who entered into matrimonial alliances with the Khaṣās, merged with them and the Khaṣās who rose to prominence adopted some brahmanical customs like the sacred thread and observances of marriage rituals hitherto unknown. Joshi is right in delineating the main stages of change in the local society, but I

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213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., p.32.
215 L.D. Joshi, op.cit. p.48. This justifies our assumption that fraternal polyandry was confused as stṛi-rājya.
would like to add that the changes did not affect the entirety of population; only those were affected who were closer to the court or the donees. That is why we find even today survivals of earlier practices.

A study of some of the social institutions may reveal the earlier customs. One such institution is the custom of ‘sautiyā bānt’, according to which the sons do not divide the inheritance of the father equally, but the division is made according to the number of wives, so that even if a wife has only one son and the second wife has several sons, the share of the former’s son would be equal to the total share of the second wife’s sons. Mr Tupper thinks that this rule of inheritance according to the number of wives is plainly incompatible with patriarchal norms, and is a survival of the matriarchal past. Though not practised now, this custom is noted in some village records and must have been practised in the past. Panna Lal, who was placed on special duty in 1919 by the United Province Government to report on Kumaon local customs, records that the institution of ‘sautiyā bānt’ was found among Khasias or Khasa-brāhmaṇas of the Nainital district. According to Tupper, this uterine appointment takes us back to that state of ruder polyandry, where the husbands being of different stocks, the only rule of kinship and succession was through the mother, each mother having a separate family, each family having a separate share in property. This system of ‘sautiyā bānt’ and the similar custom of ‘chundavand’ in the Kangra hills are relics of a state of society which had begun to be polygamous without having entirely abandoned polyandry.

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216 Ibid., pp.62-64.
218 L.D. Joshi, op.cit., p.63.
219 Ibid.
There is a community of Nayaks who reside in certain valleys such as patti Ramgarh in Nainital, pattis Giwar, Naya Katarmal, Mall Tikhun, Khasparja, Son, Seti, Mahar and Gunndesh in Almora, and Pattis Kalimath, Langur and Udaipur in Garhwal. This community supposedly brings-up their daughters to a life of prostitution. According to Atkinson, this custom owes its origin to the protracted wars of Bhāratī Canda (1437-1450A.D.) with Doti, when the Kumaoni soldiers, unable to return to their homes for a long period, contracted temporary alliances with the local women. These women were called Khatakawali, and eventually gave rise to a separate communal identity. L.D. Joshi, refuting Atkinson’s view, contended that even if the social condition among the Khaśas six hundred years ago were the same as we find them today, a girl born of the temporary alliance would not have found any difficulty in finding a husband. In the Mahābhārata, the practices somewhat similar to those found among the Nāyaks are attributed to the Khaśas. Thus, Karṇa Parva suggests a fluid state of sexual relations among the Khaśas, the Prasthalas, the Madras, the Gandhāras, the Aratjas, the Vasatis, the Sindhus and the Sauviras. Among the Arattas, the sister’s son is said to be the heir. The Nāyaks always got their wives by purchase from the Khaśa-Rajput families, and even now do so. The family organisation of the Nāyaks, according to Joshi, is half-way between a patriarchal and matriarchal society. But in the ultimate analysis, he found the Nāyak family to be matrilocal, matrilocal and matripotestal. On the basis of the above finding, one may safely assume that the social institutions of the Nāyaks represent the earliest forms among the Khaśas of the region with least impact of brahmanical influence.

221 L.D. Joshi, op.cit., p.67.
Although today, Khaśa polyandry survives under a strong patriarchal set-up, two customs related to the privileges of the maternal uncle suggest that earlier social customs were fundamentally different. The first one is the custom of ‘mānīa-jholī’ or the maternal uncle’s share in the price of the bride. This sharing in bride price looks, according to Panna Lal\(^{222}\) to be a relic of the time when the mother’s brother was the head of the family and guardian of his sister’s children. This also shows that at some point of time matrilineal families also existed. When the wife began to live with her husband amidst her in-laws, the former privileged position of her brother was to some extent preserved.\(^{223}\) In the second case, physical proximity with the wife of a sister’s son is regarded as taboo by one and all, a practice prevalent among Maithili speaking Bihar too. As the standard of sexual purity among the Khaśas was rather lax, this particular taboo is striking and would seem to have originated at a time when the mother’s brother, as the head and guardian of his nephews, was probably expected to refrain from undue familiarity with their wives. Present day Khaśas avoid union with the daughter of their father’s and mother’s agnates. There is a strict prohibition against marriage, not only with a maternal uncle’s daughter, but also with a mother’s sister’s daughter.

