Chapter 5

Public Life of Pandas of Hardwar

In this chapter, the relationship of the tirtha purohit community to the tirtha of Hardwar is described, a relationship upon which its status and livelihood depends. The importance of the idea of merit in the ritual scenario is emphasized. It is highly meritorious for pilgrims to visit Hardwar and its various shrines, to bathe in the Ganges and to perform customary rites and to donate. The Pandas frequently quote sloks from the Purans and elsewhere, which enumerate the very specific benefits, which will result from such actions. Whether pilgrims know of these specific rewards or not, most hope that they will be blessed in this life (in the form of good health, the birth of sons, increase in property and long life), and that they will achieve a better rebirth in the next life or reach a higher heaven.

The Pandas' belief in the mechanical efficacy of rites properly performed co-exists with a belief in the importance of faith and internal purity. These beliefs reflect differences between and within literary texts and they become relevant in different social contexts. Thus, a Panda will frequently make a Shastriya claim for the benefits derived from bathing in the Ganges or even falling in the Ganges accidentally. He will allow that it is possible for a pilgrim to bathe in the Ganges on behalf of some relative or caste member of his village. On the other hand, and in other contexts, he will stress the importance of bhavana and sraddha (disposition or understanding and faith).
The Pandas, as the hereditary priests of Hardwar, claim and have a monopoly of priestly service in Hardwar as far as pilgrims are concerned. They maintain that their authority to perform rites for pilgrims and to receive their donations comes from Sastras and that those who neglect these obligations gain no benefit from pilgrimage. They are, therefore, the mediators of merit (punya) and the means whereby sin (pap) is destroyed. It is through their knowledge of the correct procedures of worship that pilgrims attain maximum reward and gain specific ends.

The historical role of the Pandas is also emphasized in maintaining Hardwar and Kankhal as centres of pure sanatan dharma. Because of their influence, they were able to defend and advance what were considered orthodox Brahanical values. Thus, they extended to the cities of Hardwar and Kankhal as a whole their own vegetarianism, prohibition of alcohol and ideas of ahimsa (not killing—no slaughter of animals, no fishing, etc.). Documents show that they frequently came into conflict with the British Government on issues which affected religion and that, even today, they continue to protect the interests of orthodox sanatanis against the encroachments of various municipal and state departments and generally act as publicists of sanatani causes.

5.1 THE IDEA OF MERIT

To their jajmans and others, the Pandas emphasize the merits of pilgrimage to Hardwar and of 'works' and donation performed there. It is, of course, in their economic interests so to do, but they themselves have strong faith in tirtha, Brahman, god, Guru and mantra. They believe also that they are by birth entitled to take all the pure donations made by pilgrims in Hardwar.

One learned Panda declared:
"According to the Sastras, the Panda is by birth to be worshipped by those who come here. The man who lives in a religious place is to be supported. Birth in a religious place is the greatest qualification."

"If a person does any karma and gives Dan (donation) but not to a Panda the gains no benefit."

5·2 THE MERIT OF PILGRIMAGE TO HARDWAR

The Pandas tell their pilgrims that Uttarkund, or the part of the north in which Hardwar is situated, is very sacred. It is the home of the gods and knows as heaven upon earth. In his book on Hardwar, Pandit Omprakash Shastri (a Panda) refers to passages in the Sastras which affirm that Hardwar is superior to all other tirthas for japa (repetition of prayer of holy name), tapa (devotion or penance), Yag (good works) and Dan (donation). He says that pilgrims to Uttarkund can be blessed with whatever they desire—whether purity of life (dharma), wealth (artha), sexual desire or fulfillment (kama) of liberation (moksa). He maintains that Hardwar is the most sacred tirtha in Uttarkund and that pilgrimage to other centres (eg., Kailash, Gangotri, Jamnotri, Badrinath, Kedarnath) lacks merit and is incomplete if a birth is not first of all taken in the Ganges at Hardwar.

Great claims based on Puranic sloks are made for Hardwar. It is said, for example, that those who make the parikrama of Hardwar (circuit) will never experience unhappiness of misery and that those who die there (humans, animals and birds) will go to good universes. Sins as grievous as cow murder or the murder of Brahmins and parents, can there be purified.

There are a number of sloks known to each Panda concerning Hardwar, of which the following are the most famous:

कुम्भराशिण्ते जीवे तथा मेषे गँटे रत्नी।
हर्ष्यारं कृतं स्नानं पुनरावृत्तिवर्जनम्॥
When Vrhaspati reaches Kumbh rasi and when the sun reaches Mekh rasi then it is Kumbh and Vrhaspati and the sun come together after twelve years. After bathing in Hardwar, a man will not be reborn.

अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी कांची अवतित्क।
पुरो द्वारावती चैव सप्तते मोक्षदायिकः।

Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kasi, Kanci, Avantika, Puri. These seven cities give salvation.

हरिद्वारे कुशाबते नीलके विलपति।
स्नात्वा कन्हाले तीर्थे पुनर्जना न विद्वाते॥

Hardwar, Kusghat, Nil mountain (parvat), Bilva Mountain, Kankhal. After bathing in these five places

>You will find salvation (never be reborn).

ततः कन्हाले स्नात्वा ज्ञरते पोषते नरः॥
अश्वमेधग्रामानि० र्मर्मलोकं च गच्छति॥

Whoever lives in Kankhal for three nights and bathes there receives the benefit of asvamedh yajna and, after death, goes to heaven.

It is not only the general darsan of Hardwar that is important. Sub-tirthas have special merit attached to them also. For example, Pandit Omprakash Shastri says that ceremonies done at where and that sraddha performed there confers salvation. Pilgrims who visit Bhimgoda find pleasure in this life and heaven in the next. Pilgrims who visit Saptarsi Asram and bathe will never be reborn. Narayani sila removes all sins and, if the sraddha karma of ancestors is done there with complete faith, they will obtain salvation. After darsan of Daksa temple, pilgrims become as Nandi and Bhrngi, the gap (servants) of
Shiva, and after death go to Sivlok. Those who make a pilgrimage to Hardwar but do not visit Daksa temple gain nothing. Those who bathe in Satikund go to better universes when they die—even those who are evil. Bathing here is particularly meritorious during the month of Vaisakh, but at any time one receives what would be found by pilgrimage to all other tirthas, baths and yajhas. The darsan of the temples of Chandi and Mansa Devi, which are far off and in the jungle, also confer great merit. They are renowned for granting all desires.

Ideally, pilgrims should visit all the sacred places connected with the gods and circumambulate them (parikrama). For example, the rajas and maharajas who came periodically would first prostrate themselves before Ganga Mai at Har Ki Pauri and they go to kusghat for mundan (tonsure) and sraddha (funerary ritual). They would then make a tour of all the sacred places, bathing and donating. Today, the majority of pilgrims who do not come for a specific and brief purpose visit the main ghats, the temple of Daksa, the tank of Bhingoda, Saptarsi Asram, etc. May who have a specific request go to the hilltop temples of Chandi and Mansa Devi.

