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ज्ञान – विज्ञान विमुक्तये

Project-Title :

"HISTORY AND MYTH OF KEOT CASTE OF BIHAR"

(HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES)

Proposed & Prepared By

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Foreword

The present research study entitled "**History and Myth of Keot Caste of Bihar**" under the aegis of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi is a pedantic and lucid testimony being presented by Dr. Nagendra Prasad Verma, Associate Professor, Post-Graduate Department of History, Rajendra College, Chapra and Dr. Shree Kamaljee, Associate Professor, N. L. S. College, Jaitpur-Daudpur (Saran) under the faculty domain of J. P. University, Chapra, Bihar (India). Based on the myths and the historical facts drawn from the scriptural and non-scriptural sources and well quoted from the texts and the references, the treatise evinces how the Keot caste has made its cultural march along the corridor of time and has become vibrant today, in spite of being at the societal margin and at the crossroads. Further, it has been glaringly shown how the Keot Caste has maintained its distinct cultural entity and spiritual existentialism in secular language.

The academic pursuit to perform a project research study of a historically acclaimed social community from its antiquity to the hitherto dynamic cultural mosaic is commendable. A genuine treatise along the scale of time and space approves the *raison d'être* of the present study. As a matter of fact, any serious study of the Indian society cannot overlook or disregard the pervasive and enigmatic reality of the infamous Indian "Caste System". This is more so for a Marxist scholar. In the Marxian methodology, understanding specificities of the past is crucial for charting a definite path to a classless, democratic and egalitarian future. It is perhaps with this understanding that the researchers began their pioneering work into the history and myths of a socially marginalised community.

In India, Caste as an institution sustained certain groups in positions of power and exploited the weaker sections of the society. However, caste has never been a static system of social relations. Inter-caste marriages or mixed marriages gave rise to **Varnashankar**. In fact, hypergamy or hypogamy became a characteristic phenomenon in course of time. Differentiation facilitated the emergence of professional groups and castes while professional intolerance increased caste rivalry.

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I am very happy to contribute a few words by way of writing foreword to this Research work. I have no doubt that the entire academic community of teachers, students, social activists as well as the policy- makers would be getting sublime matters from this unique research and will work for the upliftment of this socially deprived masses.

I hope and trust that the UGC will continue to support such excellent academic projects and inspired savant investigators and teachers. Again, I congratulate the researchers' duo for doing a commendable job.



(Justice Birendra Prasad Verma)

Preface and Acknowledgements

The present research work has been undertaken as a part of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi sponsored Major Research Project. Initially, we, Nagendra Prasad Verma, Principal-Investigator and Shree Kamaljee , Co-Investigator have envisaged another title for the research project –“History, Myth and the Question of Caste Identity in Post-Colonial India: A Case Study of Keot Caste of Bihar”, but at the time of our Presentation, the Board members asked us to suggest alternative title and at our suggestion, they gave their approval to the present title “History and Myth of Keot Caste of Bihar” and thus our research project took-off.

In the course of data collection for the present work, we acknowledge with thanks the support provided by Librarians and other Staff of the National Archives of India, New Delhi; Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi; JNU Central Library, New Delhi; National Library, Kolkata; West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata ;Bihar Research Society, Patna; K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna; Bihar State Archives, Patna; A. N. Sinha Institute, Patna ; Bihar Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad Libraries, Patna; Jai Prakash University Central Library, Chapra and Ramavatar Sharma Library, Rajendra College, Chapra.

We must begin by expressing our gratitude to the Hon'ble Justice, Patna High Court, Shri B. P. Verma (Retd), who had been our perpetual source of energy and inspiration. He often used to remind us to give priority to our research work and complete it as early as possible. On our request, he agreed to write foreword. We cannot adequately thanks him for his magnanimity.

Many a friend and well wishers have helped us in undertaking this research and completing it. We must begin by thanking office bearers of Vedvyas Chetna Samiti, Patna - a state level caste organisation of Keot caste. Its president Shri Ram Narayan Mandal, a retired personnel of Bihar Administrative Services and a highly respected leader, provided us exhaustive information about the Caste. Shri Bijay Kumar Chaudhary, the General Secretary of the Vedvyas Chetna Samiti, Patna helped us in many ways, especially he accompanied us in procuring data from diverse sources. He was with us when we visited to the house of Shri Uday Kant Chaydhary, Ex-MLC and the editor of Caste Patrika-“Kaivartta Nav Nirvan”. The latter also helped us by giving valuable insights about the Caste Council and Caste Organisation. Shri Binod Kumar, Vice-President of Vedvyas Chetna Samiti, Patna and a personnel of Bihar

Administrative Services not only provided us extraordinary hospitality during our field work, but also helped in introducing us with Shri Praveen Kumar Mandal, a retired teacher of National High School, Kishenganj and a resident of Samaili Prakhanda, Katihar and Shri Prahlad Biswas of Kishenganj. Shri Praveen Kumar Mandal accompanied us to various villages of Purnia and Katihar Districts and helped in gathering information about the Kaivartta Caste of that region, especially of Khaira Village (Samaili) and Tikkapatti, which had the reputation of producing many freedom fighters from the Keot caste and had been an important centre of freedom movement. We are highly grateful to Srivastava Himanshu Kumar, a retired District Education Officer of Katihar, who provided us valuable information about Sahityaratna Anup Lal Mandal, the literary genius of the Keot Caste.

We are grateful to many of the Caste intellectuals –Shri Kumar Chandra Chaudhary of Gaur-Andhara (Madhubani District), a retired Sanskrit Teacher, Shri Chandra Narayan Chaudhary of Gaur-Andhara, who had been the companion in many of our survey works, Shri Mani Kant Azad, a retired IAS and Shri Kashinath Bhandari, General Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Kaivart Kalyan Samiti, Kolkata.

We are conscious of our gratitude to Shri Umeshwar Mandal and sister Lalita Kumari, Ramnagar, District Supaul and Shir Sanjay Kumar Mandal, Police –Inspector and cousin sister Renu Mandal, District Purnia. They not only provided us great hospitality, but had also been our companions at many of the places in Supaul, Saharsa and Purnia districts during our field-work.

Now, we cannot adequately thank our Colleagues Dr. Sanjay Kumar of Political Science, Dr. Rana Vikram Singh (Jagdam College, Chapra) and Dr. Abhay Kumar (DAV College, Siwan) for their unfailing guidance and encouragement to us throughout this research. We are also thankful to Dr. Ramakant Sharma and Dr. Avinash Chandra Jha of Patna. Among the colleagues of Rajendra College, Chapra, our thanks goes to Dr. Baikunth Pandey, former Principal, Dr. V. C. Bharti and Dr. Sanjay Kumar (History), Dr. Sanjay Kumar (Geography) and Dr. Ashok Kumar Sinha (Hindi). We also offer our thanks to Prof.-Incharge of Rajendra College Prof. B. P. Yadav and the Dean of Social Sciences Prof. Saroj Kr. Verma.

I, Nagendra Prasad Verma, offer my undying gratitude to my wife Sabita Verma and both kids-Aman and Akash for their love, concern and sacrifices.

Finally, we offer our thanks to the computer operator, Mr. Dipu Kumar, who has patiently borne many of our impatient words.

Nagendra
30.05.18

S. Kamal
30.05.18

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| RV | Rig Veda |
| AV | Atharva Veda |
| RV 1.7.9 | Rig Veda, Mandal-1,Sukta-7,Ritcha-9 |
| VR | Valmiki's Ramayan |
| Vish. Pur | Vishnu Purana |
| Bhag. Pur. | Bhagavata Purana |
| Sat.Brah. | Satapatha Brahmana |
| Har.Pur. | Harivansa Purana |
| Vrih.Ar.Up. | Vrihad Aranyaka Upanishad |
| cen. Rep. | Census Report |
| B.D.G | Bengal District Gazetteer |
| Sat.Acc. Ben. | Statistical Account of Bengal |
| MLA | Member of Legislative Assembly |
| MLC | Member of Legislative Council |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| EBC Commission | Extremely Backward Classes Commission |

Introduction

The present work entitled “History and Myth of Keot Caste of Bihar” is an attempt to study the community of the Keot Caste in its present milieu and the changes that have taken place in it over the time and along space. In the course of this study, we have tried to understand the life and culture of the people, the nature and extent of the change that have taken place in them, the factors contributing to the change and also the way in which the people have reacted to them. The unit of analysis in this study is a single Jati (Caste) variously referred to as the “Keot, Kewat, Kaiwartta”. Further, this work deals with the extent to which Jati as an ideology, and as an institution plays a part in defining the content and extent of social change undergone by its members through time. When new circumstances introduced the possibilities, new priorities and expectations, how did this Jati direct the adaptive capacities of its members? The work intends to analyse such a question with both inter-caste and intra-caste perspectives.

The present study, however, is not a mere historical account of the Keot Caste. Being principally a community study, it does not and cannot study only past exhaustively. The past is studied only with reference to the present and with an eye on the future. It must be pointed out here that even if a mere historical study is undertaken, authentic information of the past conditions, to say the least, is very scanty. Though there are very few or rather almost negligible account of the Keot Caste published so far, they are too inadequate for a historical study or for analysis of the entire social system of the community.

Myths are considered to be ‘thought-fossils’, which, through allegories and symbols, tell the story of culture and civilization. A contextual analysis of such myths is likely to furnish valuable insights into contemporary historical developments. Each caste has its own ideology, revealed mainly in diverse and discrete origin tales that contest their hierarchisation on a continuous vertical scale. This does not mean that castes do not hierarchise themselves with respect to one another; still each caste has a discrete notion

of its caste hierarchy. Caste members are proud of their caste ideology, and it is this which gives salience to their identity. The re-articulation of history and myths in a way brings forth the real place of Keot Caste where it deserves, rather than places it merely on the the margin of the society. This constitutes the core theme of the present study.

Etymology of the name Keot

The Keot, also called Kewat, is a Tadbhav derivation from Sanskrit Kaibartta. Keots, being a widely distributed community, have various synonyms in different states of India. Some of the synonyms have etymological meanings, while some others are based on mythological stories. Etymologically, the word Kaibartta is derived from ‘**Ka**’ - water and ‘**Varta**’ –livelihood, i.e, **ka+vriddi+ach**, meaning thereby the people who earn their livelihood by way of boating and ferrying; another etymological derivation of Kaibartta is ‘**Kim**’-cultivation and ‘**Vrit**’ – exist, i.e **kin+vriddi+an**, the people whose primary occupation is cultivation. Similarly, the word ‘Nishad’ is supposed to be a compound of ‘**Nib**’ connoting special and ‘**Sad**’ connoting knowledge. Thus, a Nishad is one who possesses the special knowledge of navigation.

Kaibartta, the Sanskrit or Prakrit form, has been preserved in Bengal and is still generally used as the name of the caste, while the shorter form Keot or Kewat has been current in Bihar. H.H.Risley in his book “The Tribes and Castes of Bengal” writes that the Keots or Kewats are fishing or cultivating caste of Bihar, having an uncertain origin¹. Buchanan as referred to in Risley (Ibid) postulates that the Kewat (i.e., Keot) of Bihar and the Kaibartta of Bengal belonged, in the earlier times, to one aboriginal tribe bearing the name Kewat and the Sanskrit name Kaibartta was adopted later.

¹ . Risley,H.H --The Tribes and Castes of Bengal ,Firma Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta.-1981pp.375-382.

The Habitat

In Bihar, the Keots are distributed all over the state, but their main centres of concentration are in the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharasa, Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran etc. They speak Angika, Hindi and Maithili and use the Devanagari script. In West-Bengal and Tripura, this community enjoys the status of scheduled-caste, while in Bihar they are notified as extremely backward class.

Motivation of the Study

Man is a gregarious social being. He lives in a society by practising some pattern of life style which is the outcome of the control exercised by the caste group on him. The factors influencing his life are the customs, social norms, values, beliefs, traditions and usages. He can identify with the caste group only by following the social norms developed by the caste group. Each individual in the society has to adhere to the social values and norms placed by the caste at least to some extent if the group has to survive as the cultural entity.

The principal Investigator, being born in the caste under study, was very much interested right since student life to trace the origin and evolution of the Keots through the history and legends. As Bihar is known for its caste diversity, whenever he moved out from his locality either for study or job, he often confronted the same question about his caste. After reply, he was clubbed with the fishermen group by questioner. Many a time, he did clarify and many a time he left the question without giving any clarification. But such embarrassing questions haunted him to bring the true picture of his own caste to the fore and this acted as the chief motivator for this study. When he discussed his own experiences with the Co-Investigator, the latter perceived it as an academic enterprise. This boosted the present work ahead and the project started getting a real form.

Aims and Objectives of Study

This study is a descriptive as well as analytical record of the Keot Caste and its institutions. The following are its aims and objectives: -

- (a) To trace the origin and evolution of the Keot Caste through the history and legends.
- (b) To study its social life and institutions – its family and marriage system and other life cycle practices.
- (c) To trace the political representation of the Keot Caste in the democratic set-up of India.
- (d) To study the culture and religion of Keots – their customs and beliefs, especially the worship and the annual celebration of ‘Sonai Maharaj’.
- (e) To study the changes that is taking place in the Keot Caste under the impact of urbanisation, modernisation, scientific education and prosperous economy.

The Method of Study

Any Caste or Community study, if it is to be comprehensive, should rise above the just academic methods of collecting data, through questionnaires and schedules. In addition to this normally adopted method, participant observation is a must to gain real insight for a living community, or its throbbing activities. To gain insight into a community, one should feel the pulse of its life. To feel the ‘pulse’ of the people and to understand their way of life, one should live with them, participate in their living and observe their living as an objective spectator, of course with enough identification, sympathy and understanding to them. Being born and grown in the caste under study, the Principal Investigator, himself, best suited as a ‘participant –observer’.

The present study chiefly relies on the detailed observation of the cultural contents. The Keot culture has been studied from the standpoint of various aspects of human activities, such as Caste organisation, customs, conventions, political and social life, religious beliefs and practices etc. As a result of absence of written records, the material had to be collected mainly through field work. In collecting the data, mainly

two methods were followed. The interview technique was used exhaustively. Whenever there was a difference of opinion, the points were checked and re-checked through the information by different informants. Besides, various issues and problems were also discussed with some important people of the caste and caste leaders. The ceremonies and the celebrations of the festivals were personally witnessed and the information thus gathered are the primary data. The other and the more formal method of collecting data was the filling up of a schedule on the basis of answers to questions. Visits were paid from time to time to the various villages of Keot Caste spread over many districts of Bihar.

Importance of Study

This study has a special significance from the point of view of its sociological importance. There are several communities in Bihar and many of these falls under the backward castes. These caste groups such as Keots and their types with their problems as well as the way of life have not yet been of much interest to the intellectuals and administrators. Though a few articles have been written on the problems of these castes, the broad-spectrum study of these people has not been taken up by social-scientists. We hardly find reliable written materials on the lives of Keot Caste and other such caste groups in Bihar. Keeping this point in mind, we have made an earnest effort to bring out some important information pertaining to the Keots of Bihar. We are very much hopeful, with all the limitations, that this research would benefit the people and others who are interested in the welfare of this caste and such other Castes.

We also feel that a study on such a significant section of society will be of great use to the policy makers and to the personnel in- charge of the development of these people and the likes. It may also be useful to the caste / community leaders and the welfare agencies, who are interested in the development of the community, for it can diagnose the felt needs and problems of the community to suggest a concrete plan of action for their development.

Chapter Divisions

For the convenience in treatment, the whole Research Project has been divided into four Chapters, besides Preface & acknowledgements, Abbreviations, Introduction and Appendices.

The First Chapter entitled “ **Origin Tales - Scriptural Sources**” draws the story- line of the Keot Caste from the Hindu Scriptures and Narratives making the building –blocks of the Hindu cultural mainstream. It has taken facts and illustrations from the Vedas, the Valmiki’s Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and the Ramacharitamanas. The significance of this caste depicted in these scriptural sources has been interfaced and co-related. The kaleidoscopic picture helps identify the cumulative imprint of the past experiences of the Keot Caste on the present cultural landscape of this clan.

In Second Chapter entitled “**Keot and non-scriptural Literatures (Secular Literatures)**” deals with the status and position of the Keot Caste based on the narratives and their analyses on the basis of non-scriptural writings. The facts and figures have been taken from the *Sandhyakara Nandi’s Ramacharita*, Bengal District Gazetteers of various districts, A Statistical Account of Bengal of various districts, Francis Buchanan’s Account of the relevant Districts, H. H. Risley’s “The Tribes and the Castes of Bengal”, Various Census Reports etc.

The Third Chapter entitled “**The Keots of Bihar Today**” deals with the present position of the Keot Caste in post-independence India. It deals with the population distribution of the Keots in various districts of Bihar, their role in freedom movement, their representation in democratic set up, their social and religious conditions with special reference to their folk deity Sonai Maharaj and their relations with other cognate castes.

In the fourth Chapter, we have given **our findings and conclusions**. The photos taken from various site visits during our field work have been annexed as appendices. At the end the specimen of Questionnaire and Schedules has been given.

Chapter-1

Origin Tales - Scriptural Sources

The first chapter draws the story- line of the Keot Caste from the Hindu Scriptures and Narratives making the building –blocks of the Hindu cultural mainstream. It has taken facts and illustrations from the Vedas, the Valmiki Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and the Ramacharitamana. The significance of this caste depicted in these scriptural sources has been interfaced and co-related. The kaleidoscopic picture helps identify the cumulative imprint of the past experiences of the Keot Caste on the present cultural landscape of this clan.

Position of Keot during Vedic period

In Vedic literatures, Nishad is the generic term used for all the people whose occupations is now-a-days anyway related to in and around water. We find many references of the word “panca-jana” in Vedic literatures. The lexicographer Waman Shivram Apte explains the word *panca Jana* – the four primary varnas of the Hindus with the Nishad as the fifth.² In Brahmasutras (1.4.11-13) the word Panca *Jana* refers Nishad as the fifth Varna. The Brihadaranaka Upanishad (4.4.17.5) reads Panca jana - the four primary castes of Hindus with the Nishad as the fifth.

In the Vedic literatures, Nishads have been referred as the fifth Varna and carried respectable and important place. We find many references of panch-janah in vedic texts.

1. एकश्चर्षवीनां वसूनामिरज्यति । इन्द्र पचं क्षितीनाम ॥ 9 ॥³

2. Pandit Vaman Shivram Apte (Edited) The *Practical Sanskrit –English Dictionary, part II*, P.K.Gode & C. D. Karve, Prasad Prakashan, Poona, 1958, p-949.

³ पंच जना निषादपंचमाश्रत्वारो वर्णाः । यद्वा गन्धर्वाः पितरो देवा असुरा रक्षांसि । तदुक्तं यास्केन – गन्धर्वाः पितरो रेवा असुरा रक्षासीत्येके चत्वारो वर्णा निषादः पंचम इत्यौपमन्यवः उद्धृत- ऋग्वैदिकसंहिता, तिलक महाराष्ट्र विद्यापीठ शाखाभूत, वैदिक संशोधन मण्डलेन

(Indra who rules with single sway men, riches and the panch-jana (the fivefold race) of those who dwell upon the earth.)

Rigveda – 1-7-9⁴

2. अदितिद्यौरदितिरन्तरिक्षमदितिर्माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।
विश्वे देवा अर्दितिः पचे जनो अदितिर्जामदितिर्जनित्वम् ॥१०॥

(Aditi is the heaven, Aditi is the mid-air,
Aditi is the mother, and the Sire and Son.
Aditi is all Gods, Aditi five classed men,
Aditi all that hath been born and shall be born.)

Rigveda – 1-89-10

3. वयमग्रे अर्वता वा सुवीर्यं ब्रह्मणा वा चितमेया जनां अतिं ।
अस्माकं द्युममधि पंचे कृष्टिषुचा स्वर्णं शुशुचीत दुष्टरम् ॥१०॥

(Agni , may we show forth valour with the steed
or with the power of prayer beyond all other men;
And over the five races (panch-jana) let our glory shine
high like the realm of light and unsurpassable.)

Rigveda -2-2-10

4. विश्वेदनु रोघना पौस्यं ददुरस्मै दधिरे कृत्नवे धनम् ।
षट्स्थना विष्टिर पंच संदृशः परि परो अभवः सास्युक्थ्यः ॥१०॥

(May We manifest vigour among other men,
Agni, though the steed and the food (Which thou hast given);
And may our unsurpassed wealth shine

⁴ All the references & footnotes from Rigveda have been referred from RIG VEDA MANTRA SAMHITA Editors: Prof. R.L. Kashyap & Prof. S. Sadagopan, 1st edition 1998, 2nd edition 2005, Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture, Bangalore

like the Sun over (that of) the five classes of beings.)

Rigveda- 2-2-13-10

5. ताँ इयानो महि वरुथमृतय उप घेढेना नर्मसा गृणीमसि ।
त्रितो न यान्पंच होतृनभिष्टय आववर्नदवरांचक्रियावसे ॥14 ॥

(Soliciting their high protection for our help,
with this our adoration we sing praise to them,
Whom,for assistance ,like the five terrestrial priests.
Trita hath brought to aidus hither on his car.)

Rig- Veda 2-34 (Maruts)-14.

6. यः पंच चर्षणीरभि निषसाद दमेदमे । कविर्गृहपतिर्युवा ॥2 ॥

(Who for the Fivefold People's take hath seated him in every home
Wise, Youthful, Master of the house.)

Rig- Veda 7-15-2.

7. यत्पांचजन्यया विशेन्द्रे घोषा असृक्षत । अस्तृणाब्रह्मणा विपोऽयों मानस्य स क्षयः ॥7 ॥

(When the Five Tribes with all their men to Indra have sent out their voice, And
when the priest hath strewn much grass, this is the Friend's own dwellingpiace.)

Rig- Veda 8-63-7.

8. अग्निर्ऋषिः पवमानः पांचजन्यः पुरोहितः । तमीमहे महागयम् ॥20 ॥
(Agni is Pavamana, Sage, Chief Priest of all the Races Five:

To him whose wealth is great we pray)

Rig- Veda 9-66(Soma Pavamana)-20.

9. पंच जना मम होत्रं जुषन्तां गोजाता उत ये यज्ञियासः ।
पृथिवी । नः । पार्थिवात्पात्वंहसोऽन्तरिक्षं दिव्यात्पात्वस्मान् ॥5 ॥

(May the Five Tribes be pleased with mine oblation,
and the Cow's Sons and all who merit worship.
From earthly trouble may the earth protect us,

and air's mid realm from woe that comes from heaven.)

Rig- Veda 10-53-5.

