PEOPLE
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India is unique in several respects as far as its human populations are concerned. It has almost all the major racial groups of mankind unified under a single culture complex. Vedic literature describes some of the problems that developed between the incoming fair-skinned Aryan invaders and the comparatively dark-skinned indigenous people. The institution of caste that emerged as the result of the interaction was unique in the social history of man.

Scientific study of Caste was initiated by Western anthropologists and social scientists during the last century. These endogamous population groups form mendelian units, which afford excellent opportunity to conduct population studies. In the present study six endogamous groups of North India form the subject material. These are the numerically dominant caste groups of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh states of India.

BRAHMANS

It is the "varna" comprising a large numbers of "Jatis", whose traditional occupation is that of priests and who stand as a rule at the apex of Hindu Society. They are divided roughly into two great classes said to be of five orders each, the Panch Dravida and the Panch
Gaur, roughly south and north of the Vindhya Hills respectively. But there are other classes no longer recognised as belonging to either of these two groups and in some cases regarded as degraded.

The Saraswat Brahmans of the Punjab are the priests of the Khatri caste. They have the same complicated arrangement of exogamy and hypergamy as the Khatris, and will take food from them. It seems not improbable that they are really descendents of Khatri priests who have become Brahmans. Perhaps they represent the priesthoods of what were once different, even antagonistic religions (Russel and Hira Lal, 1916).

Ethnically, the Brahmans of Punjab have been identified with the mediterranean racial stock, although other elements such as Nordic, Alpine, Dinaric etc. can also be traced in them, but to different degrees at different places. Their physical make up is characterised by long heads, shorter noses than the people farther North West. Their faces are free from any suggestion of flatness and they are tall in stature but shorter than the martial groups of Indo - gangetic plain.

RAJPUTS

It is an aristocratic Caste, widespread in Western, Northern and Central India, whose traditional functions are
fighting and ruling. They represent the ancient Kshatriya varna, and rank next to the Brahmins socially. Rajput caste is essentially an occupational caste, composed of all clans following the Hindu ritual who actually undertook the act of government and most of the great clans now in existence are, descendent either from foreign immigrants of the fifth or sixth century A.D. or from indigenous races. The clans themselves and their branches have different degrees of rank for purposes of marriage, according to the purity of their descent, while in each clan or subclan there is an inferior section formed of the descendents of remarried widows, or even the offspring of women of another caste. Marriage with in the clan as a rule is not permitted. The Rajputs of Simla Hills are migrants, from Central and Western India. Agriculture is their main occupation.

KHATRIS

Two important castes in the Punjab who are much more often Hindu than Sikh or Muslim are the Khatri and Arora Castes. The Khatris claim to be of Kshatriya origin, but the principal pursuit of both these important and numerous castes is trade. Before partition of Punjab, much of the commerce of Afghanistan and central Asia was in Khatri hands. Now they are controlling trade activities in Indian Punjab, Haryana and Delhi extending their activities to Central India. They are known for their great
administrative ability and academic pursuits.

"They are a handsome fair skinned class, some of them with blue or grey eyes, in make and appearance like Baniyas, only larger and more vigorous. Their women have a reputation for their beauty and fair complexion" (Crooke, 1896). Arora is a large subordinate class of Khatri, somewhat lower, but of equal mercantile energy. The proper Khatri, of higher grade will often deny all connection with them. Sir George Campbell (c.f. Ibbetson, 1970) considers both these groups ethnologically the same.

HARYANA JATS

The origin of the Jat caste has been the subject of much discussion. One view is that they belong to Indo-Scythian stock and might have entered the Punjab from their home on the Oxus. Major Todd (c.f. Ibbetson, 1970) classes the Jats as one of the great Rajput Tribes. General Cunningham (c.f. Ibbetson, 1970) suggests that the Rajputs belong to the original Aryan stock, and the Jats to a later wave of immigrants from the North-West, probably of Scythian race. But the argument derived from the language is strongly in favour of the pure Aryan origin of the Jats. They speak and have for centuries spoken an Aryan language, a dialect of Hindi. Physical type and language are considerations, which are not to be set aside by mere verbal resemblance.
Haryana Jats occupy the Jamuna districts and are very good cultivators, because their wives assist them largely in the fields and perform all sorts of agricultural labour except ploughing and sowing which is mainly limited to the male sex. They practice widow marriage, which places them below Rajputs. The social status of the Jat is that which the Gujar and Ahir enjoy, because they all eat and smoke together (Ibbetson, 1970).

Risley (1969) classifies Jats as Indo-Aryans, who possess the characters such as a long head; a straight, finely cut nose; a well developed forehead, regular features and a high facial angle. The stature is high and the general build of the figure is well proportioned and massive. The predominant colour of the skin is a very light transparent brown.

**JAT SIKHS**

Jats had spread into the Punjab proper before the earliest Muhammadan invasion. They form perhaps the most important element in the population of the Punjab. The typical Punjab Jat is Sikh. The Jat is a typical yeoman, devoted to agriculture and not particularly concerned in satisfying the requirements of orthodoxy, at any rate as a Hindu, so that he takes a lower social level than the Rajput. His industry is unceasing and every member of his family shares the work in the fields (Hutton, 1951).
Ethnically, they have been classified along with the Jats of Haryana, under the Indo Aryan type of Risley. The distinction between the two being more of a cultural nature rather than physical.

The Jat Sikhs of the Punjab started as a sect within the Hindu pale about the end of the fifteenth century. It was the tenth and last Guru, Gobind Singh, about the end of the seventeenth century, who organised them on a military and political basis and who emphasised the social aspect of the first Guru's reforms.

BANIYAS

The name Baniya is derived from the Sanskrit VANIJ, a merchant. It is a term applied to traders, money landers and shopkeepers, and often used for various trading castes. There has been much difference of opinion as to whether the name Baniya should be taken to signify a caste, or whether it is merely an occupational term. As a rule the name Baniya is used only as a caste name for groups who are considered both by themselves and outsiders to belong to the Baniya caste. The Baniyas have a distinct and well-defined traditional occupation, which is followed by many or most members of practically every subcaste.

The Baniyas have also a distinctive social status.
They represent the "vaish" varna of the fourfold model of caste. They are distinguished by the fact that they abstain more rigorously from all kinds of flesh food than any other caste. Their rules as to diet are exceptionally strict, and are equally observed by the great majority of the subdivisions.