Pilgrims will then visit those temples and institutions that interest them (often at the recommendation of their Pandas). Parmarth Asram because of its modern facilities. May pilgrims want to be amused or entertained as well as edified? The more serious pilgrims visit asrams famous for their learning or philanthropic activities—notably Svarga Asram and the Divine Life Society, founded by Svami Sivnand, at Rishikesh or Gurukul Kangri at Hardwar. During the period of fieldwork, much curiosity prevailed about the asram of Premagar near Kankhal and the asram of Mahesh Yogi at Rishikesh. Both had many ‘hippy-type’ devotees and their grandeur and “Westernization” aroused great interest.
A Panda Girl

Panda with his Family
Panda writing in Bahi (27-01-2003)

Asthi Visarjan of Harvansh Rai Bachchan
5.3 THE MERIT OF BATHING IN THE GANGES

The Pandas emphasize that purificatory bathing is always meritorious but that, at Hardwar, it is particularly so. Although they frequently speak of the material rewards to be gained by such bathing, their greatest preoccupation is spiritual. This can be demonstrated best by translating some thoughts of working Pandas:

"Why is bathing in the Ganges beneficial? It is because a man comes for this purpose, and after bathing in the Ganges, he feels that a great work has been done. He has accomplished the duty assigned by his ancestors. He has great psychological satisfaction...It is also because the god lives in the Ganges and, in Kaliyug especially, Ganga has great significance. Sins are removed by bathing. Salvation is gained. Ganges means Goddess, or rather is Goddess. This is described in Sastras. One who takes a bath in the Ganges gets rid of his sins. Our faith is based on the scriptures and leads to salvation. There is no prescribed time for bathing but on special occasions—Dusshera, Diwali, Amavasya, Purnima, Sankranti—it is particularly auspicious. Flowers, fruit, milk, honey, curd and coins will be offered to Ganges and tarpan will be done. These offerings are made out of Love for Gangaji. They symbolize emotions and ideas, sraddha".

"Ganges is Brahmdraya—Brahma and Narayan are Ganga and flowing. This is the whole creation of god, supreme reality. It is a goddess, Ganga Mata. This is bhavana. As the rsis advised us, so we must do. You should not create another bhavana. You should keep to the old traditions and have belief in rsis and gurus,...If you fall in the Ganges, your sins will go. The significance of Ganges is so great that, if a drop falls on your body,
it will be physically sanctified. This is said in the Purans. If the ashes of a
man who was never a devotee (literally follower) of Ganges are brought
here, then he will still gain mukti, final release. Ganga can take away
astigatpap—the sins, which result from bones which the fire could not
burn. Ganges water appears cold but it has the power to burn sins."

"Pandas believe that Ganges is itself Goddess and that one should take
more and more baths so that, by so doing, one will have good fortune in
this world and the next. This is the most pious water in the whole world.
Of this, all Pandas are sure. Ganges is the holiest river in the world. Its
water can remain pure forever and ever (i.e., can never be contaminated).
If one takes a bath, it can remove worries, disease and give full salvation.
By praying to Mother Ganges, we can receive everything—wealth, a good
wife, children. By the grace of Gangaji, people find buildings, property,
issue, wives, and recovery from disease. I had experience of this. My
pilgrim's wife had a skin disease over her entire body. My pilgrim was
very worried and at last, after many years, when all medicine had proved
useless, he brought her to Hardwar. He stayed for fifteen days. His wife
bathed daily and she was cured after ten days just by bathing”.

The Pandas therefore tell their pilgrims that great spiritual and material
benefits result from bathing and that the water of the Ganges at Hardwar has
the particular quality that it cannot be 'spoiled'. The Pandas are themselves in
a very special sense connected with the Ganges. They are called Gangaguru
and their daughters “Gangaji ki machali” (fish of the Ganges). Many Pandas
conceive of their primary duty as the worship of the Ganges. A bath in the
Ganges is the accompaniment of all rites performed by Pandas for their jajmans
and Ganges water is used in all sanskar to purity priest and jajman. Pandas
bathe daily and employ Ganges water in all pooja and life crisis ritual. After death, the Panda is immersed 101 times in the Ganges.

5.4 THE MERIT OF ‘WORKS’

Rites performed on the bank of the Ganges are especially meritorious since they take place on ground sanctified by the gods. These works (karma) include the feeding of Brahmans (Brahmabhoj), pind dan (presentation of rice balls to the ancestors), sraddha (rites in honour of the ancestors), tarpan (offering of water to deceased ancestors), argh (offering of water to a deity), snan (bath in the Ganges), godan (donation of a cow), sayyadan (the donation of a bed). They gain more merit if performed within Hardwar. For example, if the ashes of the dead are immersed in the Ganges at Hardwar or Kankhal, their souls gain salvation. If the ashes are immersed within ten days of death, the same benefit is acquired, as would have been the case had they died near the Ganges bank. Again, if pind Dan is performed by the Ganges bank rather than in the home, it is rewarded a thousand times more.

5.5 THE MERIT OF DONATION

Donation to the Panda, in either devkarma (rites for the gods) or pitrkarma (rites for the ancestors), is held to be highly meritorious and obligatory according to the Sastras. To give to picus Brahmans living a life of worship by the Ganges assures the pilgrim of tangible rewards much exceeding the value of his offering, and intangible rewards after death.

5.6 GUARDIANS OF PURITY

The Panda community ability to function as the guardian of the sacred city and of sanatan dharma results from their numbers, status and cohesion over religious matters. It also depends upon their relationship with influential
jajmans—in the past rajas and maharajas and today politicians, businesspersons, leaders of religious or quasi-religious movements (for example, the Santan Dharam Sabha, the Jan Sangh, etc.). Even today, few Hindus, whatever their status, could afford to ignore requests or pressure from a community of priestly Brahmins.

The Pandas' perception of themselves as guardians of the sacred places is conditioned by many factors, which are both geographical and historical. Here, we analyze three contributing causes:

**5.6.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

The Pandas frequently perceive a contrast between Hardwar, as the centre of orthodoxy, and the culture found outside. They, as Gaur Brahmins, represent the complex and restrained Hinduism of the plains. Their norms and ideals are those of a highly Sanskritised community well versed in the Upnísads, epics, Manusmríti, etc. For example, they are “pure vegetarians” and their gods also. They do not allow widow remarriage, the drinking of alcohol, the taking of life, or any form of orgiastic celebration. They emphasize the importance of daily worship and ritual ablutions. However, many inhabitants of the regions surrounding Hardwar—the Punjabis, Paharis, Nepalis, Sindhis, etc.—have much looser and more uninhibited customs. Moreover, many of those by origin from Northern Punjab, Sindh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, etc., were surrounded by mlecha (beathen) and came to Hardwar to be purified. The centuries-old image of Hardwar as a place of sanctity, of ‘reality’ and of Aryan tradition has persisted. Many Pandas envisage Hardwar as encircled by peoples who practice polyandry or polygyny, who have adopted the levirate or remarry their widows, who drink and sacrifice animals (particularly at festivals such as Lohri).
Internally also, they have to guard against low caste and immigrant customs, which are more lax than their own in matters of diet, marriage and daily life, and against deviations within the high castes including their own. (It is well known, for example, that the municipal laws against meat eating and the drinking of alcohol are often secretly, or not so secretly, contravened).

Just as the hills people (Berreman, 1971) see the people of the plains as ritually, spiritually and morally superior and Hindus everywhere look to Hardwar as a center of orthodox learning, so the Pandas look to the pakka Brahmans of Banaras and elsewhere and the literary models as ideals. They try to maintain the purity of tradition and observance in Hardwar against encroaching influences.