10. महत्तनाम गुह्यं पुरुस्पृग्येन भूतं जनयो येन भव्यम् ।

प्रत्नं जातं ज्योतिर्यदस्य प्रियं प्रियाः समविशन्त पंच ।।2 ।।¹

(Great is that secret name and far-extending,
whereby thou madest all that is and shall be.

The Five Tribes whom he loveth well have entered
the light he loveth that was made aforetime.)

Rig- Veda 10-55-(Indra)-2.

11. सद्यश्चिद्यः शवसा पंच कृष्टीः सूर्यइव ज्योतिपापस्ततान ।

सहस्त्रसाः शतसा अस्य रंहिर्न स्मा वरन्ते युवतिं न शर्याम् ।।3 ।।

(He who with might the Five Lands hath pervaded, like Surya with his lustre,
and the waters His strength wins hundreds, thousands none avert it, as- the
young maid repelleth not her lover.)

Rig- Veda 10-178-3.

In the later vedic texts also, we find many references of Nishads and Panch-janah. They were offered prayers and invoked to partake in the yajna .We find the beginning of division of labour based on individual's quality and sub-group of Nishads were assigned important works.

12. विश्वस्य के तुर्भवनस्य गर्भ आ रोदसी अपृणाज्जायमानः ।

वीडुं चिदद्रि मभिनत् परायंजना यदग्निमयन्त पंच ।।23 ।।

(Germ of the World, ensign of all creation ,

He sprang to life and filled the earth and heaven,

Even the firm rock he cleft when passing over,

When the Five Tribes brought sacrifice to Agni.)

White Yajur (Vajsanye Samhita) -Veda,Book-12,Verse-23

13. नमस्तक्षभ्या रथकरिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः कुलालेभ्यः कर्मरिभ्यश्च वो
नमो नमो निषादेभ्य पुंजिष्ठेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः श्वनिभ्यो मृगयुभ्यश्च वो नमः ।

(Homage to your Carpenter, and to your Chariot-Makers, homage,
Homage to your Potters and to your Blacksmiths, homage,
Homage to your Nishads and your Punjishthas, homage,
Homage to your Dog-leaders, and to your Hunters, homage.)

White Yajur-Veda, Book-16, Verse-27

Comments:

Nishads – Men of certain wild aboriginal tribes.

Punjishthas- Fishermen or fowlers.

14. ये अग्नयः पांचजन्याऽअस्यां पृथिव्यामधि ।
तेषामसि त्वमुत्तमः प्र नो जीवातवे सुव ।।67 ।।

(Praise verses, sacrificial texts and chanted hymns am I in name,
Thou art the best of all the Fires among the Fivefold race of man,
Thou burn upon this earth of Ours, Speed thou us to lengthened life.)

White Yajur-Veda, Book-18, Verse-67

15. विश्व देवा अदितिः पंच जना अदितिजातमदितिर्जनवम् ।।23 ।।

(Aditi is the heaven, Aditi is mid –air,
Aditi is the mother and the Sira and Son.)

16. अग्निऋषि पवमानः पंचजन्यः पुरोहितः । तमीमहे महागयम् ।।

(Agni is the Pavamana, sage, the Tribe-Priest of the Races Five:
To whom of Mighty Wealth, We Pray,
Taken Upon a bare arat thou, Thee for lustre.
This is the home, Thee for lustre.)

White Yajur-Veda, Book-26, Verse-09.

Comment: Taken from R.V.-ix .66.20 –Pavamana :self-purifying :an epithet applied both to Soma and to Agni . Tribe –Priest or Purohita , Races –Five –the four castes and Nishadas or aboriginal tribes , according to the Commentators.

17. नदीभ्यः पौजिष्ठ मृक्षीकाभ्यो नैषादं पुरुषव्याघ्राय दुर्मदः ।

(For Rivers a fisherman; For Rikshikas a Nishada ‘son; for the Man-tiger a madman, for the Gandharvas and Apsarases a Vratra; for Motives one demented; for serpents Genie an untrustworthy man; for Dice a gambler; for Excitement a non-gambler; for Pisachas a woman who splits cane; for Yatudhanas a Woman who works in thorns.)

White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-08

18. सरोभ्यो धैवरमुषस्थावराभ्यो दाश वैशन्ताभ्यो वैन्दं नड्ढाभ्यः शोष्कलं पाराय

मार्गारमवाराय केवर्तं तीथेभ्य आन्दं विषमेभ्यो मैनाला स्वनेभ्यः पर्णाकं गुहाभ्यः

किरात सानुभ्यो जम्भकं पवतेभ्यः किम्पूरुषम् ॥16 ॥

(For lakes a fisherman; for standing waters a fisher; for Tank –Waters a Nishada, for Reed –beds a fish –vender; for the Opposite Bank one who gropes for fish; for This Bank a Kewat (fish Catcher); for Fords an Andas ;for Shallows a Mainala; for Sounds a Bhilla; for Caverns a Kirata; for Mountain –heights a Destructive Savage ;for Mountains a Wild –man.)

White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-16

Comment:

Anda –said to mean one who catches fish by damming up water;

Maindla - a netter of fish; Bhilla –a Bheel;

The bheel is a black man only hairier.

He carries bows and arches in his hands.

When he meets you, he shoots you and throws your body in a ditch.

By this you may know the Bheel. Kirata – a Savage who lives by hunting.

19. यं तवाहोतारं मनसाभि सैविदुस्त्रयोदश भौवनाः पंच मानवाः ।

(To thee, strength-giver, glorious, rich in pleasant strains, whom.
in their minds the thirteen creatures of the world,
And the five sons of man regard as Hotar-priest—to all these-
Fires be this oblation offered.)

Atharva –Veda Book -3, Hymn -21, Manta -5

KEOT and Valmiki'S Ramayan

In Ayodhya Kanda of Valmiki 's Ramayan, we find frequent uses of the term Nishad and Nishadapati for king Guha whose capital was Sringaverapur and he was a friend of prince Rama. We also find uses of the words दाशाश्च and कैवर्तानां for Nishadas.

नदीरक्षाः सर्वे दाशाश्च (112.84.711) and नावां शतानां पञ्चानां कैवर्तानां शतं शतम्। (112.84.811)

It seems that King Guha was a powerful king and with the help of his kinsmen, he had established a powerful kingdom in the areas around Prayag and had full control over river Ganga.

His kinsmen were engaged in the profession of boating. -ततो निषादाधिपतिर्गुहो जातीनचोदयत्॥2.52.77॥. Here king Guha is asking his kinsmen to row the boat boarded by Rama, Lakshman and Sita.

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) - 50, Rama bids farewell to his birth-place Ayodhya and reaches the bank of the holy Ganga. There, Nishadas (Boatmen or Ferrymen) with their king Guha offers welcome reception to Rama and others.

तत्र राजा गुहो नाम रामस्यात्मसमस्सखा।

निषादजात्यो बलवान् स्थपतिश्चेति विश्रुतः॥2.50.33॥

(There lived the mighty king Guha who was born in the race of nishadas (Boatmen or Ferrymen) and became famous as their lord. He was a friend to Rama who was like his own self.)

स शृत्वा पुरुषव्याघ्रं रामं विषयमागतम्।

वृद्धैः परिवृतोऽमात्यैः जातिभिश्चाभ्युपागतः॥2.50.34॥

(Having come to know that Rama, the best among men, had arrived in his region, Guha accompanied by senior ministers and people of his clan came to greet him.)

ततो निषादाधिपतिं दृष्ट्वा दूरादुपस्थितम्।

सह सौमित्रिणा राम स्समागच्छद्गुहेन सः॥2.50.35॥

(When Rama and Lakshmana saw from a distance that Guha, king of the nishadas, was approaching them, they went forward to receive him.)

तमार्तस्सम्परिष्वज्य गुहो राघवमब्रवीत्।

यथाऽयोध्या तथेयं ते राम किं करवाणि ते॥2.50.36॥

ईदृशं हि महाबाहो कः प्राप्स्यत्यतिथिं प्रियम्।

(Overwhelmed with grief (to see Rama in bark), Guha embraced Rama and said this is just like Ayodhya to you. What can I do for you? O mighty armed Rama, who can have the good fortune of receiving such a beloved guest like you?)

ततो गुणवदन्नाद्यमुपादाय पृथग्विधम्॥2.50.37॥

अर्घ्यं चोपानयत्क्षिप्रं वाक्यं चेदमुवाच ह।

(Thereafter he quickly brought rice and various kinds of tasty food and drink as welcome offerings and said to him.)

स्वागतं ते महाबाहो तवेयमखिला मही॥2.50.38॥

वयं प्रेष्या भवान्भर्ता साधु राज्यं प्रशाधि नः।

(O mighty armed prince; welcome to you this entire land belongs to you. You are our master and we, your servants. Rule this kingdom happily.)

एवं ब्रुवाणं तु गुहं राघवः प्रत्युवाच ह॥2.50.40॥

अर्चिताश्चैव हृष्टाश्च भवता सर्वथा वयम्।

पद्भ्यामभिगमाच्चैव स्नेहसन्दर्शनेन च॥2.50.41॥

(Hearing (the words of) Guha, Rama replied by coming on foot to meet us and by displaying your friendliness, you have amply honoured us and pleased us.)

भुजाभ्यां साधु पीनाभ्यां पीडयन्वाक्यमब्रवीत्।।

दिष्ट्या त्वां गुह पश्यामि ह्यरोगं सह बान्धवैः।

अपि ते कुशलं राष्ट्रे मित्रेषु च धनेषु च॥2.50.42॥

(Rama embracing him tightly with his strong arms said, O Guha it is fortunate that I am able to see you and your relations in good health. Hope, all is well with your friends, kingdom and (collection of) revenue.)

यत्त्विदं भवता किञ्चित्प्रीत्या समुपकल्पितम्।

सर्वं तदनुजानामि न हि वर्ते प्रतिग्रहे॥2.50.43॥

(I must give you back whatever you have offered me so affectionately. I am not in a position to accept anything.)

कुशचीराजिनधरं फलमूलाशिनं च माम्।

विद्धि प्रणिहितं धर्मे तापसं वनगोचरम्॥2.50.44॥

(You must know me as an ascetic devoted to righteousness, and as a wanderer in the forest wearing garments made of bark, kusa, grass and antelope skin, subsisting on fruits and roots.)

श्वानां खादनेनाहमर्थी नान्येन केनचित्।

एतावताऽत्र भवता भविष्यामि सुपूजितः॥2.50.45॥

(What I now need is fodder for the horses. Nothing more. If you can do this much, I'll deem it a great honour.)

अश्वानां प्रतिपानं च खादनं चैव सोऽन्वशात्।

गुहस्तत्रैव पुरुषां स्त्वरितं दीयतामिति॥2.50.47॥

(Guha ordered the men standing there to give these horses liquids like water and forage.)

गुहोऽपि सह सूतेन सौमित्रिमनुभाषयन्।

अन्वजाग्रततो राममप्रमत्तो धनुर्धरः॥2.50.50॥

(Guha, bow in hand, conversing with Sumantra and Soumitri (Son of Sumitra, Lakshmana) then kept vigil over Rama by remaining awake (all night).

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) - 51, Guha requests Lakshmana to take rest, duly expressing his readiness to guard Rama and his consort by keeping awake the whole night. Lakshmana expressed his unwillingness to lie down in the presence of his elder brother and sister-in-law and preferred to remain awake. He spends night talking with Guha, voicing grief for his royal father as well as his affectionate mothers. Further, Lakshmana tells Guha about events which might overtake Ayodhya after Rama's exile.

तं जाग्रतमदम्भेन भ्रातुरर्थाय लक्ष्मणम्।

गुहः सन्तापसन्तप्तो राघवं वाक्यमब्रवीत्॥2.51.1॥

(Deeply moved to see Lakshmana, scion of the Raghus, keeping awake all night without any pretence for his brother's sake, Guha spoke.)

इयं तात सुखा शय्या त्वदर्थमुपकल्पिता।

प्रत्याश्वसिहि साध्वस्यां राजपुत्र यथासुखम्॥2.51.2॥

(O dear prince this comfortable bed has been arranged for you. Rest happily on this bed.)

उचितोऽयं जनस्सर्वः क्लेशानां त्वं सुखोचितः।

गुप्त्यर्थं जागरिष्यामः काकुत्स्थस्य वयं निशाम्॥2.51.3॥

(We are used to all kinds of suffering and you, to comfort. We will keep vigil during the night for the protection of Rama, descendant of the Kakutsthas.)

सोऽहं प्रियसखं रामं शयानं सह सीतया।

रक्षिष्यामि धनुष्पाणि स्सर्वतो ज्ञातिभि स्सह॥2.51.6॥

(I along with my kinsmen bow in hand; will protect my dear friend, Rama with Sita from every side.)

न हि मेऽविदितं किञ्चिद्वनेऽस्मिंश्चरतस्सदा।

चतुरङ्गं ह्यपिबलं सुमहत्प्रसहेमहि॥2.51.7॥

(Nothing is indeed unknown in this forest to me, where I wander continually.

We can able to withstand even a vast army too, comprising of four parts (elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry)

लक्ष्मणस्तं तदोवाच रक्ष्यमाणास्त्वयानघ।

नात्र भीता वयं सर्वे धर्ममेवानुपश्यता॥2.51.8॥

(Lakshmana said to Guha, O sinless one when all of us are under your righteous protection we have nothing to fear.)

तथा हि सत्यं ब्रुवति प्रजाहिते

नरेन्द्रपुत्रे गुरुसौहृदाद्गुहः।

मुमोच बाष्पं व्यसनाभिपीडितो

ज्वरातुरो नाग इव व्यथातुरः॥2.51.27॥

(Out of great friendship with Guha, Lakshmana thus told the true story of prince (Rama) in the interest of his subject (Guha). On hearing it, Guha was deeply afflicted with grief and pain and began shedding tears like an elephant suffering from fever.)

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) - 52, as per instructions of Rama, Guha gets a boat ready. Sumantra requests Rama to take him as a personal attendant to the forest, but Rama declines his offer and after reasoning with him, sends him back to Ayodhya. Rama and Lakshmana matted their hair with the latex of a banyan tree procured by Guha. On reaching the middle of the stream, Sita offers prayers to Mother Ganga (the deity presiding over the stream) and after crossing the river, all the three halt for the night at the foot of a tree.

विज्ञाय रामस्य वचः सौमित्रिर्मित्रनन्दनः।

गुहमामन्त्र्य सूतं च सोऽतिष्ठद्भ्रातुरग्रतः॥2.52.4॥

(In response to Rama's desire, Lakshmana, son of Sumitra, one who brings joy to his friends, called Guha and the charioteer (Sumantra) and stood before his brother.)

स तु रामस्य वचनं निशम्य प्रतिगृह्य च।

स्थपतिस्तूर्णमाहूय सचिवानिदमब्रवीत्॥2.52.5॥

(Having heard and accepted Rama's proposal, the king of the nisadas called his ministers at once and said:)

अस्य वाहनसंयुक्तां कर्णग्राहवतीं शुभाम्।

सुप्रतारां दृढां तीर्थे शीघ्रं नावमुपाहर॥2.52.6॥

(Get quickly to the sacred bank (of Ganga) a strong, auspicious boat equipped with rowing rods and helmsmen who can help cross the river with ease)

तं निशम्य समादेशं गुहामात्यगणो महान्।

उपोह्य रुचिरां नावं गुहाय प्रत्यवेदयत्॥2.52.7॥

(The ministers heard the orders, soon brought a beautiful boat and informed Guha (that his orders have been carried out).

ततः स प्राञ्जलिर्भूत्वा गुहो राघवमब्रवीत्।

उपस्थितेयं नौर्देव भूयः किं करवाणि ते॥2.52.8॥

(Then Guha with folded palms said to Rama: O king, the boat ready. Tell me what else can I do for you.)

तवामरसुतप्रख्य तर्तुं सागरगां नदीम्।

नौरियं पुरुषव्याघ्र तां त्वमारोह सुव्रत॥2.52.9॥

(O best among men, renowned like a god's son and constantly engaged in vows, here is the boat for you to cross the Ganga flowing into the sea. Do board it.)

अथोवाच महातेजा रामो गुहमिदं वचः।

कृतकामोऽस्मि भवता शीघ्रमारोप्यतामिति॥2.52.10॥

Thereafter the radiant Rama said to Guha, You have fulfilled my desire. Keep all our belongings in the boat.

इत्युक्त्वा वचनं सूतं सान्त्वयित्वा पुनः पुनः।

गुहं वचनमक्लीबो रामो हेतुमदब्रवीत्॥2.52.65॥

(Having spoken thus to the charioteer, the courageous Rama consoled him again and again. Then, he spoke the following reasoned words to Guha)

नेदानीं गुह योग्योऽयं वासो मे सजने वने।

आवश्यं ह्याश्रमे वासः कर्तव्यस्तद्गतो विधिः॥2.52.66॥

(Oh, Guha! This stay in the inhabited woods is not proper for me. My stay should definitely be in a hermitage. Let an action diverted towards that aim be taken.)

तत् क्षीरं राजपुत्राय गुहः क्षिप्रमुपाहरत्॥2.52.68॥

लक्ष्मणस्यात्मनश्चैव रामस्तेनाकरोज्जटाः।

(Guha fetched the latex quickly and gave it to the prince (Rama) and with that Rama matted his own hair and Lakshmana's.)

ततो वैखानसं मार्गमास्थितः सह लक्ष्मणः।

व्रतमादिष्टवान् रामः सखायं गुहमब्रवीत्॥2.52.71॥

(Having adopted the path of ascetics along with Lakshmana, Rama said to his friend Guha:)

अप्रमत्तो बले कोशे दुर्गे जनपदे तथा।

भवेथा गुह राज्यं हि दुरारक्षतमं मतम्॥2.52.72॥

(O Guha you must be vigilant about your army, treasury, forts and provinces.
A kingdom, it is (rightly) said, is protected with great difficult.)

ततस्तं समनुज्ञाय गुहमिक्ष्वाकुनन्दनः।

जगाम तूर्णमव्यग्रः सभार्यः सह लक्ष्मणः॥2.52.73॥

(Rama, Delight of the Ikshvakus, then permitted Guha to take leave. And
departed quickly with his consort and Lakshmana in peace.)

अथारुरोह तेजस्वी स्वयं लक्ष्मणपूर्वजः।

ततो निषादाधिपतिर्गुहो ज्ञातीनचोदयत्॥2.52.77॥

(With the boat boarded by the glorious Rama, Lakshmana's elder brother,
Guha, king of the nishadas urged his kinsmen (to row the boat).

अनुज्ञाय सुमन्त्रं च सबलं चैव तं गुहम्।

आस्थाय नावं रामस्तु चोदयामास नाविकान्॥2.52.80॥

(Having permitted Sumantra and Guha with his army to leave, Rama seated on
the boat urged the boatmen to proceed.)

Vasishta requests Bharata to get himself anointed as a king. Bharata refuses to
rob the throne from Rama. Who is really eligible for it as the eldest son of the family.
He resolves to bring back Rama from the forest and orders Sumantra to arrange for
vehicles and men for the journey. Thereupon, warriors merchants Shudras and
Brahmanas harnessed their chariots and got ready for the journey to the forest along
with Bharata. Leaving Ayodhya early next morning, accompanied by family-priests,
ministers, archers, elephants, cavalry, artisans, army and citizens and covering a long
distance, Bharata arrives at the bank of Ganga River at Sringaberapura ruled by Guha

and, encamping the army there, breaks journey for offering libations to his deceased father on the bank of the Ganga and also to give rest to the retinue.

Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) - 82 &83

Having gone for a considerable distance in their chariots, carts, horses and elephants, they reached the River Ganga close to the city of Shringaberapura, where the valiant Guha, a bosom friend of Rama along with multitude of relatives was ruling that region carefully.

(2.83.19 &20)⁵

Having meticulously arranged for encampment of the army which looked lovely along Ganga that great river with the surrounding equipment (like tunts, furnishings etc), Bharata halted then, reflecting as to how to bring back the magnanimous Rama. Guha the king of Nishada tribe asks his relative to guard the river bank and get ready for a battle, if necessary, with Bharata. Then, Guha approaches Bharata to know the intentions -- convinced of Bharata's loyalty, he extends warm hospitality

Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter)- 84

ततो निविष्टां ध्वजिनीं गङ्गामन्वाश्रितां नदीम्।

निषादराजो दृष्ट्वैव ज्ञातीन्सन्त्वरितोऽब्रवीत् ॥2.84.1॥

(Guha, king of the nishadas, observed the bannered army encamped all along the bank of the river Ganga, hurried off and said to his kinsmen :)

तिष्ठन्तु सर्वे दाशाश्च गङ्गामन्वाश्रिता नदीम्।

बलयुक्ता नदीरक्षा मांसमूलफलाशनाः ॥2.84.7॥

⁵. ते गत्वा दूरमध्वानम् रथम् यानाश्वकुञ्जरैः ।

समासेदुस्ततो गङ्गाम् शृङ्गिबेरपुरम् प्रति ॥2.83.19॥

यत्र रामसखो वीरो गुहो ज्ञातिगणैर्वृतः ।

निवसत्यप्रमादेन देशम् तम् परिपालयन् ॥2.83.20॥

(Let all the ferrymen, who live on meat, roots and fruits and protect the river, stay here with the troops by taking up positions along the banks of the river Ganga.)

नावां शतानां पञ्चानां कैवर्तानां शतं शतम्।

सन्नद्धानां तथा यूनां तिष्ठन्त्वित्यभ्यचोदयत्॥2.84.8॥

("Let five hundred boats, each manner by a hundred youthful ferrymen, be stationed and made ready" -thus announced Guha)

इत्युक्त्वोपायनं गृह्य मत्स्यमांसमधूनि च।

अभिचक्राम भरतं निषादाधिपतिर्गुहः॥2.84.10॥

(Having spoken thus, Guha, lord of the nishadas, approached Bharata, taking with him fish, meat and wine as offerings.)

तस्मात्पश्यतु काकुत्स्थ त्वां निषादाधिपो गुहः।

असंशयं विजानीते यत्र तौ रामलक्ष्मणौ॥2.84.13॥

(O scion of the Kakusthas (Bharata), therefore, give audience to the overlord of the nishadas, Guha, who undoubtedly knows the whereabouts.)

एतत्तु वचनं श्रुत्वा सुमन्त्राद्भरत शशुभम्।

उवाच वचनं शीघ्रं गुहः पश्यतु मामिति॥2.84.14॥

(Hearing the auspicious words of Sumantra, Bharata answered, "Introduce Guha to me without delay.)