At present, while the people of Jaunsar-Bawar and Rawain-Jaunpur still practise polyandry, the idea is rejected by most Garhwalis. But Berreman’s study\(^ {224}\) has shown that it was present amongst them as well. In the Garhwal region, the sexual relationships within the family are not much different from those prevailing among the fraternally polyandrous families

\(^{223}\) Ibid., p.74.
of Jaunsar-Bawar. There, brothers have the right of sexual access to one another’s wives. Brothers share their wives’ sexuality, but not their productivity. A wife’s children are the children of her husband only. This strongly suggests the prevalence of polyandry at some point in the past.

Another facet of the social organisation of the polyandrous Khaśas, is that intermarriage between the brāhmaṇas and the Rajputs is permissible, and as marriage outside the group is taboo, they constitute a single endogamous group, while each separate group among the Ėoms constitutes a single endogamous group arranged in a hierarchical order. The above system no doubt shows that before the caste distinctions were introduced amongst the Khaśas they belonged to a unified group. This is further supported by the fact that no exogamous institution exists in that society. The only exogamous unit that we find is the territorial unit called village. No man, irrespective of caste, is allowed to marry within the same village. Perhaps the Khaśas at some point of time practised clan exogamy, and since clans were settled in separate villages it got transformed into village exogamy. In some cases225 a prosperous Kumaon Dom stone-mason can take a wife from the Rajput Khasia and a successful Khasia can buy a wife from a descendant of a family of pure plains’ pedigree. It seems the local Dom population must have absorbed some Khaśā population as well. Since all these castes live in one village, intermarriage is considered a taboo. The custom of pagyāli,226 which ensures co-operative work in the agricultural fields involving all the segments of society enforces the custom of village exogamy.

The customs of polyandrous marriage and consign marriage can be

225 ATK., p.441.
226 D.N. Majumdar, Races and Cultures of India, Asia Pub., Bombay, 1958, p.149.
inferred from some linguistic\textsuperscript{227} evidence. Among the polyandrous Khaśas, to a married woman all the brothers with whom she has to live are known by a single term \textit{khāwand}, meaning husband. There is no word in Jaunsari, a variation of the Central Pahari Group, to differentiate her relationship with her husband’s brothers. Similarly all the brothers are called \textit{bābā} or father by the children born out of this polyandrous union.

As regards cousins, they are usually of four kinds: (1) Father’s brother’s child, (2) Father’s sister’s child, (3) Mother’s sister’s child and (4) Mother’s brother’s child. Generally in the plains, no distinction between these four groups exists and they are treated as brothers and sisters. But in Almora district, the Bhotias, the Rajputs and the brāhmaṇas make a distinction, dividing these four into two groups:

\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad \text{Father’s brother’s child} \\
& \quad \text{Mother’s sister’s child} \\
(2) & \quad \text{Father’s sister’s child} \\
& \quad \text{Mother’s brother’s child}.
\end{align*}

Among the Rajputs and the brāhmaṇas it is a custom that a man’s brother’s children and a woman’s sister’s children are considered more like their own children than the children of a man’s sister or a woman’s brother. The explanation, according to Panna Lal\textsuperscript{228} can be sought in the custom of cousin marriages which must have once been prevalent. A brother and a sister do not regard each other’s children as their own for these could marry.\textsuperscript{229}

Finally, there is no doubt that social institutions of different

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Panna Lal, op.cit.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
localities indicate different degrees of brahmanical influence, but it is
difficult to determine exactly when these communities came under
brahmanical influence, and how far this development had taken place in the
period extending from A.D. 600 to 1300. There is no documentary
evidence to prove or disprove our hypothesis. The Khasas have been
labelled as *mlecchas*, vrātya kṣatriyas and kṣatriya *gāṇa* by the
brahmanical writers of early medieval times, although the Paurava-
Varmans and Katyuris were great patrons of the brāhmaṇas. The Katyuris
are supposed to have built most of the temples of this region. It was
probably because of the practise of customs that were not approved by the
brahmanical society that the Khaśas have been dubbed as *mlecchas*. The
inscriptions of the Paurava-Varmans show the establishment of patriarchy
among the ruling groups. In the grant of Viśṇuvarman, the king calls
himself ‘*parama-pitr-bhaktah*’. In most of the cases, the kings proclaim
that they inherited the throne by the grace of their fathers. The phrase230
used in this context is *tat pādānudhyat* as opposed to *Nija bhuja-pāriṣjita*,
used for the founder of the dynasty. However, in the grant of
Subhikṣaṇājadeva, women have been mentioned as owners of land.231 But
this could not disprove the strong presence of patriarchy among the
brahmanised ruling families of the region.

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230 *El*, vol. XXXI, no.38, pp.279, 280,286,287,293.