5.6.2 SACRED AND PROFANE SPACE

The Pandas perceive Hardwar and Kankhal as microcosms in the same symbolic way that they perceive the temple, the house and even the body. Phenomenological, they each represent a sacred and ordered cosmos in contrast with the mysterious and potentially dangerous formlessness outside. The jungle and even the roads leading many from the towns were thought (at least, until very recently) to be the abode of spirits and ghosts. Wild animals with some peculiarity or deformity were considered incarnations of a powerful sadhu or spirit. Even during the period of fieldwork, a child was found ritually slaughtered near one of the temples of the goddess in the jungle, and this extremely rare event was used to illustrate the dangers of pilgrimage to shrines after dark. Thus, the sacred space of the town the temple and the house is felt as safe and sacred, the surrounding space as uncertain and alarming. Even today, the burning ghat and various places along the road are feared and Pandas of the older generation have many stories to tell of their fearful encounters with
spirits. This perception by the Pandas of Hardwar as cosmicised space is an aspect of their attempt to maintain its limits against the intrusion of the jungle and the formless (Eliade, 1961).

5.6.3 HISTORICAL CAUSES

The rule of the Moghuls and the British had a profound effect upon the Pandas, no so much in terms of their day-to-day life but in terms of their psychology. Even in practical terms, however, alien rule brought difficulties—legal and administrative matters were conducted in languages few Pandas understood. (As late as 1913, we find Pandas and others recommending before the Pilgrim Committee that the rules and regulations of the municipality should be printed in the vernacular). But more than this, alien rule made the Pandas self-consciously Hindu and, under the Raj they attacked every infringement of tradition and imposed Brahmanical values on the whole city. Their Sabha became a pressure group for sanatani causes.

Few incidents remain in the popular memory about the Moghul period and the documents from that period are unintelligible to most Pandas. All Pandas, however, have heard how the Moghul rulers seized the donations given to their ancestors and knocked and ill-treated them. There is little to suggest concerted defiance but there is evidence that at least one Panda resisted by enlisting the help of a powerful jajman, the Sikh ruler of Buria Estate in what is now Haryana. Pandi Krparam Sarma related how his ancestor, Pandit Harinarayan, received the Sikh ruler's donation of ornaments, clothes, cash, and returned home to Jwalapur. The Muslims, as usual, seized everything. This time the Panda rode to Buria and appeared before the ruler naked and crying. The ruler, stung by this insult to his Panda, sent his forces to Jwalapur where they defeated the Muslims. The Muslim rulers were strung up on a tree and the
populace attacked them with sticks and shoes. They agreed to pay a fourth of their income (chauth) to the Sikhs, and Pandit Harinarayan, (afterwards famous as Hanna Navab) was appointed receiver. After this, it is said, the Pandas were left in peace.

Many Pandas regard their ancestors at this time as maintaining continuity with Hindu customs and traditions and defending the sacred places from Muslim aggression. Their feelings about the British Ran are entirely different. Most thought that the British rule was just and discipline strong. Approving stories are told about the lack of corruption, the swiftness of justice and the state of safety in which women laden with gold and jewels could walk about unharmed.

At first, the whole community was loyal and the government officials invited their leaders to darbars and receptions. One wealthy Panda used to entertain British officials on his farm and gained much prestige from so doing. That they actually felt affection for some of the magistrates in instanced by this address that they sent to Cook Sahib when he was about to leave the district in 1909:

"The Pandas of Hardwar Union give great thanks to Cook Sahib on behalf of the tirtha and pilgrims........We are also grateful to our Government for employing a man such as Cook, who is loved by all the people alike. In the time of Cook Sahib there was peace in Hardwar Union and, by your kindness, sir, this religious place has progressed. In your time, so much has been done for the progress of the Union, for the comfort of pilgrims, for the benefit of the public. . . We pray to Mother Ganges that our benevolent officer, Cook Sahib may again return with his family at a higher post and may live a long life".

In general, the community felt able to approach the Government and its local departments. The records in the possession of Sri Ganga Sabha are full
of stern admonitions on every topic relevant to Hardwar as a pilgrimage centre—
the question of the volume of water entering the ghats, fishing by Europeans,
photography of naked female bathers, etc. Even the allegedly unjust
imprisonment, of a few Panda leaders in 1918 did not arouse much hostility at
the time. During that year, the Muslims of the nearby village of Katarpur intended
to celebrate the festival of Bakara’id by ritually slaughtering a cow. Unfortunately,
in 1918, Bakara’id coincided with the Hindu festival of Gaughal and many local
Hindus were enraged. In the riot that followed, many Muslims were killed and
their houses fired. The Government, always alert to rivalries between the
communities, hanged some and imprisoned others. A few of the Pandas
imprisoned were leaders of the community, who had not been present at the
crime, but who were thought to have instigated it. Despite their long sentence,
there was no great public outcry.

After 1930, however, a few Pandas participated in Gandhi’s freedom
movement and became political sufferers. Pandit Hariprasad, for example, was
imprisoned in 1932 for burning foreign cloth, in 1941 for opposing the giving of
aid to the British Government during the war and in 1942 for taking part in the
‘Quit India’ movement. Gradually, the great majority of the community came to
support Gandhi’s campaign against the British, although they disapproved of
many of his internal policies (the ending of caste restrictions, etc.). Those who
were political sufferers were regarded with reverence and, even today, they
possess very high status.

The idealism of the community was shattered after 1947 when India was
divided, for, in the view of the Pandas, it is a sacred land, which has an
indissoluble unity. Many found themselves in opposition to the “secularism” of
the Congress and to its social policies. Thus, even after Independence, the
Pandas (including the supporters of Congress) regarded themselves as the voice of protesting sanatanis all over India. The careers of individuals are very different but we can take the example of Pandit Rajkumar Lakarivala. In 1948, he was imprisoned for protesting against the banning of the Rastriya Svayam Sevak Sangh after the assassination of Gandhi. In 1952, he was imprisoned for demonstrating over the quasi-independent status cow slaughter in Uttar Pradesh and imprison he went on hunger strike. Today, many Pandas are committed to specifically sanatani causes, such as national prohibition of alcohol or cow slaughter or the setting up of cow shelters (gosalas). The Ganga Sabha as a body also supports these causes morally and financially.

5.7 PURITY AND ITS DEFENSE

From the records and documents held by Ganga Sabha, we can see that, from early on, Pandas acted as guardians of the whole area of Hardwar and Kankhal. For example, as a community they continually exerted their influence to have cow slaughter and the selling of meat banned in Hardwar and even in Jwalapur, where the Muslims had what they considered customary rights. Letters and documents from the United Provinces Government, the Police Department and local magistrates show the effect of this pressure (e.g. in 1815, 1843, 1901, and 1907). In 1907, due to Panda complaints, a Muslim kasai was fined for selling meat to the cooks of Europeans in Hardwar. In 1914, Pandas and other prominent citizens petitioned the Viceroy to prevent Pathans and Muslims killing cows: "Defend us from this injury to our religion because religion is our life. If religion is gone then life is useless."

There is similar and constant ferment over fishing. Europeans so much disregarded local opinion that they fished even in Har Ki Pauri. This was prohibited in 1863, and later the prohibition was extended to include the five
main ghats and kankhal. Today, fishing is not allowed in Hardwar or kankhal. Sometimes, when the water is low, it is possible to take fish from the river and this is punished, even if they are already dead. During the fieldwork period, a Pathan caprasi belonging to Ganga Sabha was detected trying to hide a first in the bazaar. He immediately absconded.