लब्ध्वाऽभ्यनुज्ञां संहृष्टो ज्ञातिभिः परिवारितः।

आगम्य भरतं प्रह्वो गुहो वचनमब्रवीत्॥2.84.15॥

(Having obtained permission, Guha along with his own people, joyfully and humbly approached Bharata and spoke as follows:)

अस्ति मूलं फलञ्चैव निषादैस्समुपाहृतम्।

आर्द्रं च मांसं शुष्कं च वन्यं चोच्चावचं महत्॥2.84.17॥

(Here are roots, fruits and a great variety of forest produce, fresh and dried meat brought by the nishadas.)

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter)- 85, Bharata thanks Guha for having come forward to offer hospitality to him and his army. He enquires about the proper route to proceed to the hermitage of Bharadvaja. Guha assures Bharata that he along with some of his ferrymen will follow him as guides. When Guha enquires Bharata whether he has an evil intention towards Rama, Bharata clarifies him that he is proceeding to Rama's place to bring him back to Ayodhya. When night falls Bharata along with Shatrughna and his army take rest. However, Guha consoles Bharata, who has been constantly bewailing, till the nightfall. In 2.85.6, the word दाशाः has been used as 'Ferrymen' and kinsmen of King Guha.

एवमुक्तस्तु भरतो निषादाधिपतिं गुहम्।

प्रत्युवाच महाप्राज्ञो वाक्यं हेत्वर्थसंहितम्॥2.85.1॥

(Hearing those words, the highly intelligent Bharata replied to Guha, the lord of Nishadas, in words that were full of reason and meaning.)

ऊर्जितः खलु ते कामः कृतो मम गुरोस्सखे।

यो मे त्वमीदृशीं सेनामेकोऽभ्यर्चितुमिच्छसि॥2.85.2॥

(O, friend of my elder brother! Indeed, your desire to offer hospitality to my army of such a magnitude is great.)

इत्युक्त्वा तु महातेजा गुहं वचनमुत्तमम्।

अब्रवीद्भरत श्रीमाननिषादाधिपतिं पुनः॥2.85.3॥

(Having spoken these excellent words to Guha; the greatly illustrious Bharata, possessed of great splendour, said again to Guha the king of Nishadas (as follows):

कतरेण गमिष्यामि भरद्वाजाश्रमं गुह।

गहनोऽयं भृशं देशो गङ्गाऽनूपो दुरत्ययः॥2.85.4॥

(O Guha this region of Ganga with its dense forest is very difficult to cross. How can I reach the hermitage of Bharadwaja?)

तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा राजपुत्रस्य धीमतः।

अब्रवीत्प्राञ्जलिर्वाक्यं गुहो गहनगोचरः॥2.85.5॥

(When he heard those words of the sagacious Bharata, Guha the forest ranger answered him reverentially with folded palms.)

दाशास्त्वाऽनुऽगमिष्यन्ति धन्विनस्सुसमाहिताः।

अहं त्वानुगमिष्यामि राजपुत्र महायशः॥2.85.6॥

(O highly illustrious prince! My ferrymen wielding their bows, and very attentive, will certainly accompany you. I too will follow you (in person)).

तमेवमभिभाषन्तमाकाश इव निर्मलः।

भरतश्श्लक्ष्णया वाचा गुहं वचनमब्रवीत्॥2.85.8॥

(When he heard Guha thus speaking, Bharata who was as tranquil as the sky, said to him in a gentle voice.)

तं निवर्तयितुं यामि काकुत्स्थं वनवासिनम्।

बुद्धिरन्या न ते कार्या गुह सत्यं ब्रवीमि ते॥2.85.10॥

(I am going to bring back that scion of the kakutsthas (Rama) who resides in the forest. O Guha, do not entertain any other thought. I am telling you the truth.)

स तु संहृष्टवदन श्रुत्वा भरतभाषितम्।

पुनरेवाब्रवीद्वाक्यं भरतं प्रति हर्षितः॥2.85.11॥

(he heard those words of Bharata, Guha was delighted and his face beamed with joy as he said to Bharata:)

(2.85.11)

एवं सम्भाषमाणस्य गुहस्य भरतं तदा।

बभौ नष्टप्रभस्सूर्यो रजनी चाभ्यवर्तत॥2.85.14॥

(While Guha was talking thus to Bharata, the rays of the Sun diminished and the night set in.)

सन्निवेश्य स तां सेनां गुहेन परितोषितः।

शत्रुघ्नेन सह श्रीमाञ्छयनं समुपागमत्॥2.85.15॥

(The illustrious Bharata, lodging that army in camps, felt delighted by Guha's hospitality, returned to his camp and took rest along with Shatrughna.)

गुहेन सार्धं भरतस्समागतो महानुभावस्सजनस्समाहितः।

सुदुर्मनास्तं भरतं तदा पुनर्गुहं स्समाश्वासयदग्रजं प्रति॥2.85.22॥

(Bharata, a man of great magnanimity, joined Guha together with his people with composed mind. Then Guha, greatly distraught, again consoled Bharata regarding his elder brother Rama.)

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda ,Sarga (Chapter)- 86, Guha reports to Bharata, how Rama and his party broke their journey at Shringaverapura and narrate to him the dialogue that took place between Lakshmana and himself during that night. Guha further tells him how Rama and Lakshmana matted their hair into a thick mass crossed the holy river with Sita and left for the hermitage of Sage Bharadwaja.

आचक्षेऽथ सद्भावं लक्ष्मणस्य महात्मनः।

भरतायाप्रमेयाय गुहो गहनगोचरः॥2.86.1॥

(Then Guha, the forest ranger, described to Bharata the countless qualities of the good-natured, magnanimous Lakshmana:)

In Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) - 87, Bharata fell unconscious, after hearing Guha's words about Rama. Bharata eases himself thereafter and asks Guha to report further details about Rama. Guha informs that even though, he offered various kinds of food to Rama, and the latter refused it. He adds that Rama Sita and Lakshmana observed fasting for that night. Guha also informs Bharata that Lakshmana laid a bed of grass for Rama as well as Sita to sleep thereon and Lakshmana stood guarding Rama during the night, along with Guha and his kinsmen.

गुहस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा भरतो भृशमप्रियम्।

ध्यानं जगाम तत्रैव यत्र तच्छ्रुतमप्रियम्॥2.87.1॥

(Extremely unhappy over what he heard from Guha, Bharata was immersed in thought then and there.)

स मुहूर्तं समाश्वस्य रुदन्नेव महायशाः।

कौसल्यां परिसान्त्वेद्यं गुहं वचनमब्रवीत्॥2.87.11॥

(Highly renowned Bharata, composing himself for a moment and still weeping, reassured Kauslaya, and then said this to Guha:)

भ्राता मे क्वावसद्रात्रौ क्व सीता क्व च लक्ष्मणः।

अस्वपच्छयने कस्मिन् किं भुक्त्वा गुहं शंस मे॥2.87.12॥

(O Guha where did my brother Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spend that night? What did they eat? On what couch did they sleep? Tell me all that.)

सोऽब्रवीद्भरतं हृष्टो निषादाधिपतिर्गुहः।

यद्विधं प्रतिपेदे च रामे प्रियहितेऽतिथौ॥2.87.13॥

(There upon delighted Guha, overlord of the nishadas, told Bharata all that he had provided to Rama, his beloved friend and guest:)

Bharata and his minister approach the foot of Angudi tree, where Rama has slept on a grass-bed on the ground. Bharata feels bad that on his account, Rama and Sita were to sleep on such a grass-bed. He thinks that the city of Ayodhya is plunged in desolation, because of the death of Dasaratha and the exile of Rama to the forest. Bharata further takes an owe that like Rama, he will also henceforth sleep on grass with his locks matted, wearing robes of bark and living only on roots and fruits. He says that if Rama refuses his appeal to occupy the throne of Ayodhya, he also will stay back in the forest along with Rama.

“Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) – 88”

तच्छ्रुत्वा निपुणं सर्वं भरतस्सह मन्त्रिभिः।

इङ्गुदीमूलमागम्य रामशय्यामवेक्ष्य ताम्॥2.88.1॥

अब्रवीज्जननीस्सर्वा इह तेन महात्मना।

शर्वरी शयिता भूमाविदमस्य विमर्दितम्॥2.88.2॥

(After listening to all that Guha had said, Bharatha reached the foot of the Ingudi tree accompanied by his ministers and gazing at Rama's bed, said to all his mothers the magnanimous Rama rested that night here on this ground in that crushed bed)

Having passed the night on the banks of Ganga, Bharata asks Guha to make arrangements for their troops to cross the river by boats. Accordingly, Guha has kept ready five hundred boat with their ferry-men for the purpose. All of them reach the opposite shore of the river. Encamping the army at the shore in the magnificent woods of Prayaga, Bharata along with the priests and king's counsellors, approach the hermitage of Bharadwaja.

“Book II: Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga (Chapter) – 89”

उष्य रात्रिं तु तत्रैव गङ्गाकूले स राघवः।

भरतः काल्यमुत्थाय शत्रुघ्नमिदमब्रवीत्॥2.89.1॥

(Bharata got up at daybreak after spending the night on the bank of the Ganga at that very place where Rama, the descendent of Raghu, had stayed. And said these words to Satrughna:)

शत्रुघ्नोत्तिष्ठ किं शेषे निषादाधिपतिं गुहम्।

शीघ्रमानय भद्रं ते तारयिष्यति वाहिनीम्॥2.89.2॥

(O Satrughna, blessings to you Why are you still asleep? Arise fetch Guha the king of the nishadas quickly. He will ferry the army across the river.)

इति संवदतोरेवमन्योन्यं नरसिंहयोः।

आगम्य प्राञ्जलिः काले गुहो भरतमब्रवीत्॥2.89.4॥

(While the two lions among men, Bharata and Satrughna were thus conversing with each other, Guha came in the appropriate time and said to Bharata with folded palms:)

गुहस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा तत्तु स्नेहादुदीरितम्।

रामस्यानुवशो वाक्यं भरतोऽपीदमब्रवीत्॥2.89.6॥

(On hearing Guha's affectionate words Bharata, ever obedient to Rama, replied:)

सुखा न शशर्वरी राजन् पूजिताश्चापि ते वयम्।

गङ्गां तु नौभिर्बह्वीभिर्दाशास्सन्तारयन्तु नः॥2.89.7॥

(O king (Guha) the night passed comfortably for us. We have been honoured by you in many ways. Let your ferrymen be ordered to ferry us across the Ganga in their boats.)

ततो गुह स्सन्त्वरितं श्रुत्वा भरतशासनम्।

प्रति प्रविश्य नगरं तं ज्ञातिजनमब्रवीत्॥2.89.8॥

(Then at Bharata's command Guha returned to his habitation quickly and said to his relations (ज्ञातिजनम्) :)

उत्तिष्ठत प्रबुध्यध्वं भद्रमस्तु च वस्सदा।

नाव स्समनुकर्षध्वं तारयिष्याम वाहिनीम्॥2.89.9॥

(Arise and awake. May you be ever blessed. Haul down the boats into the river. We have to ferry the army (across the river).)

ते तथोक्ता स्समुत्थाय त्वरिता राजशासनात्।

पञ्चनावां शतान्याशु समानिन्युस्समन्ततः॥2.89.10॥

(On hearing these words, they arose in haste and immediately brought five hundred boats from every direction in accordance with the command of their king (Guha)).

अन्या स्स्वस्तिकविज्ञेया महाघंटाधरा वराः।

शोभमानाः पताकाभिर्युक्तवातास्सुसंहताः॥2.89.11॥

(They brought excellent boats known as Swastika, solidly built, they looked magnificent, filled with large bells, sails and flags.)

तत स्स्वस्तिकविज्ञेयां पाण्डुकम्बलसंवृताम्।

सनन्दिघोषां कल्याणीं गुहो नावमुपाहरत्॥2.89.12॥

(Then Guha personally brought an auspicious boat known as Swastika covered with white canvas and generating captivating sounds.)

पताकिन्यस्तु ता नावस्स्वयं दाशैरधिष्ठिताः।

वहन्त्यो जनमारूढं तदा सम्पेतुराशुगाः॥2.89.16॥

(Those boats adorned with flags were propelled by the ferrymen occupying them. They sailed with men rowing on board fast.)

ता स्स्म गत्वा परं तीरमवरोप्य च तं जनम्।

निवृत्ताः काण्डचित्राणि क्रियन्ते दाशबन्धुभिः॥2.89.18॥

(Having reached the opposite shore, these boats cleared those people and on the return journey, the kinsfolk of Guha plied them as easily as toy- boats made of bamboo.)

सा पुण्या ध्वजिनी गङ्गां दाशैस्सन्तारिता स्वयम्।
मैत्रे मुहूर्ते प्रययौ प्रयागवनमुत्तमम् ॥2.89.21॥

(The auspicious army, ferried across the river Ganga by the ferrymen, reached the great forest of Prayaga at the auspicious hour of Maitra.)

गुहो जातिसहस्रेण शरचापासिधारिणा ।
समन्वेषतु काकुत्समस्मिन् परिवृतः स्वयम् ॥2.98.41॥

(Let Guha search for Rama and Lakshmana in this forest, himself accompanied by a multitude of his kinsmen, duly wielding their bows, arrows and swords.)

STATUS OF KEOT DURING THE AGE OF MAHABHARAT

In Mahabharata, the variant of Keot has been used frequently. We have many references of the words Dasraj and Nishad .In this age ,we find references of the two powerful Keot Kingdoms –one under the rule of Dasraj Vasu, the father of Kewart Kanya Satyavati and another under King Hiranydhanu ,the father of great archer Eklavya.It seems that Keot /Nishad/Das carries respectable and important position in the society in this age and they could have matrimonial relations with the ruling classes .when Prince Devavrata went to meet Dasraj soliciting him to give his daughter satyavati in marriage to King Santanu , the former shown great restraint and all the time used respectable adjective for Dasraj as “दाशराजो महात्मन” , “दाशो धर्मात्मा”. It seems that in the age of Mahabharata, boating and ferrying was the main profession of the kith and kin of Dasraj. Even the close relatives of King Dasraj took pride of performing their traditional vocation (Aadiparva, Adhyaya-94, Slok-44). (All the References & footnotes of Mahabharata have been taken from the Mahabharata of Veda Vyasa with Hindi translation of Pandit shripad Damodar Satwalekar, Swadhayay Mandal, Pardi, Dist.- Balsad,Gujarat ,1968)

Four years after the disappearance of Ganga, one day King Santanu went into the woods on the bank of the river Yamuna. And while the king was rambling there, he perceived a sweet scent coming from an unknown direction.

तस्य प्रभवसन्विच्छन्विचचार समन्ततः ।

स ददर्श तदा कन्यां दाशानां देवरूपिणीम् ॥ 1.94.42 ॥⁶

(And the monarch, impelled by the desire of ascertaining the cause, wandered hither and thither. And in course of his ramble, he beheld a black-eyed maiden of celestial beauty, the daughter of a Ferryman).

तामपृच्छत्स द्वषैव कन्यामसितलोचनाम् ॥

कस्य त्वमसि का चासि किं च भीरु चिकीर्षसि ॥1.94.43 ॥

⁶ 1.94.42 – Here 1 for Adiparva, 94 for Adhyaya of Adiparva & 42 for- Slok of 94 Adhyaya

(The king addressing her, said, 'Who art thou, and whose daughter? What dost thou do here, O timid one?')

साव्रवीद्दाशकन्याऽस्मि धर्मार्थं वाहये तरीम् ।

पितुर्नियोगाद्ध्रं ते दाशराज्ञो महात्मनः ॥1.94.44 ॥

(She answered, 'Blest be thou! I am the daughter of the chief of the Ferrymen. At his command, I am engaged for religious merit, in rowing passengers across this river in my boat.)

रूपमाधुर्यगन्धैस्तां संयुक्ता देवरूपिणीम् ।

समीक्ष्य राजा दाशेयीं कामयामास शंतनुः ॥1.94.45 ॥

And Santanu, beholding that maiden of celestial form endued with beauty, amiableness, and such fragrance, desired her for his wife.

स गत्वा पितरं तस्या वरयामास तां तदा ।

पर्यपृच्छत्तस्याः पितरं चात्मकारणात् ॥1.94.46 ॥

(And repairing unto her father, the king solicited his consent to the proposed match.)

स च तं प्रत्युवाचेदं दाशराजो महीपतिम् ।

जातमात्रैव मे देया वराय वरवर्णिनी ।

हृद्दि कामस्तु मे कश्चित्तं निबोध जनेश्वर ॥1.94.47 ॥

(But the chief of the Ferrymen replied to the monarch, saying, 'O king, as soon as my daughter of superior complexion was born, it was, of course, understood that she should be bestowed upon a husband. But listen to the desire I have cherished all along in my heart.)

श्रुत्वा तव वरं दाश व्यवस्येयमहं तव ।

दातव्यं चेत्प्रदास्यामि न त्वदेयं कथंचन ॥1.94.50 ॥

(O sinless one, thou art truthful: if thou desirest to obtain this maiden as a gift from me, give me then this pledge. If, indeed, thou givest the pledge, I will of course bestow my daughter upon thee for truly I can never obtain a husband for her equal to thee.'

Santanu, hearing this, replied, 'When I have heard of the pledge thou askest, I shall then say whether I would be able to grant it. If it is capable of being granted, I shall certainly grant it. Otherwise, how shall I grant it.)'

अस्यां जायेत यः पुत्रः स राजा पृथिवीपते ।

त्वदूर्ध्वमभिषेक्तव्यो नान्यः कश्चय पार्थिव ॥1.94.51 ॥

(The Ferryman said, 'O king, what I ask of thee is this: the son born of this maiden shall be installed by thee on thy throne and none else shall thou make thy successor.)

नाकामयत तं दातुं वरं दाशाय शान्तनुः ।

शरीरजेन तीव्रेण तदा दह्यमानोऽपि भारत ॥1.94.52 ॥

(When Santanu heard this, he felt no inclination to grant such a boon, though the fire of desire sorely burnt him within.)

स चिन्तयन्नेव तदा दाशकन्या महीपतिः ।

प्रत्याद्धास्तिनपुरं कामोपहतचेनः ॥1.94.53 ॥

The king with his heart afflicted by desire returned to Hastinapura, thinking all the way of the Dasraj's daughter.

And having returned home, the monarch passed his time in sorrowful meditation. One day, Devavrata approaching his afflicted father said, 'All is prosperity with thee; all chiefs obey thee; then how is it that thou grievest thus? Absorbed in thy own thoughts, thou speakest not a word to me in reply. Thou goest not out on horse-back now; thou lookest pale and emaciated, having lost all animation. I wish to know the disease thou sufferest from, so that I may endeavour to apply a remedy.' Thus addressed by his son, Santanu answered, 'Thou sayest truly, O son, that I have become melancholy. I will also tell thee why I am so. O thou of Bharata's line, thou art the only scion of this our large race. Thou art always engaged in sports of arms and achievements of prowess. But, O son, I am always thinking of the instability of human life. If any danger overtakes thee, O child of Ganga, the result is that we become sonless. Truly thou alone art to me as a century of sons. I do not, therefore, desire to

wed again. I only desire and pray that prosperity may ever attend thee so that our dynasty may be perpetuated. The wise say that he that hath one son hath no son. Sacrifices before fire and the knowledge of the three Vedas yield, it is true, everlasting religious merit, but all these, in point of religious merit, do not, come up to a sixteenth part of the religious merit attainable on the birth of a son. Indeed, in this respect, there is hardly any difference between men and the lower animals. O wise one, I do not entertain a shadow of doubt that one attains to heaven in consequence of his having begotten a son. The Vedas which constitute the root of the Puranas and are regarded as authoritative even by the gods, contain numerous proofs of this. O thou of Bharata's race, thou art a hero of excitable temper, who is always engaged in the exercise of arms. It is very probable that thou wilt be slain on the field of battle. If it so happens, what then will be the state of the Bharata dynasty, it is this thought that hath made me so melancholy. I have now told thee fully the causes of my sorrow.'

Devavrata who was endued with great intelligence, having ascertained all this from the king, reflected within himself for a while. He then went to the old minister devoted to his father's welfare and asked him about the cause of the king's grief. O bull of Bharata's race, when the prince questioned the minister, the latter told him about the boon that was demanded by the Dasraj in respect of his daughter Gandhavati.

ततो देवव्रतो वृद्धैः क्षत्रियैः सहितस्तदा ।

अभिगम्य दाशराजं कन्यां व्रवे पितुः स्वयम् ॥1.94.67 ॥

(Then Devavrata, accompanied by many Kshatriya chiefs of venerable age, personally repaired to the chief of the Ferrymen king Vasu and begged of him his daughter on behalf of the king.)

तं दाशः प्रतिजग्राह विधिवत्प्रतिपूर्य च ।

अब्रवीच्चैनमासीनं राजसंसदि भारत ॥1.94.68 ॥

The Dasraj received him with due adorations and when the prince took his seat in the court of the chief, the latter addressed him and said, 'O bull among the Bharatas,

thou art the first of all wielders of weapons and the only son of Santanu. Thy power is great. But I have something to tell thee.

असितो ह्यपि देवर्षिः प्रत्याख्यातः पुरा मया ।

सत्यवत्या भृशं ह्यर्थी स आसीदृषिसत्तमः ॥1.94.73 ॥

(If the bride's father was Indra himself, even then he would have to repent of rejecting such an exceedingly honourable and desirable proposal of marriage. Let me tell you that I have even rejected the solicitations of that best of Brahmarshis--the celestial sage Asita--who, too, had often asked for Satyavati's hand in marriage.)

I have only one word to say on the part of this maiden. In the matter of the proposed marriage, there is one great objection founded on the fact of a rival in the person of a co-wife's son. O oppressor of all foes, he hath no security, even if he be an Asura or a Gandharva, who hath a rival in thee. There is this only objection to the proposed marriage, and nothing else. Blest be thou! But this is all I have to say in the matter of the bestowal or otherwise, of Satyavati.'

एवमेतत्करिष्यामि यथा त्वमनुभाषसे ।

योऽस्यां जनिष्यते पुत्रः स नो राजा भविष्यति ॥1.94.79 ॥

(Devavrata, having heard these words, and moved by the desire of benefiting his father thus answered in the hearing of the assembled chiefs, 'O foremost of truthful men, listen to the vow I utter! The man has not been or will not be born, who will have the courage to take such a vow! I shall accomplish all that thou demandest! The son that may be born of this maiden shall be our king.')