Another cause was prohibition. The Pandas constantly petitioned against the selling of Liquor—for example, near Bhimgoda. In 1948, they succeeded in getting prohibition established but it was lifted in 1962, when two shops were burnt in Hardwar and Jwalapur. Through Panda pressure, the one in Hardwar was closed. The Pandas who take bhang and charas and other narcotics have never campaigned against then, holding that they have a religious sanction.

In 1918 (samvat 1973), the Pandas tried to ban prostitution. Prostitutes used to live along the road to Daksa temple in houses owned by the Mahants of the akharas. The Pandas begged the Mahants to stop this, as the pilgrims who came for darsan of Mahadev were adversely affected. They asked the Mahants to force the prostitutes to abandon the houses and said that, if the Mahants suffered economic loss as a result, they were prepared to make good the deficit by renting and using the vacant premises.

It is also evident from the records, that the Pandas frequently led opposition to non-sanatani practices within Hardwar and Kankhal. For example, there are documents that show that the Arya Samaj was forbidden to hold processions, on the grounds of the hostility of local inhabitants (e.g. in 1902, the Sub-Divisional Officer refused such a request). Although generally Muslims and Hindus lived peacefully, there were occasionally incidents which arose from small irritants—the lopping of a pipal tree to make room for a procession, the call of the muezzin at the time of arti, etc. The incident of 1918 was something
much more dangerous and, typically, arose from Hindu reverence for the cow (gomata).

The greatest triumph of the community (and for many the single greatest incident of the century) was its success in defeating the Government's plan to regulate the natural current of the water of the Ganges above Hardwar, by means of dams, bounds and weirs. This would have provided an artificial supply of water for Har Ki Pauri and other sacred ghats by the use of sluices. It would also have interfered with the other branch of the Ganges—called the Nildhara—, which flows from Hardwar to the plains, to Prayag (Allahabad), where it forms the sacred confluence known as the Triveni Sangam, and further down towards the sea. The Pandas led the Hindu communities of Punjab and United Provinces in presenting a memorial to Sir James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (1914). In this they maintain that "the sanctity which is associated in the Hindu mind with the river Ganges, attaches to the natural current of the river as it flows from the Himalayas, and not to any canal into which its waters may be drawn. This is demonstrated by the fact that, though the Ganges canal flows over a length of nearly a thousand miles, nowhere do Hindus regard it as a sacred stream, or resort to it for the purposes of a religious ablution or ceremony".

The Lieutenant Governor came to Hardwar and met leading Hindus from all over India and the principle was won. The next two years were spent fighting for the details of the agreement. In this battle, the Pandas had the support of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviy (then regarded as the greatest sanatani alive), officials of the All-India Hindu Sabha, the Maharajas of Gwalior, Jaipur, Bikaner, Patiala, Alwar, Banaras, etc.
Through Pandit Malviy's advice, Sri Ganga Sabha was set up in 1916. After this, the records show a fierce concern—both spiritual and economic—for the sacred places of the city. There was agitation when the flow of water into the main ghats was insufficient, particularly during festivals such as Diwali, Somvati Amavas, Makar Sankranti, Nava Ratri, Vaisakh Snan, Sivratri Mela and sacred month such as Magh and Kartik. There was also agitation when pilgrims' rights of way were blocked by the canal department of when bones thrown into the Ganges were displaced by public works (e.g. during shoaling).

Malviy was a loyal and influential friend to the Pandas for many years. For example, he supported the Pandas in their refusal to allow the government to put sewage into the Ganges (1927). When a Panda was imprisoned (1937) for saying katha on the main platform at Har Ki Pauri, he himself went there and read the katha. The District Magistrate felt unable to arrest him because of his prestige and the furore it would create. In 1943, he supported the Pandas against a movement started by Pandit Cirangi Lal and the Mahavir-Dal (which was under the management of Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha), aimed at stopping the practice of putting ashes and bones into the Ganges at Hardwar. Malviy strongly supported the Pandas and gave his opinion that the Ganges at Brahmakund is incapable of contamination.

The Pandas also protect the day-to-day purity of the sacred centre and one of the functions of Ganga Sabha is the policing of the main ghats. In Har Ki Pauri photographs are not permitted nor the wearing of leather sandals, shaving, the application of soap and oil, smoking, drinking, entrance of non-Hindus, etc. Ganga Sabha has also laid down rules for the Ghatiyas which prohibit the smoking of tobacco, charas or any other narcotic on the ghats, ensure that they treat all women pilgrims as mother and sister and forbid haggling. Ghatiyas who break these rules have their licences forfeited.
In other ways also, Pandas try to defend the purity of sanatan dharma in Hardwar. Some are attached to traditional institutions of learning, others preach (kathas), or give holy discourse (satsang) or are in charge of kirtan, dramas, processions, etc. A few are renowned beyond the limits of the town as learned sastras or karmakandis or jyotisis (astrologers) and advise all who come to them. All Pandas act as gurus to their pilgrims and, at the time of fairs and great festivals, the Ganga Sabha takes a prominent role in advertising the tenets of traditional Hinduism. At all times, Ganga Sabha is open to questioners and most Pandas enjoy a spiritual discourse or monologue.

5.8 THE PANDAS & OTHER RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONARIES

We have just seen that the Pandas have had, from ancient times, a proprietary concern for the sacred complex of Hardwar and for the maintenance of its purity and fame. They have also had a clear interest in maintaining Hardwar as a centre of orthodoxy and tradition. In general, other religious communities, sects and individuals do not have the same personal identification or economic stronghold.

The non-Panda Brahmans who serve as poojaris, jyotisis (astrologers), kathavacaks (preachers), vaidyas (ayurvedic physicians) are usually regarded as ‘outsiders’ since their ancestors did not belong to Hardwar. They are frequently from a different sub-caste and reside with their families only. Their kin ties are mainly outside Hardwar. They have, therefore, only an individual’s voice and have no claim to speak on behalf of Hardwar. The other functionaries connected with the ghats are subservient, ritually and economically, to the Pandas. The ghatiyas are Brahmans but perform a minor function, which has little religious or secular prestige. The Mahabramans are ancient inhabitants of Hardwar but they are less educated than the Pandas, both in Sanskrit and
modern terms, and they have never formed part of the local leadership. The other two communities who follow a ‘religious’ occupation, are the Bhattas and the Dakauts. The Bhattas are the servants of the Pandas and are attached to the dharas but them, like the Dakauts, accept the impure donation of the planets and are regarded as low. The Dakauts in particular have a very low status, they wander about the bazaars and shops, showing their iron pots containing a statue of Sani, and passers-by make offerings.

There are many maths, akharas and asrams in Hardwar and their heads have, with the Pandas and a few others, formed social elite of great influence in the town. Their propertied wealth confers upon them great secular status and, at the same time, they represent the asram of sanyas. Asceticism as an ideal is one, which is deeply respected in Hardwar, so that sanyasis are revered before all others in social meeting. However, they are not organized or fitted to defend the purity of the sacred city or its traditions and ritual. However much they remain within the world, they have, at an ideal, detached themselves from it and from the duties of the sanatani Hindu who lives as a householder. Moreover, they are concerned with their own devotees rather than the mass of pilgrims and with their own institutions rather than the sacred complex per se.

The sectarians, like the sadhus, are more interested in the growth of their movement than in the defense of sanatan dharma in Hardwar. They work within a much less institutionalized framework than the Pandas and they are often preoccupied with their own internal administration and economic survival. Sects such as the Divine Light Movement do not involve themselves with Hardwar. This sect vehemently discourages its devotees from going into Hardwar and does not teach them the value of bathing or on pilgrimage—except to their own asrams. This is, however, an extreme. Devotees of a particular guru of
baba usually come to have darsan of him or her and the relationship is a personal one—for example, the devotees of Anand Mai Ma come periodically to Kankhal when she is there, simply to see her.

Perhaps the most reputable institution of learning locally is the Gurukul Kangri. Previously, it was an ardent reformist centre which challenged many of the Pandas’ most fundamental beliefs and those upon which Hardwar as a sacred city is founded—the value of worship through images and statues, of bathing in the Ganges, the necessity for a priestly intermediary, etc. Today, the movement has lost much of its fire and the differences no longer appear as great as they once did, but many Arya Samajis retian contempt for popular Hinduism as superstitious and fundamentally irreligious. They tend to see the ghats in terms of dirt. Unbending orthodoxy and mindless tradition. They are, therefore, unfitted to defend the tirtha and sanatan dharma. They are able, however, (like some other institutions) to supply learned pandits who have extremely high status (higher than any professional Brahman), who are frequently loudly critical, from their knowledge of the Vedic sources, of the parrot Sanskrit or lack of learning of the Pandas, priests, poojaries, etc.

The daily life of the Pandas is simple and regular. From early morning until evening, they sit in rented rooms or in their own lodging houses near the Ganges bank. Some of the Kankhal Pandas have wooden huts near Har Ki Pauri, from which they watch the panorama of pilgrims, beggars and wandering cows; many of the Jwalapuri Pandas live around Kusghat, which is at the back of the main bazaar and a great thoroughfare for pilgrims. Passers-by can see the Pandas seated cross-legged in small rooms opening on to courtyards or streets. These rooms are furnished barely with mattress and cushions (gadda and gaddi), calendars depicting the gods, a few hand fans and a safe or chest
for the registers (bahis). The Panda may also own a cot to sit on outside or he may simply use mats of kus grass (kus asan). Nearby, there is usually close, but many Pandas prefer to use the drains or the jungle. Pilgrims often use the Pandas’ rooms as their own: they sleep in them at night and cook outside in the yard. A typical scene is of the Pandas, seated on their throne (gaddi) before their jajmans, reading out the names of their ancestors. Alternatively, when there is no work, they can be seen smoking biris, chatting, sleeping, or waiting about near the main ghats.

Early in the morning the Pandas rise, bathe and do pooja. They then go into Hardwar by bus, tonga, rickshaw, bicycle or, if from Jwalapur, by train. They have to go daily because there is always the possibility that a jajman will turn up. If they are not there to receive him, they lose not only his donations but possibly the goodwill and patronage of his entire family. If they have no jajmans, they prepare their registers or do some side-business. The majority is busiest during the summer season and, for a few days at a time, parties of villagers may overwhelm them. During the winter, they sit amusing themselves or go on tour.

The Pandas are not difficult to identify as they wear dhoti and kamiz with an angocha (towel) over the shoulder. Most wear the sacred thread prominently and have a coti (a lock of hair left long or one remaining after tonsure), while many have chandan (sandlwood), bhasma (ashes of the sacred fire) or Ganges mud smeared over their foreheads. These marks often show a reverence for a particular god (istadev). Some Pandas wear or even turbans, while the rest go bareheaded. In winter, all wrap themselves in blankets and shawls, scarves, pullovers, etc.

In general, the Pandas do all their work in the morning, and in one month they may receive ten jajmans or more than a hundred. On special festivals
(parva), the number can reach a thousand. Pandas and gumastas go to the
railway station in the morning and meet the train from the East and Punjab.
They ask pilgrims their house, district, region, sub-caste and gotra, although
many recognize their own jajmans by their dress, speech or manner. If a Panda
fails to meet his pilgrims, they will make their own way to his room. A pilgrim
whose ancestors have not been entered in any register will go to a Panda of
the district or tehsil or village where he lives.

Jajmans generally stay for between one and four or five days and their
Panda makes arrangements for them, either in a lodging house or dharmashala,
or in his own room(s). Jajmans who stay in the lodging house or room of a
Panda do not pay one pie (although all other pilgrims do), but give a donation
when they leave. At the time of Kumbh, the Panda may be so busy that some of
his jajmans may stay with him in Jwalapur or Kankhal. The Panda helps his
jajmans during their stay with their cooking arrangements, perhaps with the
loan of utensils or with directions about where to purchase food in the market.
He will keep their money for them in his safe, and lend money to those who
have had their purses cut by pickpockets or who have had to spend too much in
Badrinath. He will also help his pilgrims to get to well-down temples and,
ocasionally, he will send his gumasta with them or even accompany them
himself.

The Pandas' general reception of their jajmans will depend upon their
economic status. Many villagers simply unroll their own bedding and sleep in
the open. They build their own chulha (stove or oven) and cook food, which they
have brought with them. Others require more comfort.

The relationship of the Panda with his pilgrim is not only religious but
also social and historical. A pilgrim may be skeptical of the value of certain
rites and perform them only because he is pressured by his female relatives, but he may still have some interest in common with his Panda—music, politics, etc. One secularly minded and non-working Panda goes to meet a particular jajman who is interested in grass-roots socialism. A very great bond between Panda and pilgrim is the Panda's close knowledge of his village, family and friends. Many jajmans are delighted to see the signatures of hear the names of ancestors and relatives, and insist on all the entries being read. If the relationship is a close one, the Panda will be asked for advice on every aspect of religious and family life. Occasionally, a pilgrim will run away from home and seek the sanctuary of his Panda's room. A wife will come to Hardwar leaving her husband or family, or a young boy will run away from his father's authority. In one case, a wife wanted to run away from her husband, who was still importuning her sexually, and live the life of a sadhu.

The Panda perform all their ritual duties near the bank of the Ganges. They conduct the death ceremonies in general at Kusghat, and Ganga pooja and the immersion of the ashes at Har Ki Pauri. Other rites (mundan, yajhopavit, suhagnitari, godan, etc.) take place at both ghats. The initial ceremony of godos (murder of a cow) takes place at Gohat, where a sweeper strikes the offender symbolically. It is also traditional for many Punjabis to immerse the ashes of their dead at Satighat, Kankhal, and brief forms of worship through Pandas occur at the ghat near Daksa temple, Kankhal.

Barbers are always close at hand to shave the pilgrims at the time of mundan, pind dan, sraddha, etc., and are called by the Pandas when needed. Similarly, the Mahabrahmans are always there ready to take their part in the ash pouring or death ritual. In the bazaars are all the materials needed for pooja performances and, along the ghats, rose petals, marigolds, leaf boats, etc. can be bought to offer to the Ganges.
Near Har Ki Pauri are the ghatiyas, who sit on wooden platforms (takhats) and care for the clothing, ornaments and cash of the pilgrims who are bathing. After the “dip”, they apply tilak and take a few paise as daksina. Sometimes, the pilgrims assume (or the ghatiyas claim) that they are Pandas and entitled to donation. This is improper and Pandas and Panda organisations like the Ganga Sabha and Kendriya Panchayat own not their rights, since they are otusider Brahmans and the platforms on which they sit. Some of these ghatiyas stand around, take donation from pilgrims reaching Har Ki Pauri, and perform small ceremonies like Jal dan, suhagpitari and sankalpa. Sometimes when this happens, disputes and quarrels break out between ghatiyas and Pandas and, occasionally, officials of Sri Ganga Sabha intervene.