Thus addressed, the chief of the Ferrymen, impelled by desire of sovereignty (for his daughter's son), to achieve the almost impossible, then said, 'O thou of virtuous soul, thou art come hither as full agent on behalf of thy father Santanu of immeasurable glory; be thou also the sole manager on my behalf in the matter of the bestowal of this my daughter. But, O amiable one, there is something else to be said, something else to be reflected upon by thee. O suppressor of foes, those that have daughters, from the very nature of their obligations, must say what I say. O thou that art devoted to truth,

the promise thou hast given in the presence of these chiefs for the benefit of Satyavati, hath, indeed, been worthy of thee. O thou of mighty arms, I have not the least doubt of its ever being violated by thee. But I have my doubts in respect of the children thou mayst beget.'

दाशराज निवोधेदं वचनं मे नृपोत्तम ॥

श्रीएवतां भूमिपालनां यहूवीमि पितुः कृते ॥1.94.86 ॥

(The son of Ganga, devoted to truth, having ascertained the scruples of the chief of the Boatmen, then said, moved thereto by the desire of benefiting his father, 'Chief of Boatmen, thou best of men, listen to what I say in the presence of these assembled kings.)

अद्य प्रभृति मे दाश ब्रह्मचर्यं भविष्यति ।

अपुत्रस्यापि मे लोका भविष्यन्त्यक्षया दिवि ॥1.94.88 ॥

Ye kings, I have already relinquished my right to the throne, I shall now settle the matter of my children. O Ferryman, from this day I adopt the vow of Brahmacharya (study and meditation in celibacy). If I die sonless, I shall yet attain to regions of perennial bliss in heaven!'

तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा संप्रहृष्टतनूरुहः ।

दवानीत्येव तं दाशो धर्मात्मा प्रत्यभापत ॥1.94.89 ॥

(Upon these words of the son of Ganga, the hair on the ferryman's body stood on end from glee, and he replied, 'I bestow my daughter!')

Immediately after, the Apsaras and the Gods with diverse tribes of Rishis began to rain down flowers from the firmament upon the head of Devavrata and exclaimed, 'This one is Bhishma (the terrible).' Bhishma then, to serve his father, addressed the illustrious damsel and said, 'O mother, ascend this chariot, and let us go unto our house.'

Having said this, Bhishma helped the beautiful maiden into his chariot. On arriving with her at Hastinapura, he told Santanu everything as it had happened. And the assembled kings, jointly and individually, applauded his extraordinary act and said, 'He is really Bhishma (the terrible)!' And Santanu also, hearing of the extraordinary

achievements of his son, became highly gratified and bestowed upon the high-souled prince the boon of death at will, saying, 'Death shall never come to thee as long as thou desirest to live. Truly death shall approach thee, O sinless one, having first obtained thy command.

3.2. **Birth of Rishi Ved Vyasa from Satyavati**

It seems that in the age of Mahabharat, Keot/Dasa/Nishada commanded so much respect in the society that all the Varnas wanted to have matrimonial relations with them. When Devavarta went to meet Dasraj Vasu and begged of him his daughter on behalf of the king Santanu, the later asked the former –

असितो ह्यपि देवर्षिः प्रत्याख्यातः पुरा मया ।

सत्यवत्या भृशं ह्यर्थी स आसीदृषिसत्तमः ॥1.94.73 ॥

(Let me tell you that I have even rejected the solicitations of that best of Brahmarshis--the celestial sage Asita--who, too, had often asked for Satyavati's hand in marriage)

Rishi Krishna-Dwaipayana, the grand-father of the Pandavas was born in an island of the Yamuna, of the virgin Satyavati by Sakti's son, Rishi Parasara.

Wishing to serve her father, Satyavati plied a boat on the waters of the Yamuna. While engaged in this vocation, she was seen one day by the great Rishi Parasara, in course of his wanderings. Gifted with great beauty, and of graceful smiles, the wise sage, as soon as he beheld her, desired to have her. And that bull amongst Munis addressed the daughter of Vasu of celestial beauty and tapering thighs, saying, 'Accept my embraces, O blessed one, Satyavati replied, 'O holy one, behold the Rishis standing on either bank of the river. Seen by them, how can I grant thy wish? "

Thus, addressed by her, the illustrious lord thereupon created a fog (which existed not before and) which enveloped the whole region in darkness. And the maiden, beholding the fog that was created by the great Rishi wondered much. And the helpless one became suffused with the blushes of bashfulness. And she said, "O holy one know, that I am a maiden under the control of my father! O sinless one, by accepting your

embraces my virginity will be sullied. O best of Brahmanas, my virginity being sullied, how shall I, O Rishi, be able to return home? Indeed, I shall not then be able to bear life, reflecting upon all this – “O illustrious one, do that which should be done”. That best of Rishis, gratified with all she said, replied, thou shalt remain a virgin even if thou grantest my wish. And, O timid one, O beauteous lady, solicit the boon that thou desirest! O thou fair smiles, my grace hath never before proved fruitless!' Thus addressed, the maiden asked for the boon that her body might emit a sweet scent (instead of the fish-odour that it had). And the illustrious Rishi thereupon granted that wish of her heart'.

"Having obtained her boon, she became highly pleased, and her season immediately came. And she accepted the embraces of that Rishi of wonderful deeds. And she thenceforth became known among men by name of Ganduavati (the sweet-scented one). And men could perceive her scent from the distance of a yojana. And for this she was known by another name which was Yojanagandha (one who scatters her scent for a yojana all around). And the illustrious Parasara, after this, went to his own asylum."

"And Satyavati gratified with having obtained the excellent boon (inconsequence of which she became sweet-scented and her virginity remained unsullied conceived through Parasara's embraces. And she brought forth the very day, on an island in the Yamuna, the child begot upon her by Parasara and gifted with great energy. And the child, with the permission of his mother, set his mind on asceticism. And he went away saying, 'As soon as thou rememberest me when occasion comes, I shall appear unto thee!'

"And it was thus that Vyasa was born of Satyavati through Parasara. And because he was born in an island, he was called Dwaipayana (Dwaipa or island-born). And the learned Dwaipayana, beholding that virtue is destined to become lame by one leg each yuga (she having four legs in all) and that the period of life and the strength of men followed the yugas, and moved by the desire of obtaining the favour of Brahmana and

the Brahmanas, arranged the Vedas. And for this he came to be called Vyasa (the arranger or compiler).

3.3 Myth about the birth of Satyavati

There is a myth in Adivanasavatarana Parva, section LXIII, Adi Parva of the Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa (traslated into English prose from the original Sanskrit Text by Pratap Chandra Roy ,Oriental Publishers Co. ,11D,Surendrlal Pyre Lane ,Calcutta -12) about the birth of Satyavati from the semen of king Uparichara aslo called Vasu. This myth is repeated in Devi Bhagabat purana, second Skandha, Chapter -1 & 2 with slight variation.

There was a king of the name of Uparichara. That monarch was devoted to virtue. He was very much addicted also to hunting. That king of the Paurava race, called also Vasu, conquered the excellent and delightful kingdom of Chedi under instructions from Indra. He had a beautiful wife named Girika. Girika the wife of Vasu, after her menstrual course, purifying herself by a bath, represented her state unto her lord. But that very day the Pitris of Vasu came unto that best of monarchs and foremost of wisemen, and asked him to slay deer (for their Sradha). And the king, thinking that the command of the Pitris should not be disobeyed, went a-hunting, wishfully thinking of Girika alone who was gifted with great beauty and like unto another Sree herself. And the season being the spring, the woods within which the king was roaming, had become delightful like unto the gardens of the king of the Gandharvas himself.

The whole forest was maddened by the sweet notes of the Kokila and echoed with the hum of maddened bees. And the king became possessed with desire, and he saw not his wife before Kim. Maddened by desire as he was roaming hither and thither, he saw a beautiful Asoka decked with dense foliage and its branches covered with flowers. The king sat at his ease in the shade of that tree and excited by the fragrance of the season and the charming odours of the flowers around, and excited also by the delicious breeze, the king could not keep his mind away from the thought of the beautiful Girika. And beholding that a swift hawk was resting very near to him, the

king, acquainted with the subtle truths of Dharma and Artha, went unto him and said, 'Amiable one, carry thou this seed (Semen) for my wife Girika and give it unto her. Her season hath arrived.

The hawk, swift of speed, took it from the king and rapidly coursed through the air. While thus passing, the hawk was seen by another of his species. Thinking that the first one was carrying meat, the second one flew at him. The two fought with each other in the sky with their beak. While they were fighting, the seed fell into the waters of the Yamuna (Jumna). And in those waters dwelt an Apsara of the higher ranks, known by the name of Adrika, transformed by a Brahmana's curse into a fish. Adrika, transformed into a fish, as soon as Vasu's seed fell into the water from the claws of the hawk, rapidly approached and swallowed it at once. That fish was, sometime after, caught by the fishermen. And it was the tenth month of the fish's having swallowed the seed. From the stomach of that fish came out a male and female child of human form. The fishermen wondered much, and wending unto king Uparichara (for they were his subjects) told him all. They said, 'O king, these two beings of human shape have been born in the body of fish!' The male child amongst the two was taken by Uparichara. That child afterwards became the virtuous and truthful monarch Matsya.

After the birth of the twins, the Apsara herself became freed from her curse. For she had been told before by the illustrious one (who had cursed her) that she would, while living in her piscatorial form, give birth to two children of human shape and then would be freed from the curse. Then, according to these words, having given birth to the two children, and been slain by the fishermen, she left her fish-form and assumed her own celestial shape. The Apsara then rose up on the path trodden by the Siddhas, the Rishis and the Charanas. The fish-smelling daughter of the Apsara in her piscatorial form was then given by the king unto the fisherman, saying, 'Let this one be thy daughter. That girl was known by the name of Satyavati. And gifted with great beauty and possessed of every virtue, she of agreeable smiles, owing to contact with fishermen, was for some time of the fishy smell.

3.4 The Great Archer Eklavya and His Sacrifices

Drona endued with great prowess started to teach the Kauravas viz., the sons of Pandu and Dhritarashtra, science of weapons. And hearing reports of his skill, kings and princes, desirous of learning the science of arms, flocked to Drona by thousands. Amongst those that came there was also a prince named Ekalavya, who was the son of Hiranyadhanus, king of the Nishadas. Drona, however, cognisant of all rules of morality, did not accept the prince as his pupil in archery. However undaunted Nishada prince, touching Drona's feet with bent head, wended into the forest, and there he made a clay-image of Drona, and began to worship it respectfully, as if it was his real preceptor, and practised weapons before it with the most rigid regularity. In consequence of his devotion to his purpose, all the three processes of fixing arrows on the bowstring, aiming, and letting off became very easy for him.

One day the Kuru and the Pandava princes set out on a hunting excursion. A servant followed the party at leisure, with the usual implements and a dog. Having come to the woods, they wandered about, intent on the purpose they had in view. Meanwhile, the dog also, in wandering alone in the wood, came upon the Nishada prince Ekalavya. And beholding the Nishada of dark hue, of body besmeared with filth, dressed in black and bearing matted locks on head, the dog began to bark aloud.

Thereupon the Nishada prince, desirous of exhibiting his lightness of hand, sent seven arrows into its mouth (before it could shut it). The dog, thus pierced with seven arrows, came back to the Pandavas. Those heroes, who beheld that sight, were filled with wonder, and, ashamed of their own skill, began to praise the lightness of hand and precision of aim by auricular precision exhibited by the unknown archer. And they thereupon began to seek in those woods for the unknown dweller therein that had shown such skill. And the Pandavas soon found out the object of their search ceaselessly discharging arrows from the bow. And beholding that man of grim visage, who was totally a stranger to them, they asked, 'Who art thou and whose son?' Thus questioned, the man replied, 'Ye heroes, I am the son of Hiranyadhanus, king of the

Nishadas. Know me also for a pupil of Drona, labouring for the mastery of the art of arms.

The Pandavas then, having made themselves acquainted with everything connected with him, returned to the city, and going unto Drona, told him of that wonderful feat of archery which they had witnessed in the woods. Arjuna, in particular, thinking all the while about Ekalavya, saw Drona in private and relying upon his preceptor's affection for him, said, 'Thou hadst lovingly told me, clasping me to thy bosom, that no pupil of thine should be equal to me. Why then is there a pupil of thine, the mighty son of the Nishada king, superior to me?

On hearing these words, Drona reflected for a moment, and resolving upon the course of action he should follow, took Arjuna with him and went unto the Nishada prince. And he beheld Ekalavya with body besmeared with filth, matted locks on head, clad in rags, bearing a bow in hand and ceaselessly shooting arrows therefrom. And when Ekalavya saw Drona approaching towards him, he went a few steps forward, and touched his feet and prostrated himself on the ground. And the son of the Nishada king after worshipping Drona, duly represented himself as his pupil, and clasping his hands in reverence stood before him awaiting his commands. Then Drona addressed Ekalavya, saying, 'If, O hero, thou art really my pupil, give me then my fees.' On hearing these words, 'Ekalavya was very much gratified, and said in reply, O illustrious preceptor, what shall I give? Command me; for there is nothing, O foremost of all persons conversant with the Vedas, that I may not give unto my preceptor. Drona answered 'O Ekalavya, if thou art really intent on making me a gift, I should like then to have the thumb of thy right hand.

Hearing these cruel words of Drona, who had asked of him his thumb as tuition-fee, Ekalavya, ever devoted to truth and desirous also of keeping his promise, with a cheerful face and an unafflicted heart, cut off without ado his thumb, and gave it unto

Drona. After this, when the Nishada prince began once more to shoot with the help of his remaining fingers, he found that he had lost his former lightness of hand. And at this Arjuna became happy, as the fever of jealousy having left him.

The story of Eklavya is subject to various interpretations..... For the Nishads, Eklavya is a hero, whose devotion and sacrifice must be celebrated and commemorated..... The author continues to argue that is because of 'Brahminical domination (Brahmanvadi) that the ordinary man (the son of the Nishads) cannot achieve greatness. He states 'that if he (Eklavya) had been born into a family of Brahmins,he would be able to attain the status of a great man (Mahapurush).....The narrator highlights the existing hierarchical order and the social political structure as represented by the Brahmin (Drona) and the Kshatriya (Arjun) respectively. As such, the story is employed to emphasize the marginalization of the community, both in the past and today⁷

⁷ Assa Doron "Caste,Occupation and Politics On the Ganges,passages of Resistance " ,Ashgate Publishing Limited ,Wey Court East, Union Road ,Farnham,Surrey GU9 7PT,England ,p-67-69.

Legend of Vena

The legend of Vena is narrated in the Vishnu Purana, Book I. Sect. 13. He was the son of Anga, and the descendant, in the 9th generation, of the first Manu, Swayambhuva; the line of ancestors from the latter downwards being as follows:- 1st- Uttanapada; 2nd -Dhruva; 3rd -Slishti; 4th - Ripu; 5th -Chakshusha; 6th- the sixth Manu, Chakshusha; 7th -Uru; 8th- Anga, father of Vena. (See Wils., Vish. Pur., pp. 52, 86 and 98). Vena thus belonging, according to the Vishnu Purana, at least, to a mythical age preceding, by an enormous interval, that of the descendants of the Manu Vaivaswata - five Manwantaras or periods of 308, 571 years having, it is fabled, intervened in the present Kalpa between the close of the Manwantara Swayambhuva and the commencement of the existing Vaivaswata Manwantara.

The story goes as: “The maiden Sunitha was the first-born of “Mrityu (Death); she was given as wife to Anga and of her Vena was born. This daughter’s son of Mrityu, infected with the taint of his maternal grandfather, came into existence corrupt, as if by nature. When Vena was installed as monarch by the eminent Rishis, he caused this proclamation to be made on the earth; ‘Men must not sacrifice, or offer oblations, or give gifts. Who else but myself is the enjoyer of sacrifices? I am always the lord of oblations.’ Then all the Rishis, approaching the king with respectful salutations, said to him in a conciliatory tone: ‘Hear, O king, what we have to say; we will worship Hari, the king of the gods, and lord of all sacrifices, with the Dirghasatra (prolonged sacrifice), from which the highest benefits will accrue to your kingdom, person, and subjects. May all be well with you: you shall share in the sacrifice. Vishnu, the lord, the sacrificial Male, being propitiated by us with the oblation, will grant all your desire. Hari, lord of sacrifices, gives to those kings in whose country he is honoured with sacrifices, the accomplishment of all that they wish.’ Vena replied: ‘What other is superior to me? Who else but I should be adored? Who is this person called Hari, whom

you regard as lord of sacrifice? Brahma, Janardana, Rudra, Indra, Vayu, Yama, Ravi (the Sun), Agni (Fire), Varuna, Dhatri, Pushan, Earth, the Moon: these and all the other gods who curse and bless us are present in a king's person; for he is composed of all the gods. Knowing this, see that ye perform what I have commanded. Ye must not, Brahmans, give alms, or offer sacrifice, or oblation. As obedience to their husbands is regarded as the chief duty of women, so is the observation of my commands incumbent upon you.' The Rishis answered: 'Give permission, great king! Let not religion perish; this whole world is but a modified form of oblations. If religion perishes, the whole world also will be destroyed.' When Vena, though thus entreated by the Rishis, and repeatedly addressed, did not accord his permission, then all those Munis, being filled with wrath, cried out to each other, 'Slay, slay the sinner. This man of degraded character, who blasphemes the sacrificial Male, the god, the Lord without beginning or end, is no fitting ruler of the earth.' Having so spoken, the Munis slew with blades of sacrificial grass purified by hymns, this king who had been already slain by his blasphemy of the divine Being, and his other offences. The Munis afterwards beheld dust (arising) on every side, and asked the people who were near what that was. Those persons told them, 'In this country, which has no king, the people, being distressed, have become robbers, and have begun to seize the property of others. It is from these robbers, rushing impetuously, and plundering other men's goods, that his immense dust arises.' Then all the Munis, after consulting together, rubbed the thigh of the king (Vena), who had left no progeny, to produce a son. From his thigh, when rubbed, there sprang a man, like a charred log, with flattened face, and very short. 'What shall I do?' cried this man, in distress, to the Brahmans. They said to him, 'Sit down' (nishida); and he became in consequence a Nishada. There sprang afterwards from this man Nishadas, dwelling in the Vindhya mountains, notorious for their wicked deeds. By this means the son of the king (Vena) was expelled; the Nishadas were thus produced, originating in the sin of Vena. The Brahmans then rubbed his right hand; and from it, when rubbed, arose the glorious Prithu, Vena's son, whose resplendent form shone like the manifested Agni. Then the primeval bow, Ajagava, fell from the sky, with celestial

arrows, and armour. At Prithu's birth all creatures rejoiced, and when this holy son was born, Vena, delivered by that high souled being from the hell called Put, ascended to heaven."

The Harivansa (Sect. 5) relates the same legend as follows, with very little variation from the Vishnu Purana; "There was formerly a Prajapati called Anga, of the race of Atri, a protector of righteousness, resembling Atri in power. His son was the Prajapati Vena, who was not well skilled in duty, and was born of Sunita, the daughter of Mrityu (Death). This son of the daughter of Kala (Death), owing to the taint derived from his maternal ancestor, throwing his duties behind his back, was addicted to cupidity, from the influence of passion. This king established an unrighteous rule of life, and transgressing the ordinances of the Veda, was devoted to lawlessness. In his reign men lived without studying the Veda, and without sacred invocations, and the gods drank no Soma-juice at sacrifices. 'There shall be no sacrifice or oblation offered,' – such was the ruthless injunction of that monarch, as the time of his destruction approached. He said, 'I am the object and the offerer of sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself: sacrifices and oblations should be presented to me.' Then all the Rishis, headed by Marichi, addressed him who was thus transgressing all rules, and exacting what was not his due: 'We are about to enter upon a sacrifice which shall last for many years: practice not unrighteousness, O Vena; this is not the eternal rule of duty. Thou art, in truth, a Prajapati of Atri's race, and hast engaged to protect thy subjects.' The infatuated Vena, ignorant of what was right, then mockingly answered those great Rishis who had so addressed him; 'Who but myself is the ordainer of duty? to whom ought I to listen? Who on earth is like me in sacred knowledge, in valour, in devotion, in truth? Ye who are deluded and senseless, know not that I am the source of all creatures and duties. Doubt not that, if I willed, I could burn up the earth, or inundate it with water, or shut up heaven and earth.' When Vena could not be restrained, from madness and pride the mighty Rishis, becoming incensed, seized the vigorous but quivering king and rubbed his left thigh. From it, when so rubbed, was produced a man very short and black, who being alarmed, stood with joined hands. Atri, seeing that he

was agitated, said to him, ‘Sit down’ (nishida). He became the progenitor of the Nishadas, and of the Dhivaras (fishermen), the offspring of Vena’s offence. The other inhabitants of the Vindhya range, Tukharas and Tumburas, prone to wickedness, are also descendants of Vena. Then the mighty sages, incensed, again rubbed the right hand of Vena, like sacrificial fuel, and Prithu came forth from it, his body gleaming like the manifested Agni (Fire).”

Though the Harivansa declares Vena to be a descendant of Atri, yet, as the Prajapati Atri is said in a previous section to have adopted Uttanapda, Vena’s ancestor, for his son; there is, so far, no contradiction in the genealogies.

The story of Vena is told in the same way, but more briefly, in the Santiparva of the Mahabharata, Sect. 59. After narrating the birth of Prithu, the writer proceeds: “The son of Vena (Prithu) then addressed the great Rishis with joined hands: ‘A very slender understanding has been given to me for perceiving the principles of duty: tell me truly how I must employ it. Whatever you shall declare to me as my duty, and its objects, that I shall unhesitatingly perform.’ Then those gods and great Rishis answered him: ‘Whatever duty is ordained, do thou perform it undoubtingly, abandoning love and hatred, regarding all creatures with an equal eye, and putting far away lust, anger, cupidity, and pride. Restrain by the strength of thy arm all those men who depart from righteousness, having a continual regard to duty. In thought, deed, and word take on thyself, and constantly renew, the engagement, to uphold the earthly Veda (Brahma).... And promises that thou wilt exempt the Brahmans from punishment, and preserve society from the confusion of castes.’ The son of Vena men addressed the gods headed by the Rishis: ‘The illustrious Brahmans, the chief of men, shall be venerated by me.’ The son of Vena was then addressed by those maintainers of the Veda in these words, ‘So be it.’ Sukra, the treasure of divine knowledge, then became his priest, the Balakhilyas and Saraswatyas his ministers, and the divine Rishi Garga his astrologer.”

The legend of Vena is told at greater length, but with no material variation in substance, in the Bhagavata Purana, iv. sections 13-15.

A prince of this name is mentioned in various hymns of the Rig Veds. In the 10th verse of the 9th hymn of the VIIIth, and in the 5th verse of the 148th hymn of the Xth, Mandala, he is alluded to as the father of Prithi; - Prithi being, in the latter case, the recognised author of the hymn. In the 93rd hymn of the same mandala, verse 14, Vena is eulogized alongwith Duhsima, Prithavana, and Rama (See M. Langlois's French translation of the Rig Veda, Vol. III, p. 219, and Vol. IV. pp. 350, 445m and 467.) Prithi is also mentioned in Rig Veda, I. 112. 15 and the commentator allude to him as "a royal Rishi, son of Vena." In the Satapatha Brahmana, V. 3.5.4. Prithi "the son of Vena" is mentioned as "the first of men who was inaugurated "as king".

Thus, in ascribing to Vena an irreligious character and a contempt for the priests, the Puranas contradicts a verse in the Rig-Veda, X-93,14 in which (unless we suppose a different individual to be there meant) Vena is celebrated along with Duhsima, Prithavana, and Rama for his conspicuous liberality to the author of the hymns. 8 Status of Kewart in the Medieval Period: Portrayal in Ramacharitamanas of Tulsi Das.

⁸ J.Muir –Original Sanskrit Texts on the origin and progress of the Religion and Institutions of India, Part first, Williams and Norgate, Pp.60-68.

Status of Kewart in the Medieval Period:Portrayal in Ramacharitamanas of Tulsi Das

Goswami Tulsidas is considered to be one of the greatest poets in Hindi, Indian, and world literature. He is considered to be one of the most famous representatives of the Bhakti school of Hinduism. Details of his early life are a bit sketchy. Some say that he was born in 1589, while others say that it was in 1532. His literary work was most impressive. He was a Sanskrit scholar, but he is known for his works in Awadhi. He is particularly known for his Tulsi-Krita Ramacharitamanasa. It is said that he died on the bank of Ganges at the Assi Ghat in Varanasi (Benares) in about 1623(CE) or Vikram 1680. Ramacharitamanas (रामचरितमानस, 1574–1576) is an Awadhi rendering of the Ramayana narratives. It is the longest and earliest work of Tulsidas, and draws from various sources including the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Adhyatma Ramayana, the Prasannaraghava and Hanuman Nataka. The work consists of around 12,800 lines divided into 1073 stanzas, which are groups of Chaupais separated by Dohas or Sorthas. It is divided into seven books (Kands) like the Ramayana of Valmiki, and is around one-third of the size of Valmiki's Ramayana.

In the Ramacharitamanas, Kevata, Kevatu, Kevatahi, Nisada, Nisadahi, Nisadapati, Nisadu etc.words have been used for ferrymen or boatmen. Their references as occurred in Ramacharitamanas are given below: -

2.88

चौपाई

यह सुधि गुहँ निषाद जब पाई। मुदित लिए प्रिय बंधु बोलाई॥
लिए फल मूल भेंट भरि भारा। मिलन चलेउ हिंयँ हरषु अपारा॥१॥
करि दंडवत भेंट धरि आगें। प्रभुहि बिलोकत अति अनुरागें॥
सहज सनेह बिबस रघुराई। पूँछी कुसल निकट बैठाई॥२॥
नाथ कुसल पद पंकज देखें। भयउँ भागभाजन जन लेखें॥
देव धरनि धनु धामु तुम्हारा। में जनु नीचु सहित परिवारा॥३॥

कृपा करिअ पुर धारिअ पाऊ। थापिय जनु सबु लोगु सिहाऊ।।
कहेहु सत्य सबु सखा सुजाना। मोहि दीन्ह पितु आयसु आना।।४।। (2-88)

(When Guha, the Nisada,* got this news, he gladly called together his near and dear ones and taking by way of presents fruits and roots in baskets slung across their shoulders, he proceeded to meet the Lord with infinite joy in his heart. Prostrating himself on the ground and placing the presents before the Lord he gazed on Him with great affection. The Lord of Raghus, who is won by natural affection, seated him by His side and inquired about his welfare. "The sight of your lotus feet, my lord, is the root of all welfare; I can now count myself as a blessed man. My land, house and fortune are yours, holy sir; my family and myself are your humble servants. Do me the favour of visiting my town and confer dignity on me. Let everyone envy my lot." "Everything you have said is true; my wise friend; but my father has commanded me otherwise.)

दोहा/सोरठा

बरष चारिदस बासु बन मुनि ब्रत बेषु अहारु।
ग्राम बासु नहिं उचित सुनि गुहहि भयउ दुखु भारु।।४४।।

“For four years and ten my home shall be in the woods and my mode of life, dress and food shall be that of a hermit. Hence my staying in a village would be hardly advisable.” Guha was deeply distressed to hear this.” (2 – 88)

चौपाई

राम लखन सिय रूप निहारी। कहहिं सप्रेम ग्राम नर नारी।।
ते पितु मातु कहहु सखि कैसे। जिन्ह पठए बन बालक ऐसे।।१।।
एक कहहिं भल भूपति कीन्हा। लोयन लाहु हमहि बिधि दीन्हा।।
तब निषादपति उर अनुमाना। तरु सिंसुपा मनोहर जाना।।२।।
लै रघुनाथहि ठाउँ देखावा। कहेउ राम सब भाँति सुहावा।।
पुरजन करि जोहारु घर आए। रघुबर संध्या करन सिधाए।।३।।

गुहँ सँवारि साँथरी डसाई। कुस किसलयमय मृदुल सुहाई॥
सुचि फल मूल मधुर मृदु जानी। दोना भरि भरि राखेसि पानी॥४॥ (2-89)

(Beholding the beauty of Sri Rama, Laksmana and Sita, men and women of the village feelingly said, "What sort of parents, O friend, can they be who have sent such children to the forest?" Other people said, "The king has done well in that God has thereby rewarded our eyes." The Chief of the Nisadas then pondered within himself and perceived a charming Asoka tree. He took the Lord of Raghus to the spot and showed it to Him, when Sri Rama declared that the place was beautiful in every way. The people of the town then returned home after paying their respects to Him, while the Chief of Raghus retired for performing His evening devotions. In the meantime Guha prepared a soft and beautiful bed of Kusa grass and tender leaves and spread it on the ground. He also placed besides Him with his own hands cups of leaves full of fruits and roots which he knew to be pure, delicious and soft.)

चौपाई

उठे लखनु प्रभु सोवत जानी। कहि सचिवहि सोवन मृदु बानी॥
कछुक दूर सजि बान सरासन। जागन लगे बैठि बीरासन॥ १॥
गुँह बोलाइ पाहरू प्रतीती। ठावँ ठाँव राखे अति प्रीती॥
आपु लखन पहिँ बैठेउ जाई। कटि भाथी सर चाप चढ़ाई॥२॥
सोवत प्रभुहि निहारि निषादू। भयउ प्रेम बस हृदयँ बिषादू॥
तनु पुलकित जलु लोचन बहई। बचन सप्रेम लखन सन कहई॥३॥
भूपति भवन सुभायँ सुहावा। सुरपति सदनु न पटतर पावा॥
मनिमय रचित चारु चौबारे। जनु रतिपति निज हाथ सँवारे॥ ४॥ (२-९०)

(When Laksmana perceived that his lord had fallen asleep, he rose and asked the minister in soft accents to retire. As for himself he got ready his bow and arrows and sitting at some distance in the posture of a hero he kept watch. Guha called his trusted watchmen and stationed them at different points with great love; while he himself went and took his seat beside Laksmana with a quiver fastened to his waist and an arrow

fitted to his bow. When the Nisada chief saw his lord lying (on a bed of grass and leaves) he felt great sorrow in his heart due to excess of love; the hair on his body bristled, tears flowed from his eyes and he addressed the following affectionate words to Laksmana: "The king's palace is naturally charming; even Indra's residence can hardly stand comparison with it. Its beautiful attics are built of precious gems and are so lovely as though the god of love has constructed them with his own hands.")

चौपाई

भइ दिनकर कुल बिटप कुठारी। कुमति कीन्ह सब बिस्व दुखारी॥
 भयउ बिषादु निषादहि भारी। राम सीय महि सयन निहारी॥१॥
 बोले लखन मधुर मृदु बानी। ग्यान बिराग भगति रस सानी॥
 काहु न कोउ सुख दुख कर दाता। निज कृत करम भोग सबु भ्राता॥२॥ (२-९२)

"The wicked woman has played the axe in felling the tree of the solar race and plunged the whole universe in woe." The Nisada chief was sore distressed to see Rama and Sita sleeping on the ground. Laksmana spoke to him sweet and gentle words imbued with the nectar of wisdom, dispassion and devotion:

चौपाई

तुम्ह पुनि पितु सम अति हित मोरें। बिनती करउँ तात कर जोरें॥
 सब बिधि सोइ करतब्य तुम्हारें। दुख न पाव पितु सोच हमारें॥१॥
 सुनि रघुनाथ सचिव संबादू। भयउ सपरिजन बिकल निषादू॥
 पुनि कछु लखन कही कटु बानी। प्रभु बरजे बड़ अनुचित जानी॥२॥ (२-९६)

(You too are extremely kind to me as my own father. Hence I pray with joined palms, sire, do everything in your power to see that my father does not feel miserable on account of grief for us." Hearing this conversation between the Lord of Raghus and the minister (Sumantra) the Nisada chief and his people felt much distressed.)

दोहा

रथ हाँकेउ हय राम तन हेरि हेरि हिहिनाहिं।
देखि निषाद बिषादबस धुनहिं सीस पछिताहिं॥११॥

(As he drove the chariot the horses turned their eyes towards Sri Rama and neighed. Overcome with grief at this sight, the Nisadas (Guha's men) beat their heads and lamented.)

चौपाई

जासु बियोग बिकल पसु ऐसे। प्रजा मातु पितु जिइहहिं कैसें॥
बरबस राम सुमंत्रु पठाए। सुरसरि तीर आपु तब आए॥१॥
मागी नाव न केवटु आना। कहइ तुम्हार मरमु में जाना॥
चरन कमल रज कहूँ सबु कहई। मानुष करनि मूरि कछु अहई॥२॥
छुअत सिला भइ नारि सुहाई। पाहन तें न काठ कठिनाई॥
तरनिउ मुनि घरिनि होइ जाई। बाट परइ मोरि नाव उड़ाई॥३॥
एहिं प्रतिपालउँ सबु परिवारु। नहिं जानउँ कछु अउर कबारु॥
जौ प्रभु पार अवसि गा चहहू। मोहि पद पदुम पखारन कहहू॥४॥ (२-१००)

(When even beasts felt so miserable on being torn away from Him how could His subjects and His father and mother hope to live without Him? Sri Rama dismissed Sumantra against the latter's will and Himself arrived at the bank of the heavenly stream (Ganga) immediately afterwards. He called for a boat, but the ferryman would not bring it. The latter said, "I know your secret; about the dust of your lotus-feet everyone says it is some drug possessing the quality of turning things into human beings. By its very touch a rock was transformed into a charming woman* and wood is not harder than stone. If my boat itself gets converted into a hermit's wife (like Ahalya), I shall be robbed of the very means of my subsistence in that my boat will disappear. It is by means of this boat that I maintain the whole of my family; I know

no other trade. If, therefore, my lord, you must cross the river, command me to lave your lotus-feet.)

छंद

पद कमल धोइ चढ़ाइ नाव न नाथ उतराई चहौं।
मोहि राम राउरि आन दसरथ सपथ सब साची कहौं॥
बरु तीर मारहूँ लखनु पै जब लगि न पाय पखारिहौं।
तब लगि न तुलसीदास नाथ कृपाल पारु उतारिहौं॥

(I will let you board the boat only when i have bathed your lotus-feet; I seek no toll from you. I swear by you, O Rama, as well as by King Dasaratha, that what I tell you is all true. Let Lakshmana shoot me with his arrows if he will; but until I have washed your feet I will not, O gracious lord of Tulasidasa, ferry you across.)

सोरठा

सुनि केबट के बैन प्रेम लपेटे अटपटे।
बिहसे करुनाएन चितइ जानकी लखन तन॥100॥

(On hearing these words of the ferryman, mysterious though imbued with love, the all-merciful Lord at Janaka's Daughter and Lakshmana and smiled.)

चौपाई

कृपासिंधु बोले मुसुकाई। सोइ करु जेहि तव नाव न जाई॥
वेगि आनु जल पाय पखारु। होत बिलंबु उतारहि पारु॥१॥
जासु नाम सुमरत एक बारा। उतरहिं नर भवसिंधु अपारा॥
सोइ कृपालु केवटहि निहोरा। जेहिं जगु किय तिहु पगहु ते थोरा॥२॥
पद नख निरखि देवसरि हरषी। सुनि प्रभु बचन मोहँ मति करषी॥
केवट राम रजायसु पावा। पानि कठवता भरि लेइ आवा॥३॥

अति आनंद उमगि अनुरागा। चरन सरोज पखारन लागा।।
बरषि सुमन सुर सकल सिहाहीं। एहि सम पुन्यपुंज कोउ नाहीं।।४।।(२-१०१)

(The all-compassionate Lord smilingly said, "Do that which may prevent the loss of your boat. Bring water at once and lave my feet; we are getting late, take us across." The same gracious Lord, by uttering whose Name only once men cross the boundless ocean of mundane existence, and for whose three strides the universe proved too small*, thus importuned an ordinary boatman. Though bewildered by the Lord's words, the celestial river (Ganga) rejoiced on beholding the nails of His toes. On receiving Sri Rama's command, the ferryman brought a wood basin full of water. In great joy and with a heart overflowing with love he proceeded to bathe the Lord's lotus-feet. Raining flowers on him all the gods envied his lot and said there was none so meritorious as he.)

दोहा

पद पखारि जलु पान करि आपु सहित परिवार।
पितर पारु करि प्रभुहि पुनि मुदित गयउ लेइ पार।।१०१।।

(Having laved the Lord's feet and drunk of the water in which they had been immersed alongwith the other members of his family, he thereby transported the souls of his deceased forbears across the ocean of metempsychosis and then gladly took the Lord across the Ganga.)

चौपाई

उतरि ठाड़ भए सुरसरि रेता। सीयराम गुह लखन समेता।।
केवट उतरि दंडवत कीन्हा। प्रभुहि सकुच एहि नहिं कछु दीन्हा।।१।।
पिय हिय की सिय जाननिहारी। मनि मुदरी मन मुदित उतारी।।
कहेउ कृपाल लेहि उतराई। केवट चरन गहे अकुलाई।।२।।
नाथ आजु में काह न पावा। मिटे दोष दुख दारिद दावा।।
बहुत काल में कीन्हि मजूरी। आजु दीन्ह बिधि बनि भलि भूरी।।३।।

अब कछु नाथ न चाहिअ मोरें। दीनदयाल अनुग्रह तोरें॥
फिरती बार मोहि जे देबा। सो प्रसादु में सिर धरि लेबा॥४॥ (2-102)

(Getting down from the boat Sita and Rama stood on the sands of the Ganga alongwith Guha and Laksmana. The ferryman too got down and fell prostrate before the Lord, who felt uncomfortable at the thought that He had given nothing to the ferryman. Sita, however, who could read the mind of Her beloved lord, took off Her jewelled ring with a cheerful heart. The gracious Lord said, "Take your toll." But the ferryman clasped His feet in great distress. "What have I not already received, my lord? The fire of my errors, sorrows and indigence has been quenched today. I worked for my livelihood for a long time; it is only today that God has given me an adequate and handsome return. By your grace, my compassionate Lord, I want nothing now. While returning, whatever you bestow on me I shall thankfully accept that boon.")

दोहा

बहुत कीन्ह प्रभु लखन सियँ नहिं कछु केवटु लेइ।
बिदा कीन्ह करुनायतन भगति बिमल बरु देइ॥102॥

The Lord as well as Lakshmana and Sita dis their utmost; but the ferryman would accept nothing. The All-merciful Rama, therefore, dismissed him after bestowing on him the boon of unalloyed devotion.

चौपाई

गंग बचन सुनि मंगल मूला। मुदित सीय सुरसरि अनुकुला॥
तब प्रभु गुहहि कहेउ घर जाहू। सुनत सूख मुखु भा उर दाहू॥१॥
दीन बचन गुह कह कर जोरी। बिनय सुनहू रघुकुलमनि मोरी॥
नाथ साथ रहि पंथु देखाई। करि दिन चारि चरन सेवकाई॥२॥
जेहिं बन जाइ रहब रघुराई। परनकुटी में करबि सुहाई॥
तब मोहि कहँ जसि देब रजाई। सोइ करिहउँ रघुबीर दोहाई॥३॥
सहज सनेह राम लखि तासु। संग लीन्ह गुह हृदय हलासू॥
पुनि गुहँ ग्याति बोलि सब लीन्हे। करि परितोषु बिदा तब कीन्हे॥४॥ (२-१०४)

Sita rejoiced to hear these benedictory words of goddess Ganga and to find her favourably disposed. Then the Lord said to Guha, "Go home." The moment he heard this his face turned pale and there was great agony in his heart. With joined palms Guha addressed the Lord in pathetic terms: "Hear my prayer, O Jewel of Raghu's race; let me remain with you, my lord, and show you the road; after serving you for a few days I shall prepare a beautiful hut of leaves for you in whichever forest, O Lord of Raghus, you may go and take up your abode. Thereafter I swear by you, O Chief of Raghus, to do as you bid me." Perceiving his natural love Sri Rama took him with Him and Guha felt much joy in his heart. Then Guha summoned all his kinsmen and having gratified them sent them away.

दोहा

तब गनपति सिव सुमिरि प्रभु नाइ सुरसरिहि माथ।
सखा अनुज सिया सहित बन गवनु कीन्ह रधुनाथ॥104॥

Then the Lord invoked the gods Ganesa and Siva; and bowing His head to the celestial stream (Ganga) the Lord of Raghus processed to the woods with his friend (Guha), His younger brother (Laksman) and Sita.

चौपाई

तेहि दिन भयउ बिटप तर बासू। लखन सखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू॥
प्रात प्रातकृत करि रधुसाई। तीरथराजु दीख प्रभु जाई॥१॥ (२-१०५)

That day He halted under a tree; Laksmana and His friend (Guha) provided for all His comforts.

चौपाई

कीन्ह निषाद दंडवत तेही। मिलेउ मुदित लखि राम सनेही॥
पिअत नयन पुट रूपु पियूषा। मुदित सुअसनु पाइ जिमि भूखा॥३॥
ते पितु मातु कहहु सखि कैसे। जिन्ह पठए बन बालक ऐसे॥
राम लखन सिय रूपु निहारी। होहिं सनेह बिकल नर नारी॥४॥ (२-१११)

The Nisada chief in his turn fell prostrate before the hermit, who gladly embraced him recognizing him to be a friend of Sri Rama. With the cup of his eyes he drank the nectar of Sri Rama's beauty and was delighted as a hungry soul who had secured excellent food *. "Tell me, friend, what are those father and mother like, that have exiled to the woods children such as these?" Beholding the beauty of Sri Rama, Laksmana and Sita, men and women alike were ill at ease on account of love.

दोहा/सोरठा

तब रघुबीर अनेक बिधि सखहि सिखावनु दीन्ह।
राम रजायसु सीस धरि भवन गवनु तेंई कीन्ह॥१११॥

(The Hero of Raghu's race then admonished His friend (Guha) in ways more than one. And bowing to Sri Rama's commands he left for his home)

चौपाई

फिरेउ निषादु प्रभुहि पहुँचाई। सचिव सहित रथ देखेसि आई॥
मंत्री बिकल बिलोकि निषादू। कहि न जाइ जस भयउ बिषादू॥३॥
राम राम सिय लखन पुकारी। परेउ धरनितल ब्याकुल भारी॥
देखि दखिन दिसि हय हिहिनाहीं। जनु बिनु पंख बिहग अकुलाहीं॥४॥ (२-१४२)

When the Nisada chief returned after escorting the Lord, he saw the minister (Sumantra) with the chariot. The minister was distressed to see the Nisada chief; words fail to describe the agony which he felt at the moment. Crying out "Rama, Rama, Sita, Laksmana" he (Sumantra) dropped on the ground utterly helpless; while the horses kept looking on to the south and neighed. They were as restless as birds shorn of their wings.

दोहा/सोरठा

नहिं तृन चरहिं पिअहिं जलु मोचहिं लोचन बारि।
ब्याकुल भए निषाद सब रघुबर बाजि निहारि॥142॥

They would neither eat grass nor drink water; while their eyes kept shedding tears. The whole party of Nisadas was distressed to see the horses of Sri Rama (the Chief of Raghu's line).

चौपाई

धरि धीरज तब कहइ निषादू। अब सुमंत्र परिहरहु बिषादू॥
तुम्ह पंडित परमारथ गयाता। धरहु धीर लखि बिमुख बिधाता॥१॥
बिबिध कथा कहि कहि मृदु बानी। रथ बैठारेउ बरबस आनी॥
सोक सिथिल रथ सकइ न हाँकी। रघुबर बिरह पीर उर बाँकी॥२॥

(Then recovering himself, the Nisada said, "Sumantra, cease sorrowing now. You are a man of wisdom and a knower of the highest truth; therefore, compose yourself realizing that Fate is unpropitious to you." Narrating various legends in soft accents, he took him by force and seated him in the chariot. But overpowered by grief he could not drive the chariot; the agony of separation from Rama (the Chief of Raghu's line) was severe in his heart.)

दोहा

भयउ निषाद बिषादबस देखत सचिव तुरंग।
बोलि सुसेवक चारि तब दिए सारथी संग॥143॥

The Nisada was overcome with grief as he beheld the minister and his horses. He then called four trusted grooms and sent them with the charioteer (Sumantra).

चौपाई

गुह सारथिहि फिरेउ पहुँचाई। बिरहु बिषादु बरनि नहिं जाई॥

चले अवध लेइ रथहि निषादा। होहि छनहिं छन मगन बिषादा॥१॥ (२-१४४)

Seeing off the charioteer, Guha returned; the agony of his separation was too deep for words. And the Nisadas drove off to Ayodhya, plunged in sorrow every moment.

चौपाई

एहि बिधि करत पंथ पछितावा। तमसा तीर तुरत रथु आवा॥

बिदा किए करि बिनय निषादा। फिरे पायँ परि बिकल बिषादा॥१॥ (२-१४७)

While Sumantra was thus lamenting on the way, his chariot presently reached the bank of the Tamasa river. He politely dismissed the Nisadas, who fell at his feet and returned with a heart stricken with grief.