Also prominent are the Acaryas or Mahabrahmans, who search the Ganges for coins and other offerings. They do this by sifting the bottom of the river with their feet and bringing up sand in panniers. They use glass sheets to help them see more clearly. The Pandas feel that it is undignified for them to do this—particularly since the Mahabrahmans tread the ashes of the dead—but they are not content that the Mahabrahmans should receive all the offerings. They have several times made representations to the government about this, but to no effect. Their only recourse is to try to make their jajmans throw their offerings close to the bank. Sometimes, during large festivals such as Kumbh, this is also a cause of open quarrels.

The ghatis attract many beggars, of whom some are beggars by profession and others because of deformity, leprosy, madness, etc. Pilgrims give to them and to the kitchen maintained by a Sikh charity for their benefit. Many types of sadhus also live along the Ganges banks, some in rough shelters, and nearly always one can find devotees of particular sects (eg. Rambhaktas,
whose entire bodies are inscribed with the name of Ram), singing bhajans or holding kirtan. All these remind the Hindu pilgrims of their duty to donate. It is a pious act to donate to all living beings, not only to men, so that many pilgrims give hay or grass to the sacred cows that lie in the sun, or buy pellets to feed to the fish in Har Ki Pauri.

Amidst the throng, the Pandas search out, receive their jajmans, and perform karmakand. This requires a specialized knowledge quite different from an academic knowledge of Sanskrit. A good Sanskritist may not know how to perform Karmakand and a good karmakand may be a bad Sanskritist.

After all ritual has been performed and the names of the party have been entered in the register, the most senior jajman offers the Panda some money and possibly some clothes. The Panda accepts if he thinks it sufficient. If not, he will refuse and press the pilgrim to give more, using all the arguments at his command. These vary from: “I am a poor Panda and you are a rich Seth”, to: “your brother / neighbour gave so much when he came”. The Panda will also say that it is so many years since the pilgrim came, that it is a holy duty to give, that he can scarcely pull on his living expenses, etc. Generally, the Panda will only be insistent where the occasion is a joyful one or where relatives have brought the ashes of a man, old in years, whose sons and grandsons are living.

On occasion, the pilgrim is really beset and importuned and perhaps a little afraid of the wrath of the Brahman. This, perhaps, is the aspect of the Panda that the outsider regards as typical. The acceptance over, the jajman often touches his head to the Panda’s feet with folded hands. The Panda says a few words of blessing (Asirvad) to each member of the party and, at the same time, gives them prasad (food offered to the gods or blessed by the guru) and sometimes a sacred thread. He dismisses them affectionately with god wishes for the family.
The Pandas will give a sacred thread only to those who can wear it—Brahmans, Ksatriy and Vaisya—and to those who do wear it. As prasad, they will usually give ilaycidana (sweets made of grains of cardamum coated with sugar) mixed with parmal (parched corn). In olden times, ilaycidana only used to be given, but parmal is now given also because it is cheaper. Previously, the Panda also gave pickle (acar), jam (murabba) and curd (dahi). This is thought to be a throwback to the time when pilgrims came on foot or by bullock cart exclusively and used to stay for several days with the Pandas. At that time, the Pandas used to keep many cows and buffaloes and supply the needs of the pilgrims. The Pandas say that the proper procedure for giving prasad is to buy it from the shop, offer it to Mother Ganges and, with some mantras, gain her blessing. Now, it is sometimes offered in this way, but it frequently goes from shop to Panda to pilgrim.

During the day, the Pandas may eat rotis brought from Jwalapur or Kankhal, return home, or buy puris from a sweetshop or from any Gaur Brahman dhaba (cafe). They can take tea from Vaisya and Ksatriy but prefer, generally, to take kacci roti only from Gaur, Brahmans. If they want kacci roti, therefore, they will eat it from a dhaba or bring it from home. They may take pakka food anywhere but not usually from a Sudra. They will not take it from a member of a Scheduled Caste and, indeed, no such person would have a tea stall or a cafe in Hardwar. Brahmans, Vaisya, Khatris, Jats, Aroras, etc., generally own cafes and the Pandas will ascertain the caste of the person serving the food.

Sometimes, the Pandas eat food cooked by jaimans and then they individually make the decision whether and what to eat. The Panda will be served first and will generally eat alone before everyone else. Throughout the day, he will drink or be offered milk, tea, lassi, coca-cola, fanta, etc. Frequently, Pandas
are called to eat ceremonially (Brahmabhog), either on the thirteenth day after
the death of a jajman or on a sraddha anniversary, or simply as part of a donation.
They then eat in a line off leaf plates and in pots which are afterwards broken.
They are served by the family of the person donating. Generally at this time,
they will perform all the ritual connected with eating—leave aside apart of the
food for the gods and ancestors and make an offering to the fire.

In the afternoons, the Pandas are often without work and many take bhang
and charas. Cannabis grows freely in the jungle around Hardwar and the Pandas
daily soak the leaves and rub them against a stone. Sometimes, they add
crushed almonds, black pepper, aniseed, rose petals, melon seeds, cucumber
seeds, etc. After drinking bhang, they go at once to the jungle to urinate and
then come back and lie on charpoys, sleeping playing cards, chaupar (a kind
of board game), or chess. They describe those who have taken bhang as ‘out
of mind’ or ‘without worries’. They feel very peaceful and enjoy the heightened
sensations and thoughts. Some Pandas smoke charas and this is regarded as
somewhat more dangerous. Many outsiders and some Pandas themselves
criticize the community for this idleness but it is, in general, integrated into their
daily lives and used moderately. This contrasted markedly with the habits of the
many hippies wandering about India at the time, who used drugs heavily as a
form of self-exploration. Many Pandas and sadhus defend the use of drugs as
satvik and as useful in meditation and even sacred, since Shiva used them. It is
ture, however, that in a few cases excess has done damage to individual Pandas
and ruined their lives and caused their early death. Researcher herself saw
one or two Pandas who had been adversely affected, but the following account
shows that there had been more serious cases:

“My brother died when he was under thirty. He had bad habits in his life,
drinking bhang, smoking charas and taking opium (madak). He was very
beautiful and a good worker of the trade. His habit of smoking opium led to his death. One older person in the community became his friend and, through his influence, he began to smoke. He became habituated. At the time of his death, I myself bought the opium from a madak addas (opium stand). He could not live without. It was a horrible death."

There is a definite hierarchy in the matter of drug taking, since Panda leaders are generally not habituated to its daily use but enjoy it on occasions such as Holi. Moreover, the professional Pandas working away from the ghats do not drink bhang. It is largely the working Pandas who, while away the afternoons on the ghats and who are known as the "bhangpinesvalas". A generation before, the use of narcotics is said to have been even more pronounced and the taking of opium much more common.

An equally constant habit of many Pandas is the chewing of pan (betel and its accompaniments). Some show a real addiction and have teeth permanently reddened. Pandas offer each other pan, tea or biris or prepared cigarettes on meeting, and are frequent customers of the halvais (sweet-makers). There are many jokes told about the Panda's ability to eat whatever is put in front of them and particularly sweets. They are always being urged by their jajmans to take something "either sweet or salted". They either prepare the food themselves or bring it from the bazaars or ghats, where there are many stalls selling cats (a kind of potato covered with sauce), pakora (vegetables, grains, etc., fried in ghi), namkin (salted dal or biscuits), barphi (a milk sweet), rasgullas (a delicious sweet) or even roti and vegetables.