चौपाई

सई तीर बसि चले बिहाने। संगुबेरपुर सब निअराने॥

समाचार सब सुने निषादा। हृदयँ बिचार करइ सबिषादा॥१॥

कारन कवन भरतु बन जाहीं। है कछु कपट भाउ मन माहीं॥

जौं पै जियँ न होति कुटिलाई। तौ कत लीन्ह संग कटकाई॥२॥

जानहिं सानुज रामहि मारी। करउँ अकंटक राजु सुखारी॥

भरत न राजनीति उर आनी। तब कलंकु अब जीवन हानी॥३॥

सकल सुरासुर जुरहिं जुझारा। रामहि समर न जीतनिहारा॥

का आचरजु भरतु अस करहीं। नहिं बिष बेलि अमिअ फल फरहीं॥४॥ (२-१८९)

Halting on the bank of the Sai* river they resumed their journey at daybreak and the whole party drew near to Srngaverapura†. When the Nisada chief (Guha) heard the whole story, he anxiously thought within himself: "What motive can Bharata have in journeying to the woods? He must have some evil design at heart. If he had no mischievous intention at heart, why should he have brought an army with him? He must have thought that after killing Rama and his younger brother (Laksmana) he would reign peacefully and happily. But Bharata did not take to heart the maxims of sound polity; latterly he brought on himself stigma alone but this time he will meet a sure death. If all the warriors among the gods and demons combine against Sri Rama, even they will fail to conquer him in battle. But what wonder that Bharata should behave as he is doing; for venomous plants, after all, can never bear fruits of ambrosia."

* They (Bharata, Satradhan and all other people) halted the first day on the bank of the Tamasa river and made the next halt on the bank of the Gomati. Tamasa (Now popularly known by the name of Tons) is a branch of Ghaghara which leaves that river about 10 miles from the Ayodhya and after flowing past the town of Azamgarh falls into the Sarayu.

* The Sai rises about midway between the Gomati and the Ganga and falls into the former 10 miles below the city of Jaunpur.

* The site of the ancient Srngaverapura is marked by a village bearing the same name under the modernized form 'Singraur' 22 miles to the north-west of Allahabad. The Ganga has changed its course and only a small branch now flows through the old channel.

दोहा

अस बिचारि गुहँ गयाति सन कहेउ सजग सब होहु।

हथवाँसहु बोरहु तरनि कीजिअ घाटारोहु॥189॥

(Pondering thus Guha said to his kinsmen, "Be alert all of you; collect the boats and sink them and blockade the ghats (flight of steps leading to the river landingplace).)

चौपाई

होहु सँजोइल रोकहु घाटा। ठाटहु सकल मरै के ठाटा॥
सनमुख लोह भरत सन लेऊँ। जिअत न सुरसरि उतरन देऊँ॥१॥
समर मरनु पुनि सुरसरि तीरा। राम काजु छनभंगु सरीरा॥
भरत भाइ नृपु मै जन नीचू। बड़ें भाग असि पाइअ मीचू॥२॥
स्वामि काज करिहँ रन रारी। जस धवलिहँ भुवन दस चारी॥
तजँ प्रान रघुनाथ निहोरें। दुहँ हाथ मुद मोदक मोरें॥३ ॥
साधु समाज न जाकर लेखा। राम भगत महुँ जासु न रेखा॥
जायँ जिअत जग सो महि भारू। जननी जौबन बिटप कुठारू॥४॥ (२-१९०)

(Equip yourself and blockade the ghats; be prepared in every way to face death. I go to encounter Bharata in open combat and would not let him cross the Ganga so long as there is life in me. To die in battle and that too on the bank of the Ganga; and to lay down this frail body in Sri Rama's cause! Then Bharata is Sri Rama's own brother and a king; while I am an humble servant! It is through a great good fortune that one meets with a death like this. In the cause of my master, I will fight on the battlefield and will brighten the fourteen spheres with my glory. I am going to lay down my life for the sake of Sri Rama (the Lord of Raghus) and will be a gainer either way. (If I win the battle, I will have served the cause of my master, and if I die, I will attain the eternal abode of the Lord and his constant service.) He who is not reckoned among the virtuous

and is neither counted among Sri Rama's devotees lives in vain in this world; he is a veritable burden to the earth and an axe to the tree of his mother's youth.)

दोहा

बिगत बिषाद निषादपति सबहि बढाइ उछाहु।
सुमिरि राम मागेउ तुरत तरकस धनुष सनाहु॥190॥

The Nisada chief, who was not the least troubled at heart, encouraged all and, fixing his thought on Sri Rama, forthwith demanded his quiver, bow and coat of mail.

चौपाई

बेगहु भाइहु सजहु सँजोऊ। सुनि रजाइ कदराइ न कोऊ॥
भलेहिं नाथ सब कहहिं सहरषा। एकहिं एक बढावइ करषा॥१॥
चले निषाद जोहारि जोहारी। सूर सकल रन रूचइ रारी॥
सुमिरि राम पद पंकज पनहीं। भार्थी बाँधि चढाइन्हि धनहीं॥२॥
अँगरी पहिरि कूँडि सिर धरहीं। फरसा बाँस सेल सम करहीं॥
एक कुसल अति ओइन खाँडे। कूदहि गगन मनहुँ छिति छाँडे॥३॥
निज निज साजु समाजु बनाई। गुह राउतहि जोहारे जाई॥
देखि सुभट सब लायक जाने। लै लै नाम सकल सनमाने॥४॥ (२-१९१)

Make haste, brethren, to get ready the necessary equipment; on hearing my command, let no one shrink in fear." "All right, my lord," they all joyfully responded, and roused the spirit of one another. Greeting their chief one after another, the Nisadas left; they were all brave and loved to fight on the battlefield. Invoking the shoes of Sri Rama's lotus feet, they fastened their quiver and strung their bow. Nay, they donned their coat of mail, placed the helmet on their head and straightened their axe, bludgeon and spear. Some of them who were exceptionally clever at fencing, sprang with such agility that it seemed they never touched the ground and moved in the air. Equipping themselves with their weapons etc., and forming themselves into batches they all went up to their

chief, Guha, and greeted him. Seeing his gallant warriors and finding them all fit for active service he addressed them, each by his name, and duly honoured them.

दोहा/सोरठा

भाइहू लावहू धोख जनि आजु काज बड़ मोहि।
सुनि सरोष बोले सुभट बीर अधीर न होहि॥१९१॥

(Spare not your life, brethren; there is a great issue before me today." At this the gallant warriors spiritedly exclaimed, "Have patience, our brave chieftain!")

चौपाई

राम प्रताप नाथ बल तोरे। करहिं कटकु बिनु भट बिनु घोरे॥
जीवत पाउ न पाछें धरहीं। रुंड मुंडमय मेदिनि करहीं॥१॥
दीख निषादनाथ भल टोलू। कहेउ बजाउ जुझाऊ ढोलू॥
एतना कहत छींक भइ बाँए। कहेउ सगुनिअन्ह खेत सुहाए॥२॥
बूढ़ एकु कह सगुन बिचारी। भरतहि मिलिअ न होइहि रारी॥
रामहि भरतु मनावन जाहीं। सगुन कहइ अस बिग्रहू नाहीं॥३॥
सुनि गुह कहइ नीक कह बूढ़ा। सहसा करि पछिताहिं बिमूढ़ा॥
भरत सुभाउ सीलु बिनु बूझें। बड़ि हित हानि जानि बिनु जूझें॥४॥ (२-१९२)

(Through the majesty of Sri Rama and by your might, my lord, we shall leave no fighting man or horse in the enemy's ranks. We shall never retrace our steps so long as there is life in us; nay, we shall strew the earth with the trunks and heads of fallen warriors!" The Nisada chief saw that he had a good band of warriors and exclaimed, "Beat the martial drum." Even as he said so someone sneezed on the left. The sooth-sayers said, "The sneeze has come from an auspicious quarter! (The issue will be a happy one.)" An old man thought over the meaning of the omen and exclaimed, "Let us go and meet Bharata; there will be no conflict. Bharata is out to persuade Sri Rama to return. The omen tells us that there will be no discord." On hearing this Guha said,

"The old man says aright. Fools act precipitately and repent. If we come to a clash without knowing Bharata's intentions and ascertaining his temper and disposition, we shall be doing much harm to our own cause.)

दोहा

गहहू घाट भट समिति सब लेउँ मरम मिलि जाइ।
बूझि मित्र अरि मध्य गति तस तब करिहउँ आइ॥१९२॥

(Close up, all my warriors, and blockade the ghats till I meet Bharata and find out what is in his mind. When I have ascertained his friendly, hostile or neutral attitude I shall act accordingly after that.)

चौपाई

लखन सनेहू सुभायँ सुहाएँ। बैरु प्रीति नहिं दुरइँ दुराएँ॥
अस कहि भेंट सँजोवन लागे। कंद मूल फल खग मृग मागे॥१॥
मीन पीन पाठीन पुराने। भरि भरि भार कहारन्ह आने॥
मिलन साजु सजि मिलन सिधाए। मंगल मूल सगुन सुभ पाए॥२॥
देखि दूरि तैं कहि निज नामू। कीन्ह मुनीसहि दंड प्रनामू॥
जानि रामप्रिय दीन्हि असीसा। भरतहि कहेउ बुझाइ मुनीसा॥३॥
राम सखा सुनि संदनु त्यागा। चले उतरि उमगत अनुरागा॥
गाउँ जाति गुहँ नाउँ सुनाई। कीन्ह जोहारु माथ महि लाई॥४॥ (२-१९३)

(I shall test his love on the touchstone of his friendly disposition; for hatred and love cannot be disguised even if one tries to do so." So, saying he began to collect articles for making a present and sent for bulbs, roots and fruits as well as birds and deer. Men of the porter class also brought loads of fat and ripe fish of the Pathina* species. Thus, equipping himself with presents he proceeded to meet Bharata and met with auspicious and happy omens. As soon as he saw the chief of sages, Vasistha, he mentioned his own name and prostrated himself before the sage from a distance. The sage, who knew him to be a friend of Sri Rama, bestowed his blessing on him and told Bharata in detail

about him. Hearing that he was a friend of Sri Rama, Bharata alighted from his chariot and, leaving it behind, advanced towards him with a heart overflowing with love. Guha, on his part mentioned his village, caste and name and greeted him by placing his head on the ground.)

दोहा

करत दंडवत देखि तेहि भरत लीन्ह उर लाइ।
मनहुँ लखन सन भेंट भइ प्रेम न हृदयँ समाइ॥193॥

(When Bharata saw him (Guha) falling prostrate on the ground he lifted him and pressed him to his bosom. He felt as if he had met Laksmana and the surging emotion of his heart could not be repressed.)

चौपाई

भेंटत भरतु ताहि अति प्रीती। लोग सिहाहिं प्रेम कै रीती॥
धन्य धन्य धुनि मंगल मूला। सुर सराहि तेहि बरिसहिं फूला॥१॥
लोक बेद सब भाँतिहिं नीचा। जासु छाँह छुड़ लेइअ सीचा॥
तेहि भरि अंक राम लघु भ्राता। मिलत पुलक परिपूरित गाता॥२॥
राम राम कहि जे जमुहाहीं। तिन्हहि न पाप पुंज समुहाहीं॥
यह तौ राम लाइ उर लीन्हा। कुल समेत जगु पावन कीन्हा॥३॥
करमनास जलु सुरसरि परई। तेहि को कहहु सीस नहिं धरई॥
उलटा नामु जपत जगु जाना। बालमीकि भए ब्रह्म समाना॥४॥ (२-१९४)

[Bharata embraced him with great affection and the people admired the mode of his love. Raising a jubilant cry of applause, the gods extolled him and rained flowers on him. "This man is low in the eyes of the world as well as from the point of view of the Vedas, so much so that one must bathe even on crossing his shadow. Yet Sri Rama's younger brother, Bharata, has met him in close embrace, his body thrilling all over with joy. Hosts of sins turn away from them who utter the name of Rama even while yawning. As for this man he was embraced by Sri Rama Himself, who thereby

bestowed on him and his family the efficacy of sanctifying the whole world. Where the water of the Karmanasa joins the celestial stream (the Ganga) tell me who would not place it on his head! The whole world knows how Valmiki became as good as Brahma (God Himself) by repeating the name (Rama) in the reverse way (as Mara).]

चौपाई

रामसखहि मिलि भरत सप्रेमा। पूँछी कुसल सुमंगल खेमा॥
देखि भरत कर सील सनेहू। भा निषाद तेहि समय बिदेहू॥२॥
सकुच सनेहू मोदु मन बाढ़ा। भरतहि चितवत एकटक ठाढ़ा॥
धरि धीरजु पद बंदि बहोरी। बिनय सप्रेम करत कर जोरी॥३॥
कुसल मूल पद पंकज पेखी। मैं तिहूँ काल कुसल निज लेखी॥
अब प्रभु परम अनुग्रह तोरें। सहित कोटि कुल मंगल मोरें॥४॥ (२-१९५)

(Having thus met Sri Rama's friend (Guha), Bharata lovingly enquired after his health, welfare and happiness. Seeing Bharata's amiability and affection on that occasion the Nisada forgot all about himself. His bashfulness, love and soul's delight grew; and he stood gazing at Bharata with unwinking eyes. Collecting himself he bowed at Bharata's feet again and with joined palms lovingly submitted, "Now that I have beheld your lotus feet, which are the very fountain of happiness, I have accounted myself blessed for all time. And now, my lord, by your supreme grace my welfare is assured for millions of generations.)

चौपाई

कपटी कायर कुमति कुजाती। लोक बेद बाहेर सब भाँती॥
राम कीन्ह आपन जबही तें। भयउँ भुवन भूषन तबही तें॥१॥
देखि प्रीति सुनि बिनय सुहाई। मिलेउ बहोरि भरत लघु भाई॥
कहि निषाद निज नाम सुबानीं। सादर सकल जोहारीं रानीं॥२॥
जानि लखन सम देहिं असीसा। जिअहु सुखी सय लाख बरीसा॥

निरखि निषादु नगर नर नारी। भए सुखी जनु लखनु निहारी॥३॥

कहहिं लहेउ एहिं जीवन लाहू। भँटेउ रामभद्र भरि बाहू॥

सुनि निषादु निज भाग बड़ाई। प्रमुदित मन लइ चलेउ लेवाई॥४॥ (२-१९६)

(False, cowardly, evil-minded and low-born as I am and cast off from society as well as from the fold of the Vedas in every way, I have become the ornament of the world ever since Sri Rama took me for his own." Seeing his affection and hearing his humble submission Bharata's younger brother, Satrugna, embraced him next. The Nisada chief then greeted all the dowager queens in polite and respectful terms, mentioning his name each time. Treating him on the same footing as Laksmana they gave him their blessing: May you live happily for millions of years. The men and women of the city were as glad to see the Nisada chief as if they saw Laksmana, and said, "He has surely reaped the reward of his existence in that our beloved Rama folded him in his arms." Hearing them extol his good fortune the Nisada chief led them with a cheerful heart.)

दोहा/सोरठा

सनकारे सेवक सकल चले स्वामि रुख पाइ।

घर तरु तर सर बाग बन बास बनाएन्हि जाइ॥१९६॥

(Receiving a signal from him and learning their master's will all his attendants dispersed; and reaching the residential quarters, the foot of trees, ponds, orchards and groves they made room for the guests to take up their lodging).

चौपाई

सृंगबेरपुर भरत दीख जब। भे सनेहँ सब अंग सिथिल तब॥

सोहत दिँ निषादहि लागू। जनु तनु धरें बिनय अनुरागू॥१॥ (२-१९७)

(When Bharata beheld the town of Srngaverapura, all his limbs were overpowered with emotion. Leaning on the Nisada chief he presented a goodly sight; it appeared as if meekness and love had taken a living form.)

चौपाई

जहँ तहँ लोगन्ह डेरा कीन्हा। भरत सोधु सबही कर लीन्हा॥
सुर सेवा करि आयसु पाई। राम मातु पहिं गे दोउ भाई॥१॥
चरन चाँपि कहि कहि मृदु बानी। जननीं सकल भरत सनमानी॥
भाइहि सौँपि मातु सेवकाई। आपु निषादहि लीन्ह बोलाई॥२॥
चले सखा कर सौं कर जोरें। सिथिल सरीर सनेह न थोरें॥
पूँछत सखहि सो ठाउँ देखाऊ। नेकु नयन मन जरनि जुड़ाऊ॥३॥
जहँ सिय रामु लखनु निसि सोए। कहत भरे जल लोचन कोए॥
भरत बचन सुनि भयउ बिषादू। तुरत तहाँ लइ गयउ निषादू॥४॥ (२-१९८)

The people took up their lodgings at different places and Bharata made enquiries about all. After worshipping the gods and taking leave of them the two brothers (Bharata and Satrugna) went up to Sri Rama's mother (Kausalya). Bharata showed respect to all his mothers by kneading their feet and speaking to each in polite terms. Then entrusting his brother with the service of his mothers he himself summoned the Nisada chief and went hand in hand with him, his body overpowered with excess of love. He asked his friend to show him the spot-and thereby soothe the agony of his eyes and soul to some extent-where Sita, Sri Rama and Laksmana had slept at night. Even as he spoke the corners of his eyes were filled with tears. The Nisada chief was distressed to hear Bharata's words and presently took him to the spot-

चौपाई

जमुन तीर तेहि दिन करि बासू। भयउ समय सम सबहि सुपासू॥
रातहिं घाट घाट की तरनी। आई अगनित जाहिं न बरनी॥१॥

प्रातः पार भए एकहि खेवाँ। तोषे रामसखा की सेवाँ॥
चले नहाइ नदिहि सिर नाई। साथ निषादनाथ दोउ भाई॥२॥ (२-१२१)

(That day they halted on the bank of the Yamuna; everyone was provided with comforts according to the occasion. In course of the night innumerable boats of untold varieties came from all the ghats. At daybreak the whole party crossed the river in a single trip; everyone was pleased with the services rendered by the Nisada chief in this behalf. After performing their ablutions and bowing their heads to the river (Yamuna) the two brothers (Bharata and Satrugna) resumed their journey with the lord of Nisadas.)

चौपाई

रामसखाँ तेहि समय देखावा। सैल सिरोमनि सहज सुहावा॥
जासु समीप सरित पय तीरा। सीय समेत बसहिं दोउ बीरा॥३॥ (२-२२५)

(Sri Rama's friend (Guha) presently pointed to Bharata the crest-jewel of mountains (Kamadagiri), which was naturally charming and in the vicinity of which on the bank of the river Payasvini dwelt the two brothers (Sri Rama and Laksmana) alongwith Sita.)

चौपाई

तब केवट ऊँचें चढ़ि धाई। कहेउ भरत सन भुजा उठाई॥
नाथ देखिअहिं बिटप बिसाला। पाकरि जंबु रसाल तमाला॥१॥
जिन्ह तरुबरन्ह मध्य बटु सोहा। मंजु बिसाल देखि मनु मोहा॥
नील सघन पल्लव फल लाला। अबिरल छाहँ सुखद सब काला॥२॥
मानहुँ तिमिर अरुनमय रासी। बिरची बिधि सँकेलि सुषमा सी॥
ए तरु सरित समीप गोसाँई। रघुबर परनकुटी जहँ छाई॥३॥
तुलसी तरुबर बिबिध सुहाए। कहँ कहँ सियँ कहँ लखन लगाए॥
बट छायाँ बेदिका बनाई। सियँ निज पानि सरोज सुहाई॥४॥ (२-२३७)

(In the meantime the Nisada chief ran and climbed up an eminence, and lifting his arm, exclaimed to Bharata; "My lord, look at those huge and noble trees of Pakara (the citron-leaved Indian fig tree), Jambu (the black plum), Mango and Tamala, in the midst of which stands out a beautiful and stately banyan, which is so charming to behold with its dark and dense foliage, red fruit and unbroken shade, which is pleasant throughout the year, as if God had brought together all that was exquisitely beautiful and given it the shape of a dark and rosy mass. The trees in question, my lord, stand close to the riverside where the Chief of Raghus has erected His hut of leaves. In front of it you will find a variety of charming basil shrubs planted here by Sita and there by Laksmana. And in the shade of the banyan tree there is a lovely altar raised by Sita with Her own lotus hands.)

दोहा

जहाँ बैठि मुनिगन सहित नित सिय रामु सुजान।

सुनहिं कथा इतिहास सब आगम निगम पुरान॥237॥

(Seated whereon the all-wise Sita and Rama listen every day, in the midst of a crowd of hermits, to all kinds of stories and legends from the agamas (Tantras), Vedas and Puranas.)

चौपाई

सखा बचन सुनि बिटप निहारी। उमगे भरत बिलोचन बारी॥

करत प्रनाम चले दोउ भाई। कहत प्रीति सारद सकुचाई॥१॥

देखि भरत गति अकथ अतीवा। प्रेम मगन मृग खग जड़ जीवा॥

सखहि सनेह बिबस मग भूला। कहि सुपंथ सुर बरषहिं फूला॥३॥ (२-२३८)

(The moment Bharata heard the words of his friend (Guha) and saw the trees tears rushed to his eyes. The two brothers (Bharata and Satrugna) made obeisance as they

proceeded; even Sarada (the goddess of speech) felt diffident in describing their love (for Sri Rama). Perceiving Bharata's condition, which was altogether beyond description, beasts and birds and even inanimate creatures (such as trees etc.,) were overwhelmed with emotion. Overpowered by love Bharata's friend (Guha) lost his way; but the gods showed it to him and rained flowers.)

चौपाई

सखा समेत मनोहर जोटा। लखेउ न लखन सघन बन ओटा।।

भरत दीख प्रभु आश्रमु पावन। सकल सुमंगल सदन सुहावन।।१।। (२-२३९)

(The two charming brothers and their friend (Guha) could not be seen by Laksmana, screened as they were by a dense thicket. Bharata, however, saw the holy and lovely hermitage of his lord, which was an abode of all fair blessings.)

चौपाई

सानुज सखा समेत मगन मन। बिसरे हरष सोक सुख दुख गन।।

पाहि नाथ कहि पाहि गोसाई। भूतल परे लकुट की नाई।।१।। (२-२४०)

(Bharata as well as his younger brother (Satrughna) and friend (Guha) were so enraptured that their joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, were all forgotten. Uttering the words "Protect me, my lord; save me, my master" he fell flat on the ground like a log.)

दोहा/सोरठा

मिलि सपेम रिपुसूदनहि केवटु भेंटेउ राम।

भूरि भायँ भेंटे भरत लछिमन करत प्रनाम।।२४१।। (२-२४१)

(After fondly embracing Ripusudana (Satrughna) Sri Rama met the Nisada chief. Even so with profuse love Bharata embraced Laksmana while the latter was greeting him.)

चौपाई

भेंटेउ लखन ललकि लघु भाई। बहुरि निषादु लीन्ह उर लाई॥
पुनि मुनिगन दुहँ भाइन्ह बंदे। अभिमत आसिष पाइ अनंदे॥१॥
कोउ किछु कहइ न कोउ किछु पूँछा। प्रेम भरा मन निज गति छूँछा॥
तेहि अवसर केवटु धीरजु धरि। जोरि पानि बिनवत प्रनामु करि॥४॥ (२-२४२)

(Likewise Laksmana eagerly met his younger brother (Satrughna) and next clasped the Nisada chief to his bosom. Then the two brothers (Bharata and Satrughna) greeted the host of hermits and were delighted to receive blessings to their liking. No one uttered a word nor asked any question; the mind was so full of love that it had stopped its activity. Presently the Nisada chief collected himself and bowing his head submitted with joined palms)

चौपाई

प्रेम पुलकि केवट कहि नामू। कीन्ह दूरि तें दंड प्रनामू॥
रामसखा रिषि बरबस भेंटा। जनु महि लुठत सनेह समेटा॥३॥
रघुपति भगति सुमंगल मूला। नभ सराहि सुर बरिसहिं फूला॥
एहि सम निपट नीच कोउ नाहीं। बड़ बसिष्ठ सम को जग माहीं॥४॥ (२-२४३)

(Thrilling all over with emotion and mentioning his name the Nisada chief too fell prostrate on the ground at a respectable distance. The sage, however, forcibly embraced him as a friend of Sri Rama; it seemed as though he had gathered up love lying scattered on the ground. "Devotion to the Lord of Raghus is the root of all choice blessings!" With these words of praise the gods in heaven rained flowers. "There is no one so utterly vile as this man; and who is so great as Vasistha in this world?)

मिलि केवटिहि उमगि अनुरागा। पुरजन सकल सराहहिं भागा॥
देखीं राम दुखित महतारीं। जनु सुबेलि अवलीं हिम मारीं॥३॥ (२-२४४)

(All the citizens met the Nisada chief with a heart overflowing with love and praised his good fortune. Sri Rama found all His mothers as stricken with grief as a row of tender creepers that had been smitten by frost.)

चौपाई

कोल किरात भिल्ल बनबासी। मधु सुचि सुंदर स्वादु सुधा सी॥
भरि भरि परन पुटीं रचि रुरी। कंद मूल फल अंकुर जूरी॥१॥
सबहि देहिं करि बिनय प्रनामा। कहि कहि स्वाद भेद गुन नामा॥
देहिं लोग बहु मोल न लेहीं। फेरत राम दोहाई देहीं॥२॥
कहहिं सनेह मगन मृदु बानी। मानत साधु पेम पहिचानी॥
तुम्ह सुकृती हम नीच निषादा। पावा दरसनु राम प्रसादा॥३॥
हमहि अगम अति दरसु तुम्हारा। जस मरु धरनि देवधुनि धारा॥
राम कृपाल निषाद नेवाजा। परिजन प्रजउ चहिअ जस राजा॥४॥ (२-२५०)

(The Koals, Kiratas, Bhilas and other dwellers of the forest prepared lovely bowls of leaves and filling them with honey, pure, fine and delicious as nectar, presented them with small bundles of bulbs, roots, fruits and sprouts to all the newcomers with humble submission and salutations, severally mentioning the taste, species, virtue and name of each. The people offered a liberal price; but the foresters would not accept it and returned it adjuring them by Sri Rama's love to take it back. Overwhelmed with emotion they submitted in gentle tones: "The good respect true love once they have come to recognize it. You are all virtuous souls, while we are vile Nisadas: it is through Rama's grace that we have been blessed with your sight. You were utterly inaccessible to us even as the stream of the heavenly river (Ganga) is to the desert land of Maru (Western Rajaputana and Sindha). The all-merciful Rama has showered his grace on the Nisada chief; a king's kith and kin and subjects too should share his disposition.)

चौपाई

तुम्ह प्रिय पाहुने बन पगु धारे। सेवा जोगु न भाग हमारे॥
देब काह हम तुम्हहि गोसाँई। ईधनु पात किरात मिताई॥१॥
यह हमारि अति बड़ि सेवकाई। लेहि न बासन बसन चोराई॥
हम जड़ जीव जीव गन घाती। कुटिल कुचाली कुमति कुजाती॥२॥
पाप करत निसि बासर जाहीं। नहिं पट कटि नहि पेट अघाहीं॥
सपोनेहूँ धरम बुद्धि कस काऊ। यह रघुनंदन दरस प्रभाऊ॥३॥
जब तैं प्रभु पद पदुम निहारे। मिटे दुसह दुख दोष हमारे॥
बचन सुनत पुरजन अनुरागे। तिन्ह के भाग सराहन लागे॥४॥ (२-२५१)

("You have come to this forest as our welcome guests; but we are not lucky enough to be fit for any service to you. What can we offer you noble sirs ? Fuel and leaves are the only tokens of a Kirata's friendship; and our greatest service is that we do not steal and remove your utensils and clothes. We are unfeeling creatures taking others' life, and are crooked by nature, wicked, evil-minded and low-born. Our days and nights are spent in sinful pursuits and yet we have no cloth to cover our loins and get no food enough to fill our belly. How could we possibly have ever dreamt of entertaining pious sentiments but for the virtue of having seen the Delighter of Raghus ? Ever since we had the good fortune of gazing on our Lord's lotus feet our terrible woes and evils have disappeared." The citizens were overwhelmed with emotion to hear these words and began to extol the good fortune of those forester).

छंद

लागे सराहन भाग सब अनुराग बचन सुनावहीं।
बोलनि मिलनि सिय राम चरन सनेहू लखि सुखु पावहीं॥
नर नारि निदरहिं नेहू निज सुनि कोल भिल्लनि की गिरा।
तुलसी कृपा रघुबंसमनि की लोह लै लौका तिरा॥(२-२५१)

(All began to extol the good fortune of the foresters and addressed them in terms of endearment. Everyone rejoiced to hear their talk and behold their polite manners as well as their devotion to the feet of Sita and Rama. Men and women deprecated their own love when they heard the talk of the Kolas and Bhilas. It was through the grace of Sri Rama (the Jewel of Raghu's line), says Tulasidasa, that a block of iron floated with a boat loaded on it).

चौपाई

बिनु पानहिन्ह पयादेहि पाँ। संकरु साखि रहेँ एहि घाँ।
बहुरि निहार निषाद सनेहू। कुलिस कठिन उर भयउ न बेहू॥३॥ (२-२६२)

(To crown all when I heard that clad in hermit's robes and accompanied by Laksmana and Sita, the Lord of Raghus proceeded to the woods on foot and without shoes, God Sankara be my witness, I survived even that blow. On top of it, when I witnessed the Nisada's love, my heart, which is harder than adamant, refused to break.)

चौपाई

बिषम बिषाद तोरावति धारा। भय भ्रम भवँर अबर्त अपारा॥
केवट बुध बिद्या बड़ि नावा। सकहिं न खेइ ऐक नहिं आवा॥२॥ (२-२७६)

[It (the river) I had deep sorrow for its swift current, while fear and delusion constituted its numberless eddies and whirlpools. Boatmen in the form of the learned waited with big boats in the form of their learning; but they were unable to row them, because they had no idea of its depth.]

चौपाई

एक सराहिं भरत सनेहू। कोउ कह नृपति निबाहेउ नेहू॥
निंदहिं आपु सराहि निषादहि। को कहि सकइ बिमोह बिषादहि॥३॥
एहि बिधि राति लोगु सबु जागा। भा भिनुसार गुदारा लागा॥

गुरहि सुनावँ चढ़ाइ सुहाई। नई नाव सब मातु चढ़ाई॥४॥

दंड चारि महुँ भा सबु पारा। उतरि भरत तब सबहि सँभारा॥५॥ (२-२०२)

(Some would praise Bharata's love, while others said the king had vindicated his affection. They would reproach themselves and praise the Nisada chief; who can describe their confusion and woe? In this way they all kept vigil overnight and at daybreak the passage across the river began. The Guru was put on a good and handsome boat and all the mothers on another newly-built one. In an hour and a half everyone was taken across. When Bharata had alighted, he made sure that all had come.)

दोहा

प्रातक्रिया करि मातु पद बंदि गुरहि सिरु नाइ।

आगें किए निषाद गन दीन्हेउ कटकु चलाइ॥२०२॥

(Having finished the morning duties Bharata adored his mothers' feet and bowed his head to the preceptor, and sending a party of the Nisadas ahead started the whole host.)

चौपाई

कियउ निषादनाथु अगुआई। मातु पालकीं सकल चलाई॥

साथ बोलाइ भाइ लघु दीन्हा। बिप्रन्ह सहित गवनु गुर कीन्हा॥१॥ (२-२०३)

(He made the Nisada chief lead the van and then started the palanquins carrying the queen-mothers, and summoning his younger brother (Satrugna) told him off as their escort.)

चौपाई

बिदा कीन्ह सनमानि निषादू। चलेउ हृदयँ बड़ बिरह बिषादू।
कोल किरात भिल्ल बनचारी। फेरे फिरे जोहारि जोहारी॥१॥ (२-३२१)

(he Nisada chief was courteously sent away and departed; leaving the Lord was a great wrench to him. Pressed to return, the Kolas, Kiratas, Bhilas and other foresters returned after bowing again and again.)

चौपाई

जमुना उतरि पार सबु भयऊ। सो बासरु बिनु भोजन गयऊ।।
उतरि देवसरि दूसर बासू। रामसखाँ सब कीन्ह सुपासू।।२।।
सई उतरि गोमतीं नहाए। चौथें दिवस अवधपुर आए।
जनकु रहे पुर बासर चारी। राज काज सब साज सँभारी।।३।।
सौँपि सचिव गुरु भरतहि राजू। तेरहुति चले साजि सबु साजू।।
नगर नारि नर गुरु सिख मानी। बसे सुखेन राम रजधानी।।४।। (२-३२२)

[Crossing the Yamuna everyone reached the other bank; the day passed without any food. The next halt was made on the other bank of the Ganga (at Srngaverapura) where Sri Rama's friend (Guha) made all arrangements for their comfort. Ferrying over the Sai they bathed in the Gomati and reached Ayodhya on the fourth day. King Janaka stayed in the capital for four days, looked after the state administration as well as all the state property and, entrusting the reins of government to the ministers, the Guru (the sage Vasistha) and Bharata, he left for Tirahuta (his capital) after making all necessary preparations. Following the preceptor's advice the men and women of the city ensconced themselves in Sri Rama's capital (Ayodhya).]

6.121

चौपाई

इहाँ निषाद सुना प्रभु आए। नाव नाव कहँ लोग बोलाए।।३।।
सुरसरि नाघि जान तब आयो। उतरेउ तट प्रभु आयसु पायो।।

तब सीताँ पूजी सुरसरी। बहु प्रकार पुनि चरनन्हि परी॥४॥
दीन्हि असीस हरषि मन गंगा। सुंदरि तव अहिवात अभंगा॥
सुनत गुहा धायउ प्रेमाकुल। आयउ निकट परम सुख संकुल॥५॥
प्रभुहि सहित बिलोकि बैदेही। परेउ अवनि तन सुधि नहिं तेही॥
प्रीति परम बिलोकि रघुराई। हरषि उठाइ लियो उर लाई॥६॥ (६-१२१)

(At this end the Nisada chief heard that the Lord had come and exclaiming "The boat, where is the boat ?" Summoned his people. Meanwhile the aerial car flew across the celestial stream and landed on the bank (adjoining Srngaverapura) in obedience to the Lord's command. Then Sita offered all kinds of worship to the celestial stream and threw Herself at the feet of the Goddess presiding over the stream. In gladness of soul Ganga pronounced Her blessing. "May You enjoy a happy married life without a break, O fair lady." Overwhelmed with love, Guha ran to meet the Lord as soon as he heard of His landing and approached his Master, full of ecstatic joy. Perceiving the Lord accompanied by Videha's Daughter, he fell flat on the ground oblivious of his own existence. The Lord of the Raghus felt overjoyed to see his excessive fondness; He took and clasped him to His bosom.)

छंद

लियो हृदयँ लाइ कृपा निधान सुजान रायँ रमापती।
बैठारि परम समीप बूझी कुसल सो कर बीनती।
अब कुसल पद पंकज बिलोकि बिरंचि संकर सेब्य जे।
सुख धाम पूरनकाम राम नमामि राम नमामि ते॥१॥
सब भाँति अधम निषाद सो हरि भरत ज्यों उर लाइयो।

मतिमंद तुलसीदास सो प्रभु मोह बस बिसराइयो॥ (६-१२१)

(The All-merciful Lord of Rama (Sita or Laksmi), the wisest among the wise, took and clasped him to His bosom and, seating him very close to Him, enquired after his welfare. Guha submitted in reply: "Now all is well with me; for I have beheld your lotus-feet, worthy of adoration even to Viranci (Brahma) and Lord Sankara. O blissful Rama, self-sufficient as you are, I simply adore you; O Rama, I adore you." That Nisada, who was low in every respect, Sri Hari clasped to His bosom as though he were Bharata himself! A victim of infatuation, this dull-witted Tulasidasa, however, has cast out of his mind even such a benign lord.)

चौपाई

बिदा कीन्ह सनमानि निषादू। चलेउ हृदयँ बड़ बिरह बिषादू।
कोल किरात भिल्ल बनचारी। फेरे फिरे जोहारि जोहारी॥१ (२-३२१)

(The Nisada chief was courteously sent away and departed; leaving the Lord was a great wrench to him. Pressed to return, the Kolas, Kiratas, Bhilas and other foresters returned after bowing again and again.)

चौपाई

सीय स्वयंबर कथा सुहाई। सरित सुहावनि सो छबि छाई॥
नदी नाव पटु प्रस्न अनेका। केवट कुसल उतर सबिबेका॥१॥
सुनि अनुकथन परस्पर होई। पथिक समाज सोह सरि सोई॥
घोर धार भृगुनाथ रिसानी। घाट सुबद्ध राम बर बानी॥२॥
सानुज राम बिबाह उछाहू। सो सुभ उमग सुखद सब काहू॥

कहत सुनत हरषहिं पुलकाहीं। ते सुकृती मन मुदित नहाहीं॥३॥

राम तिलक हित मंगल साजा। परब जोग जनु जुरे समाजा॥

काई कुमति केकई केरी। परी जासु फल बिपति घनेरी॥४॥ (१-४०)

(The fascinating story of Sita's choice —marriage is the delightful charm surrounding the river. The numerous pertinent questions are the boats on the river, while the judicious replies to the same are the skilled boatmen. The conversation that follows the narration of the story is the crowd of travellers moving along the river banks. The wrath of Parasurama (the Lord of Bhrgus) represents the furious current of this river; while Sri Rama's soft words are the strongly built Ghatas on the banks. The festivities connected with the wedding of Sri Rama and His younger brothers represent the graceful swell in the river, which is a source of delight to all. Those who rejoice and experience a thrill of joy in narrating or hearing the story are the lucky souls who take an exhilarating dip in the river. The auspicious preparations that were gone through in connections with the installation of Sri Rama as the Yuvaraja (Prince-regent) represent as it were the crowds of bathers assembled at the river bank on a sacred occasion. Kaikeys's evil counsel represents the moss on the bank, which brought a serious calamity in its wake.)

Tulsidas left his body at the Assi Ghat on the bank of the river Ganga in the Shraavan (July–August) month of the year Vikram 1680 (1623 CE)

Chapter –2

Keot and non-scriptural Literatures (Secular Literatures)

For the most part the understanding of caste in India is derived from, and is based on, scriptures and sacred texts. Indological works dealing with the subject sketch the outlines of the system as it was conceptualized by the authors of the ancient ethico-religious treatises and speculate on its origin. These studies present an admirable picture of the system visualized in ideal terms and offer occasional glimpses of some aspects of its working. The social history of caste is, however, most inadequate and scriptural view of the ethico-religious bases of caste in many ways distracts from the understanding of it as a functioning social system. Early empirical works on this subject was predisposed, in a large measure, to view the system in the ideal framework provided by the sacred texts and tended to ignore certain aspects of it that were crucially significant for its proper sociological analysis, but which found no mention in the ancient works. Recent empirical work has provided in some measure, a corrective to this one-sided approach, but to date the gaps in information regarding the functional aspects of caste in the different regions of India are far too many and far too wide to permit any meaningful generalisations about the system as a whole.⁹

Pursuit of a common occupation has misled many writers into considering certain groups as parts of a major caste. It may be added that at times change of occupation may result in the splitting of a caste. As for example, the Kaibartta of Bengal, who “were longer regarded, and regarded themselves, as a single caste divided occupationally into Jaliya Kaibarttas who practised the calling of fishermen and Haliya (or Chasi) Kaibarttas who lived by agricultureEventually Haliya Kaibarttas broke

⁹. Atal, Yogesh -*The Changing Frontiers of Caste*, National Publishing House, 2/35, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, Delhi-6, 1968, p-3

away entirely banning all the intermarriage with the Jaliya Kaibarttas, and succeeded in getting recognition as a separate caste under the name of Mahishya” (Hutton 1960:51-52). Thus it is possible that castes having different occupations may at one time have been part of a bigger caste.¹⁰

In this Chapter Kaibartta as an influential social group has been outlined from various non-scriptural sources and plethora of literature such as Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi, District Gazetteers, The Statistical Account of Bengal, Census Reports and Returns, Francis Buchanans’ Account of the Districts of Bihar and Bengal and so on.

Status of Keot in the Early Medieval Period

In the early medieval period, Keot enjoyed very respectable and high status in the society. Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi gives a detailed account of the Kewart Revolt led by Dibyoka and Bhima against Pala King Mahipal. Ramacharita is a historical record of the Pala Dynasty. It is written throughout in double entendre in imitation of Raghava –Pandaviya. Read in one way, it gives the connected story of the Ramayan and read another way, it gives the history of Ramapaladeva of the Pala Dynasty of Bengal. The author of the text is Sandhyakara Nandi, who composed the work in the reign of Madanpal Deva, the second son of Ramapal, and the fourth king from Ramapal, for he ends his work with a hearty wish for the long life of Madanpal. The author enjoyed exceptional opportunities of knowing the events of Ramapal’s reign and those of his successors, as his father was the Sandhivigrahika, or the Minister of peace and war of Ramapala, and lived at Paundra-Vardhana, if not the capital, a suburb of the capital of the Palas¹¹. When the work was written, the events narrated in it were recent and people understood them without difficulty. The manuscript is written in Bengali character of the 12th century and the commentary though written a few years later was written in the same character. The work is very important for the history of Bengal in the first half of the 11th century and the second

¹⁰. Atal, Yogesh- Op.cit, p-10.

¹¹. Mahamopadhaya Haraprasad Sastri - Ramacharita by Sandhyakara Nandi, Bhartiya Publishing House, 1973, page-1 (preface).

half of the 12th century. It is a contemporary record and such records are very rare for India and especially for eastern portion of it.

The author belonged to a very respectable family of Varendra Brahmanas, who derived their residence in the Varendra Country, i.e., North Bengal, the scene of the struggles of Ramapala for empire. Sandhyakara Nandi in Ramacharita writes that Nayanpala was succeeded by Vignrahapala III, who is best known to us by his Amgachi Copper-Plate grant issued in the 13th year of his reign, for propitiating Lord Buddha¹². Vignrahapala III had three sons – Mahipala, Surapala and Ramapala. Mahipala by his impolite acts incurred the displeasure of his subjects. He put Ramapala and Surapala to prison bound in chains; but they were rescued by their friends.

Kaivartas were very powerful and warlike people in North Bengal¹³. Mahasweta Devi in her historical novel “Kaiwart Khand” writes that Kewarts had established a very powerful kingdom in Varendri and they enjoyed very respectable position and their society were highly developed in Radha-Gaur-Banga and Varendri¹⁴. She further wrote that Kewarts had established independent state and their capital was Damarnagar. Kewart king Bhima was called ‘Sun of Varendri’¹⁵.

Kewart Kingdom was founded by Dibyoka. He has a brother named Rudoka. The Kaivartas were smarting under oppression of the king. Bhima, the son of Rudoka, taking advantage of the popular discontent, led his Kaivarta subjects to rebellion. Mahipal did not pay any heed to the cautious advice of his ministers, he hastily collected a large but ill-disciplined force, and advanced to meet the enemy. His force was routed. The soldiers fled in disorder and he was defeated and slain. The whole of Northern Bengal, called Varendri in those days, fell into the hands of the

¹² Op.Cit., page-13.

¹³ Op.cit. , page-13.

¹⁴ Mahasweta Devi – Kewart-Khand, Kitabghar Publication, page-09

¹⁵ Mahasweta Devi - .Op.cit.,page-15

Kaivartas¹⁶. And Bhima built a Damara, a suburban city close to the capital of the Pala Empire and made it his capital.

Mahasweta Devi discusses some of salient features of kewart social life. She says that kewart society like aboriginal tribal society was highly developed and civilized. Widow-remarriage was prevalent and there were no traces of dowry. All Kewart villages were under the control of a social representative known by various names and they were responsible to maintain social decorum and punish defaulters. In Rajnagarh, social representative was known as 'Chhote Babu'. Age of marriage was between 20-22 years and the marriage of unmarried girls was the responsibility of whole society. There were free from curse of dowry¹⁷.

First kewart king Dibyoka had got dig a lake near village Shivanagar. The King Bhima had got constructed a brick road from Bangura to Mahasthangarh known as "Bhima's Jangal"¹⁸.

Prof. Ram Sharan Sharma writes that the Kaivartas were Peasants and their revolts can be seen as assertion of their land rights¹⁹. The significance of this event can be appreciated better if we bear in mind that the Kaivartas were deprived of their plots of land given as service tenures and subjected to heavy taxes²⁰. The revolt had a mass appeal and its popular character can be gauged from the fact that literally naked soldiers fought with bows and arrows riding on buffaloes²¹. Chariots were conspicuous by their absence in the army of Bhima. None the less the rising was so formidable and resistance so strong that Ramapala had to mobilise not only his own resources but those of all his feudal lords to put down their revolt²². Thus Prof. Sharma concludes that it was

¹⁶ Ramacharita, page-13

¹⁷ Mahasweta Devi –Op.cit., page-8

¹⁸ Ibid, page-7.

¹⁹ Sharma,R.S – Indian Feudalism ,Third Edition2006 ,Macmillan Publishers India Ltd., page 325

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

probably a peasant uprising directed against the Palas, who made a common cause with their vassals against the Kaivarttas²³ .