Pandas may also, during the afternoon, make purchases from the bazaar, read the newspapers, or sit in teashops or cafes and talk. During the day, they are constantly meeting fellow Pandas so that news of a death, of a proposed
marriage or of a deception over a jajman will quickly reach them. News travels like fire through the community, although the men say that, without going outside the four walls of the house, the women know everything first.

At night, the Pandas look up their bhatis and start for Jwalapur or Kankhal, after paying namaskar to Gangaji and taking acman. Thus, the life of the Panda alternates between the rather undignified crush of pilgrims and Pandas near the station, the cross-questioning of pilgrims and the babble of tongawallahs and rickshawalas, and the ritual of the ghats, and the somnolent afternoons.

The Pandas as a community participate in the same domestic rites and festivals and are served by the same specialists (that is, they are the hereditary jajmans of families from different communities who perform certain duties, in return for gifts in cash and kind). As the Pandas are the priests of Jajmani families outside the Hardwar Union, in general there is little direct reciprocity in terms of ritual services, although a few are called as kul purohit by local inhabitants of the higher castes. The idea of jajmani reciprocity is, nevertheless, strongly established and the Pandas have a saying that “everyone is everyone’s jajman”. The instance of low caste servants is often cited. For example, at the time of Raksabandhan or Dussehra the barber comes with his mirror to Panda families and says:

“जजमान हमको दान–दर्शणा दीजिएः”

The numerical strength and clear ritual superiority of the Pandas has meant that the caste hierarchy appears unambivalent seen from the top, and that there is seldom any question of relationships developing in which the usual criteria of commensality, etc. are relevant. Today, education and multiplication of job opportunity are affecting local hierarchical patterns but, in the traditional contexts, the Pandas exhibit an authority towards other castes, expect deference,
and respect in return. Their manner is usually friendly and paternalistic. Of all those to whom they stand in a jajmani relation, only their kul purohit. The Misras and Suklas, are acknowledged to be superior, and they are members of their own community but set aside by their function. As Pocock (1975) correctly observes, however, “the very rigidity of caste rules defines a precise area in which people can have warm relationships of trust and confidence.” Many Pandas have relationships of great intimacy with those from low castes who serve them and, indeed, with their own jajmans of low caste. When the jajmani link is weakened, it often means that occasions of meeting decrease, and that both communities become more isolated vis-à-vis each other, although the affairs of both are still of local interest.

In the Panda society, traditional specialization assigned to castes and traditional modes of exchange entail both contract and status relations. As Mandelbaum puts it, they involve a range of relationships along a scale from purely contractual, individual, temporary, limited transactions at one end to broadly supportive, group-oriented, and long-term, multiple bonds at the other (Mandelbaum, 1972).

The Pandas have a contractual relationship with many groups whose function is ritually neutral—shopkeepers, local farmers and gardeners, nearby villagers selling their produce, rickshawalas, tongawalas, etc. Although some bargaining or bartering may take place, the relationship is primarily a cash one, depending on the market rate. The Pandas also have relationships which have contractual elements with a number of traditional specialists whose functions are not considered ritually neutral. Again, the Pandas have no special jajmani link with the potters (Kumhar). They can go to any Kumhar (Prajapat) and pay in cash and order pots as needed—for example, at the time of marriage festivities.
Pocock (1962) distinguishes a category of specialists to which, by virtue of its religious associations, the term 'jajmani' may be applied: "these are the specialists whose specialization derives from the exigencies of the caste system and not from economic needs or from the intricacy of craft". He differentiates the specialists from the artisans and unskilled labourers who are normally included in an account of the jajmani system.

Within the Panda community, true jajmani relationships occur only with those whose services are required for ritual purposes and in particular, those concerned with pollution. These specialists include the revered family priest as well as barber or sweeper.

All Panda families require their kul purohit from time to time not only to perform life crisis ritual but also to avert the evil influence of the planets or to restore them to health and happiness. They are also obliged, on many festivals through the year, to make gifts to their kul purohits to feed them and show them respect. These are meritorious acts which are rewarded in this life and which maintain the Panda families in a state of ritual normalcy.

Other ritual specialists, such as the Bhattas, the Mahabrahmans, and the Dakauts, perform ritual services and accept donations, which the Brahman priest cannot. For example, the Bhattas accept donations given by Pandas during a solar eclipse. This acceptance lowers their status and establishes he Pandas as their ritual superiors. Similarly polluting is the acceptance of the donation of death and of kriya karma by the Mahabrahmans. They perform those rites after death which are essential, but which are forbidden to pure Brahmans, and enable those they serve to avoid the greater pollution of death. The lowest of all the 'priestly' specialists are the Dakauts who are called by the Pandas only occasionally. Their main function is to take donations given to Sani on Saturdays.
and, if a Panda meets a Dakaut on a Saturday, he will generally give him a few paisas to appease Sani. However, if an family is distressed, and their kul purohit or astrologer confirms that Sani is responsible, the family will often donate to the Dakauts. In extremity, tuladan is donated—the donor gives his own weight in cash and kind. This is not a jajmani relationship in its full sense but it possesses certain characteristic elements.

The Pandas also require the services of specialists of lower jatis to perform tasks that would pollute them. Within the Panda community, this particularly concerns the cutting of hair and nails, the removal of excrement and dirt, the clearing of drains.

The jajmani relationship, with their broad enduring bonds, symbolizes a system of society which is hierarchical and which attributes status according to the degree of purity and impurity attached to a specialized occupation. It is above all in their jajmani relationships that Pandas find expression of the varna categories as described by Manu. They possess a symbolic importance far outweighing their diminishing economic relevance. They guarantee the ritual superiority of the Pandas and their pre- eminent place in an organic and inter-dependent whole.

Hierarchy is evident in not only the nature of the service performed but in the rewards offered and jajmans accepted. Traditionally, the ‘pure’ priest’s receive new clothes, freshly prepared food and a considerable cash reward. They pride themselves on the high caste of their jajmans. The Mahabrahmans are given some paisa, used clothes, second-hand bed, etc. They take the clothes of the dead and are not particular about the caste of their jajmans.

The barbers, water-carriers, sweepers, and other low castes are given clothes and food on occasions by their Panda jajmans, and their cash record is
traditionally scaled in terms of their status. Thus, the barbers are given twice as much as the water—carriers, and four times as much as the sweepers. The sweepers, who are the lowest of all local castes, have the most polluting function. They accept impure offerings and take all castes as jajmans. They will eat Jutha (e.g. food remaining after a feast) and accept food from all castes.

Pandas also inherit particular areas and they, or their gumastas, speak the language of those regions. They are often purohits of entire villages or of the dominant or high castes within them—particularly in nearby states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. Pilgrims from far off states used to be much fewer so that fewer families often monopolized them. Thus, five lineages own the ajman vrti of Sindh and know the customs of the Sindhis (who are by reputation wealthy and generous). One lineage from Kankhal owns Nepali pilgrims. Another serves many jajmans who originated from Afghanistan, Baluchistan and from the frontier provinces.

Pilgrims from Bengal, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and other distant states originally belonged to a few lineages and families who knew their language. Today, pilgrims who come only occasionally, or for the first time, adopt as purohit the Panda who receives them and helps them with food and lodging. Those who have emigrated to these states (for example, Punjabis and Rajasthanis) retain their original Panda. Generally, pilgrims who come vast distances (e.g. from Tamilnadu) do not come for specific purposes (for example, to immerse the ashes of their relatives). They come for the most general religious and purificatory reasons and travel frequently in groups.

Prestige very often accrues from the possession of famous jajmans and most Pandas are able to boast of some politician, businessperson, general or even film star who is nationally or internationally famous. For example, one
lineage is the purohit of Kashmiri Brahman family's like the Nehrus, the Dhars and the Kauls. Another owns the Gujarati family of the late Mahatma Gandhi. Economically, the possession of rich Rajasthani or Sindhi businesspersons is even more important and the Pandas of such families are considered very fortunate. In this respect, the place of rajas and maharajas has been taken by rich families such as the Birlas, Dalmiyas, Simhariyas, Jaipuriyas, Bangaras and Morarkas, and when such capitalists come to Hardwar they find an instant popularity. They give not only to their Panda but to social organizations, temples, beggars, etc.

The bahi, pothi, or khata is the most important moveable property the Pandas possess, and consists of records of jajmans' visits to Hardwar. They are strung together and kept by the Pandas in safes in Hardwar. The Pandas rely upon them totally for their livelihood. Their existence is the proof that jajmans belong to certain Pandas, and they are the only documents capable of being tested in a law court. The Pandas know this and treat their registers with great respect. They worship them on such festivals as Diwali, Ganga Saptami and Ganga Dussehra and some Pandas daily burn incense (dhup) to them.

The number owned by each lineage or family varies from a few to hundreds. Frequently, families and lineages own registers of regions, which are not too far apart, but inheritance and adoption, may bring those jajmans from widely dispersed regions. When lineages end, their registers are often passed on through daughters to affinal lineages or they are divided among far relatives. If Pandas are in acute need, they may sell a bahi but the more usual practice is to take a loan on its security and deposit it with another Panda. This, there is not much dispersal through sale.
Register, as important moveable property, are the focus of much litigation and represent an important source of wealth. Theft by outsiders is not a problem, because no outsider could utilize them. A more common occurrence is that, in a quarrel over partition, registers may go 'underground' or be looked up by one of the parties to the dispute. Occasionally, if there is a widow or female heir who does not know her own registers, pages may be copied or entries appropriated.

Pandas who have been doing the trade for some years find their way through their own record books instinctively. In their heads are the names of hundreds of sub-castes, gotras and villages. A young Panda boy or gumasta may have to work for months or even years before they can be relied on to pick out the jajmans who belong to the owner. This is why it is important for a gumasta to stay with a Panda for some years and not lightly to leave his employment. Where, on the other hand, the owners are young and secularly educated, it may be that the gumasta knows much more than they do.

The bahis are sometimes very beautifully written and fascinating to read. The Pandas often find it difficult to decipher the older entries made by their ancestors because the script and language were so different, and it is sometimes almost as hard to decipher the writing of the present-day panditji. What is clear, however, is that the purposes for which the pilgrims come are unchanged. Today, the tourist interest may be more evident, but the sanctity of Ganga Mai and the attraction of the sin-absolving waters are as strong as ever.

Just before their departure for home, the Panda records the name of each of his pilgrims, together with their purpose in coming. The manner of writing depends upon each Panda, the time at his disposal and the different customs of each region and caste. Generally, the caste and gotra of the jajman is written...
first and his original place of residence. Then, the place where he is resident at the time, and his occupation (optional). The Panda then writes the name of the head of the family, those of his brothers, father, grandfather, sons (sometimes, the names of sisters and daughters are also given) and brothers’ sons (sometimes, brothers’ daughters also) and, occasionally, the address of his brothers and their sons. Finally, the principal jajman (or head of the family) is again named with the reasons why he came to the "pious banks of Sri Ganga Ji" (eg. for the holy bath) and the names of all those who accompanied him-wife, children, neighbours, servants, etc. The date is then written according to the Indian calendar. Then, each member of the party signs.

Each register has an index in which entries are classified according to region, village, caste, gotra, etc. A particular register may contain the records of three villages, or of one sub-caste, or it may contain a very varied pilgrimage. The method of indexing varies considerably.

Pandas looking up an entry search for the village of origin, or, in the case of cities such as Delhi, for the mohalla, the sub-castes and its divisions, and the gotra. All jajmans should have gotras, but where none is known that of Kasyap (the father of the world) is supplied. The custom of putting farmers first is a simple convenience, since they are frequently the most numerous. In general, Pandas would like to keep their registers both beautiful and well arranged, but the haphazari nature of the arrivals makes this difficult. When new pages are added, the bahis are unstrung and the index renumbered.

Pocock's (1962) view that the occupations of the ritual specialists are sheltered by the values of the hierarchy and are therefore less alterable to market forces. It is argued that those whose work or aspects of it, are impure and therefore shameful find it harder to leave their occupation than others but that their monopoly is more complete.
The Pandas hereditary monopoly of their own profession. It is noted that even Pandas who work outside the traditional profession gain income from the family—jajman vrti and that they record it as a continuing form of economic. It is also shown that, although the Panda’s attitudes towards the acceptance of donation and the carrying out of ritual duties are those of a ‘pure’ community, they also reflect certain defensiveness. These attitudes, in part, drive from the loss of the patronage of the ruling princes and the loss of educational monopoly. Pandas often feel that their own position, which should be next to the gods, has been made insecure by the ambivalent attitudes of the present governing elites and intelligentsia. A few feel explicitly that, as a result class not caste has been made the principal of status.

Within Ganga Sabha, it is the office holders who make the crucial decision and it is in their interest to be supporters of Congress. While they sometimes carry the Sabha with them against the government and the municipal board, the solution of problems is easier and swifter if they have local political influence.

We discussed the founding of Ganga Sabha. It was registered in 1927 and the constitution formulated. It was decided that large lineages should send two representatives to Sabha meetings and that small lineages should send one. In addition, each dharah is entitled to elect representatives and the families of a few local ‘householder sadhus.

The Working Committee elects the officials of the Ganga Sabha every three years. They are: General President, President of the Working Committee, 7 Vice-President, General Secretary, 2 Assistant Secretaries, a Cashier and Auditor who is also a chartered accountant. The General President is the most respected of all Pandas and the constitution of Ganga Sabha lays it down that this office is a hereditary one within the Phralahediyan thok (Lineage).
The working committee meets at least four times a year and discusses the management of Har Ki Pauri, Brahmkund and the Sabha offices, the sanitation of Hardwar, facilities for pilgrims, relations with the municipal board, etc. It sends representatives to police, railway, and district authorities.

The Sabha is financed by donations, by subscriptions (members pay two rupees annually), and by income from the umbrellas and wooden platforms hired out to ghatiyas and from the arti and katha held under its auspices. This is distributed as pay to employees and ‘voluntary’ assistants, for annual repairs to Har Ki Pauri, painting, construction, etc.

Ganga Sabha has the power to decree rules and exercise a controlling function within the community. On the other hand, it is not certain whether it will be obeyed. For example, several years ago it decreed that the impure (och) lineages should be allowed to marry with the pure suddha lineages. Up to now, however, no such marriage has taken place. What Ganga Sabha does do effectively is to act as the mouthpiece of Panda and sanatani opinion and to defend the professional interests of the community against third parties.