The Dinajpur Inscription of Madanpal mentioned Surapala as the next king²⁴. But Ramacarita is silent about him. According to Ramacarita, Ramapala and his son Rajyapala travelled all over the empire and beyond it, collected together all his feudatories, and sent Sivaraja of the Rastrakuta race, who was the commander of his palace guards, to reconnoitre the Varendra Country²⁵. Sivaraja assured the people, Brahmanas and others, that their property would be respected. Ramapala then formed a big confederacy to fight against Kaivarttas. His principal supporters were²⁶ –

- 1) Bhimayasa, the Raja of Pithi in Magadha, who defeated the army of Kanyakubja.
- 2) Viragupta, a king of southern India, who was a lion in the forest of Kota.
- 3) Jayasinha, the Raja of Dandabhukti or Bihar, who destroyed the army of Karna Kesari, the Raja of Utkala.
- 4) Vikram Raja, the Raja of Devagrama and the surrounding country, washed by the waves of the rivers of Bala-Valabhi of Bagdi, one of the five provinces into which Bengal was divided.
- 5) Laksmisura, the ruler of Aparas Mandara, and the lord of all the forest feudatories.
- 6) Surapala, the lion in destroying the elephants of Kujabati.
- 7) Rudrasekhara of Tailalampa, the Modern Telkupi near Pachet.
- 8) Mayagala Sinha, the King of Uchhala.
- 9) Pratap Sinha, the king of Dhekkariya of Dhekura on the side of the river Ajaya near Katwa.
- 10) Narasinhajuna, the king of Kayangala.

²³ Ibid, page- 326.

²⁴ Mahamahopadhaya Haraprasad Sastri – Op.cit., page-13

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

- 11) Candarjuna of Sankatagrama.
- 12) Vijayaraja of Nidravala.
- 13) Dvorapabardhana of Kausambi
- 14) Soma,Raja of Padubanva or Pabna

But the warriors on whom Ramapala relied in this crisis were, Rashtrakuta princes, Kanhura Deva who was Mahamandalika, and Sivaraja Deva who was Mahapratihara. These were son and nephew of Mahana or Mathana, his maternal uncle. This warrior, Mahana, riding of his famous elephant, Bindhya Manikya, defeated Devaraksita, the Raja of Pithi, in Magadha²⁷.

The allied army threw a bridge of boats of the Ganges, crossed the river and advanced and destroyed the Damara, the capital of Kaivarttas, and took Bhima a captive while riding on his elephant in the battle field²⁸. But Hari ²⁹, a friend of Bhima, rallied scattered Kaivarta army and advanced to fight. It was a well-contested battle in which both sides lost too much. Ramapala's son contested every inch, and established his power. Hari at last found himself powerless, was captured and led to the place of execution. Bhima too seems to have been put to the sword. According to Prof. R.S.Sharma, Kaivarttas Revolt took place around 1075 A.D.³⁰

To commemorate his victory over kaivarttas, Ramapala founded a city named Ramavati at the confluence of the Ganges and the Karatoya in the Varendri country. There is an inscription commemorating a grant of land made by Madanpala Deva in the 8th year of his reign from the victorious camp at Ramavati to Batesvara Svami at Paundra-Bardhanabhukti for recting the Mahabharata before the Chief queen Citramalika³¹.

²⁷ Ibid, page-14

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Prof.Sharma R.S –Op.cit. page-139v

³¹ Mahamahopadhaya Haraprasad Sastri – Op.cit., page-16

Status of Keot in the later Medieval and British Period

Bengal District Gazetteers -Midnapore ³²

Midnapore being an intermediate district between Bengal and Orissa, the population possessed characteristics common to the people of both provinces, which are described as follows by Mr. H.V.Bayley in his Memoranda of Midnapore (1852):-
“The people of Midnapore proper are generally composed an amalgamated race, who can neither be called Bengalis nor Oriyas, but who are a mixture of both. It is not intended to convey by this remark the impression that the mixture observable has been affected so much by the intermarriage by the two classes as by the adoption of manners and habits common to both.

The Kaibarttas, the great race caste of Midnapore, account for nearly a third of whole population. Local tradition states that the Kaibarttas were originally settled on the banks of the river Sarju or Gogri in Oudh, and that they came to Midnapore, led by five chiefs, and conquered it. Srida Hui, the then Raja of Mayna, is said to have been defeated by Gobardhan Nandu, who took his kingdom and founded a family. This defeat of the Raja of Myana is the subject of a local poem once very popular, but now seldom read. The five chiefs, according to tradition, established as many principalities, Viz. Tamralipta (Tamluk), Balisita, Turka, Sujamata and Kutabpur. The Sujamata family is now extinct, the lineal descendant of the Raja dying some 20 years ago. The Tamluk and Kutabpur families still survive, but have been reduced to indigence, while the Turka family is represented by the Mahapatras of Khunduri. From this tradition it may perhaps be inferred that Midnapore is one of the earliest seats of the tribe and that they once held a commanding position in it. Dr. Grierson conjectures that they entered Midnapore from Orissa and writes:-The history of their arrival in the district accounts for the very peculiar character of the dialect of Bengali spoken by them. Originally

³² .O'Malley, L.S.S - Midnapore District Gazetteer, Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1911.

owning some non-Aryan language, they arrived in Midnapore speaking a corrupt patois of Oriya, and on this, as a basis, they have built the dialect of Bengali which they speak in their present home.”³³

According to this Gazetteer, The Kaivarttas have been traced to a very early period, being mentioned as Kevarttas in the Vajasaneyi Samhita, as Kaivarttas in the Epics and the Manu-Samhita, and as Kevatas in a Pillar edict of Ashoka. Not improbably they held the old kingdom of Tamralipti. They seem to have consisted originally of a congeries of tribes, which coalesced owing to the similarity of their functions. As land was gradually reclaimed from the waste and came under settled cultivation, they took more and more to agriculture. The cultivating portion then gradually drew away from the rest and set up a higher caste with degraded Brahmans for priests. Their power, wealth and number eventually secured for them a higher social status and an acknowledgement that water might be taken from them (jalacharaniya) by Brahmans and other higher castes.

The Kaibarttas of Midnapore are subdivided into two sub-castes, the Uttar Rarhi and the Dakshin Rarhi, the latter being again subdivided into four septs, called Lalchatai, Ekside, Doside, and Makunda which are of an uncommon type. The Lalchatai, the highest of the series, appears to be of hypergamous origin. It is explained that they used to have a ‘Red Mat’ to sit on, as a mark of social distinction at the meetings of the Kaibartta caste. The next two names are based on a marriage custom. The Ekside, when they go with a wedding procession to fetch the bride, will not eat in her father’s house on the wedding night. He, therefore, sends them a present (Sute) of food, which they cook and eat in a neighbour’s house. The Doside extend this to the night after the wedding and therefore are described as ‘two-present men.’ Makunda is said to an eponymous group. They carry their own presents to the bride’s house, and they eat cooked food with and Kaibartta, whether he belongs to their class or not.³⁴

³³ Op.cit- p.57-58

³⁴ Risley, Sir H.H.-The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, vol. 1, p.-879.

Socially, the Kaibarttas are frugal and industries, ranking among the best cultivators of the district. A large proportion of the Zamindars and Talukdars and most of the Ryots, belong to this caste, which represents all interests in land ranging from the proprietor to the cultivator. By religion the great majority is Vaishnavas; and it is said that they pay greater respect to a Vaishnava than to a Brahman.

Nearly all are cultivating Kaibarttas or Mahisya, and only a small minority is fishing Kaibarttas or Jeliya, who occupy a very low position in the social scale. The name Mahisya is a new one adopted since the census 1901, when the Chasi Kaibarttas urged that they were entirely distinct from the Jeliya Kaibarttas, and that their proper appellation was Mahisya, an ancient caste of much respectability, which is said to be descended from a Kshatriya father and a Vaisya mother.

Some Madhyasrenis Brahmans serve the Goalas or Gope as their family priests, and others are said to eat uncooked food at religious ceremonies performed by members of the Kaibartta caste, and to accept gifts from them on those occasions.

Another peculiar class of the Brahmans consists of the Vyasoktas, who serve the Kaibarttas as priests. Like the Kaibarttas themselves, these Kaibartta Brahmans are divided into two sub-castes, Uttar Rarhi and Dakshin Rarhi. Member of the higher castes, who will take water from the hands of the Kaibarttas, will not take it from Kaibartta Brahmans, and the Kaibarttas themselves will not eat food cooked by their own Brahmans. The legends of the origin of the Vyasoktas³⁵ are as follows: -

One legend state that they are descended from Barhu, a sage who composed heterodox Puranas and was cursed by Brahma, who ordained that he and his descendants should be priests to men of the Sudra Caste. In consequence of this curse the Vyasoktas were told off to serve the Kaibarttas, the children of Bidur, on the bank of the Sarju River. Another story tella how the Kaibarttas rendered a great service to the Ballal Sen and were told to name their reward. They asked the king to compel the local Brahmans to serve them as priests, but the king in order to keep his promise

³⁵ Op.cit.- p. 62-63.

vowed that the first man he saw in the morning should be made the Kaibarttas' priest. Next morning when the king looked out, the first man he saw was his own sweeper, sweeping out the courtyard. This was not quite what the Kaibarttas meant, but the king vow has to be kept, so the sweeper was invested with the sacred thread and sent to minister to the Kaibarttas. A third legend says that, after the kaibarttas has settled in Midnapore, a certain kaibartta merchant dug a big tank in pargana Kasijora. To consecrate this tank, a Brahman had to be got, who could kindle the sacred fire by the breath of his mouth. The Vyasoktas were unequal to this feat, but a Dravida Brahman performed it. His caste brethren expelled him for having served a low caste, and he therefore settled in Midnapore.

A Statistical Account of Bengal- Midnapur District

Mr. C.F. Magrath in his District Census Compilation for Midnapur³⁶ classifies the people of this district into three broad groups – (1) Non-Asiatics (2) Mixed Race (3) Asiatics. He further divides Asiatics people into two groups – (A) Other than Natives of India and Burmah, and (B) Natives of India and Burmah. The Natives of India and Burmah have been put into six groups – (i) Aboriginal Tribes (ii) Semi-Hinduised Aboriginals (iii) Hindus (iv) Persons of Hindu Origin not recognising Caste (v) Muhammadans (vi) Burmese. The Hindus have been further categorised as follows:- (1) Superior Castes (2) Intermediate Castes (3) Trading Castes (4) Pastoral Castes (5) Castes engaged in preparing Cooked Food (6) Agricultural Castes (7) Castes Engaged Chiefly in Personal Services (8) Artisan Castes (9) Weaver Castes (10) Labouring Castes (11) Castes occupied in Selling Fish and Vegetables (12) Boating and Fishing Castes (13) Dancer, Musician, Beggar, and Vagabond Castes (14) Persons Enumerated by Nationality only (15) Persons of Unknown or Unspecified Castes. Mr. Magrath put the Kaibarttas under the category of Agriculture Castes along with Aguri, Barui, Tamli, Keori, Kurmi, Mali, Sadgop, and Sarkar. He give a separate list of Boating and Fishing Castes which includes Jalia, Mahadanda, and Mala, Manjhi, Pod, and Tior.

³⁶ .Hunter, W.W- The Statistical Account of Bengal-Midnapur District, pp.49-51

W.W.Hunter in his statistical Account of Midnapur³⁷ enlisted 110 Hindu Castes met with and arranged them as far as possible in the order in which they rank in local public esteem, and also showing their occupation. The figure indicating the number of each caste has been extracted from Mr. Magrath District Census Compilation for Midnapur. He categorised Hindus as such: - (i) Highest Rank Castes – 09 in number (ii) Pure Sudra Castes – 14 in number, from whose hands a Brahman can take water or uncooked food without injury to his caste. Originally, these Pure Sudra Castes were only nine in number, called nabasaks. But some of them, such as the Banias, have split up into two or three divisions, all of whom are held in equal esteem; and others, such as Tilis Telis, by their influence or wealth, have forced themselves forward from a lower class into a position of social respectability (iii) Intermediate Sudra Castes - 19 in number, who are neither esteemed nor despised, but who have some claim to respectability (iv) Lowest Hindu Castes - 43 in number and are utterly despised (v) Semi-Aboriginal Castes - 25 in number.

W.W.Hunter in his statistical Account of Midnapur keeps Kaibarttas under the category of Intermediata Sudra Castes and gives this caste 28th rank in local public esteem, and agriculture as occupation³⁸. He further writes that this is by far the most numerous caste of Midnapur District, and is returned by the Census of 1872 as numbering 692,140 souls. The Kaibarttas are probably one of the aboriginal tribes of the Chhota Nagpur Hills, West of Orissa and Midnapur, and are supposed to be the same as the Bhuiyas, an undoubtedly aboriginal tribe still inhabiting the Chhota Nagpur Hills and jungles. They embraced Hinduism at a very early period after the Aryans made their appearance in Bengal, and from their number and strength, succeeded in demanding and obtaining admission to the Hindu community on honourable terms. In ancient times, a number of Kaibarttas were made into Brahmans, and their descendants are numerous in Hugli District. The Kaibarttas of Midnapur are divided into two classes

³⁷. Hunter, W.W – Op.cit. Pp.52-57

³⁸. Hunter, W.W – same, pp.54-55

.The first follow cultivation as their occupation,and are looked upon with only less respect than one of the pure sudra castes ;while the other live by fishing ,and accordingly classed with one of the very low castes. One section of the cultivating Kaibarttas are silk-producers,and are called Tutia Kaibarttas,from the tut or mulberry tree,which they cultivate largely as food for the worms they rear.Midnapur District has sent many colonies of Kaibartta emigrants to the neighbouring Districts of Hugli and Bardawan,where they muster very strong along the banks of the Damodar River ; also to the 24-parganas on the other side of the Hugli river.The Raja of Tamluk is Kaibartta by caste ; and as confirmatory of the opinion that the Kaibarttas and the aboriginal Bhuiyas were the same ,an old tradition relates how Kuli Bhuiya ,the founder of the family,usurped the throne,and was supported by a large number of Kaibarttas. The family name of the Tamluk Kaibartta Rajas is Bhuiya.

The earliest kings of the Tamluk belonged to the Peacock Dyanasty, and were kshatriyas by caste.The last of this line Nisankha Narayan dies childless, and at his death, the throne was usurped by a powerful aboriginal Chief named Kalu Bhuiya, and who was the founder of the line of Kaibartta Kings of Tamluk. The present Raja, a Kaibartta a twenty-fifth in the descent from the aboriginal Bhuiya founder³⁹.

W.W.Hunter gives a separete list of Boating and Fishing Castes and placed them under the catogaru of lower Hindu Castes .In the local public esteem, they are placed at 73-Jalia; fishermen or Boatmen- 24,450 in number, 74-Keut; Fishermen or Boatmen -2553 in number ,75 –Mahadanda ; Fishermen or Boatmen-2064 in number ,76-Mala ; Fishermen or Boatmen -1895 in number,77-Manjhi ; not a caste,but a class of boatmen who act as helmsmen. The Census gives their number at 37,909, but from this high total, it appears propable that a class of village head-men among the junle and aboriginal people, and who have the title of Manjhis, have been included with the Manjhis who are boatmen, 78- Pod,Fishermen,4 in number 79-Tior, Fishermen or Boatmen -16,304 in number,82- Patni ;ferryman and government contractors,who

³⁹ Same, p-67

farm the government ferries. These men are held of lower rank than the other Boating Castes, as in the way of their trade they carry cows across the river, which is looked upon as a sin by an orthodox Hindu; and also because they take money for ferrying passengers, which ought to be done as an act of benevolence. The number these ferrymen is 1872.⁴⁰

Bengal District Gazetteers- Howrah

Hindus form the large majority of the people and are divided into numerous castes or semi-Hinduized tribes. Forty-nine castes were reported 1901 as numbering more than 1,000, while the castes noted in the margin numbered more than 15,000 and therefore deserve separate notice.

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Higher Castes | Brahman | 52,238 |
| | Kayasth | 19,225 |
| Pastoral Castes | Goala | 23,930 |
| | Sadgop | 19,152 |
| Fishing and Boating Castes | Kaibartta | 230,508 |
| | Bagdi | 72,608 |
| | Tiyar | 21,914 |
| | Pod | 19,258 |
| | Koara | 17,575 |

In the lowland district, such as Howrah, liable to be flooded and cut up by rivers and creeks, the chief autochthonous tribes or castes would naturally consist of fishermen and boatmen, and thus accounts for the facts that the predominating castes are Kaibarttas, Bagdis, Tiyars and Pods.

The Kaibarttas are by far the largest, accounting in the Uluberia subdivision for about half the number of total Hindus. Originally a non-Aryan tribe, they have been

⁴⁰ Same, pp 56-57.

traced to a very early period, being mentioned as Kevarttas in the Vajasaneyi-Samhita, Kaivarttas in the Epics and the Manu-Samhita, and as Kevatas in the pillar-edict of Ahoka. Not improbably they held the old kingdom of Tamralipti, and they still continue to be the great caste of eastern Midnapore. They seem to have consisted originally of a congeries of tribes, which coalesced owing to similarity of functions, but were still kept separate by the prohibition of intermarriage. As land was gradually reclaimed from the waste and came under settled cultivation, they took more and more to agriculture. The cultivating portion gradually drew away from the rest and set up as a higher caste with degraded Brahmans for priests. Their power, wealth and number eventually secured for them, in the districts where they predominated, a higher social status and an acknowledgement that water might be taken from their hand (Jalacharaniya) by Brahmans and other higher castes. At the last census seven-eighths returned themselves as cultivating kaivarttas or Mahishyas. The fishing (Jaliya) Kaibarttas occupy a very low position; and in Eastern and Northern Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, all Kaibarttas and Kewats still rank very low in the social scale.⁴¹

The bulk of the tenants are Kaibarttas, “who are” as Mr. Ritchie remarked 20 years ago, “beyond comparison, the best cultivators and most industrious the thrifty class in this district”. They usually keep a fair quantity of their produce at home, and the women help by paddy-husking. They catch fish almost for nothing in the pools, Khals, and rice-fields; and they supplement their daily food, or add to their savings, by getting vegetables and pot herbs from the fields or homestead nurseries, and by growing fruit like plantains, mangoes and pine-apples in the orchards. They can afford a number of silver ornaments and brass utensils, their houses are substantially built, and two meals a day are general. As a class, they are but a little indebted to the mahajans, while their poorer brethren can get loans from a more well-to-do at a lower rate of interest than the mahajan will allow. In slack seasons they can earn good wages by working in

⁴¹ O'Malley, L.S.S & Chakravarti, Manmohan – Bengal District Gazetteers-Howrah, Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book, Depot, 1909, pp. 39-40.

the towns and factories. No relief operations have been necessary since 1866, when most of the persons relieved were paupers from other districts; and emigration to other districts is uncommon. These facts go to prove that the cultivators have generally something to fall back upon in times of distress and find sufficient employment in their own district or in Calcutta. On the other hand, there is a reverse to this somewhat bright picture in the sickness which prevails in certain thanas during the greater part of the year and the loss it necessarily entails.⁴²

Bengal District Gazetteers- Hooghly⁴³

Hindus at the Census of 1901 numbered 861,116 or 82 per cent of the total population, distributed among numerous castes and semi-Hinduised tribes. Bagdis, Vaishnavas, Bauris, Brahmans, Dom, Goalas, Kaibarttas, Kamars, Kayasths, Keoras, Muchis, Napits, Sadgops, Tantis and Telis were the Castes and Tribes numbering more than 10,000 at the census of 1901.⁴⁴

Numerically Bagdis are the strongest caste in the district and their number has been steadily rising, viz. from 134,115 in 1881 to 188,723 in 1901. Next to the Bagdis, the Kaibarttas are the most numerous caste in Hooghly. Their number has been gradually rising, viz. from 142,526 in 1881 to 165,886 in 1901. The main caste of eastern Midnapore, they have overflowed in the districts of Howrah and Hooghly on the west and across the Bhagirathi River into the 24-Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad on the east. Naturally, therefore, the Kaibarttas congregate chiefly in the south of this district, viz. in thanas Khanakul and Arambagh, Chandital, Haripal and Singur, and many have also settled in the low reparation tract of Balagarh Thana. The great majority returned themselves at the census of 1901 as Chasi or cultivators and only 5 per cent as Jaliya or flashers. Except a very few who call themselves Tutiya from their cultivation of Mulberry, the Chasi Kaibarttas in Hooghly has no real endogamous groups, but are

⁴² Same. pp.93-94

⁴³ O'Malley, L.S.S & Chakravarti, Manmohan - Hooghly District Gazetteer, Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book, Depot, 1911

⁴⁴ Op.cit. -p.99.

merely subdivided territorially into Uttar-Rarhi and Dakhin-Rarhi (North and South Rarh). Most follow Vaishnavism with Gossains as Gurus or spiritual guides. Generally speaking, they are well off and they have the reputation of being the thriftiest and most industrious of the cultivating classes.⁴⁵

A Statistical Account of Bengal- Hugli District

W.W.Hunter has enlited 90 Hindu Castes in his Statistical Account of Hugli District⁴⁶, and they are arranged as far as possible in the order of precedence which they hold in local social esteem, and also showing the occupation of each caste. The numbers have been taken from the Census Report of 1872. Like Midnapur, he has divided Hindu people of this district into five groups-(i) Highest Rank Castes, nine in number (ii) Pure Sudra Castes, fourteen in Number (iii) Intermediate Sudra Castes, nineteen in number (iv) Low Sudra Castes, twenty-eight in number (v) Semi-Aboriginal Castes, twenty in number. Unlike Midnapur, Kaibarttas have been kept in the group of pure sudra castes or 'nabasaks' in Hugli District, from whose hands a Brahman may receive water without defilement. The Kaibarttas are listed at number 22 in the order of precedence and they are the most numerous caste in this district, numbering 288, 621, according to the Census of 1872.

There is little doubt that kaibartta caste was one of the aboriginal tribes of this part of the country. They are spoken of in the Mahabharata and in several of the ancient religious books of the Hindus; and the caste is especially numerous in the districts of Hugli, Midnapur, and 24-parganas. The Kaibarttas embraced Hinduism soon after the Aryans pushed themselves forward into Bengal, and succeeded in obtaining for themselves a fair rank in Hindu society. The ordinary Kaibarttas are divided into two classes. The first consists of the people who are generally well off, many being substantial landholders, some are employed in respectable service, and others follow agriculture as a profession. The first class is regarded with considerable respect, and a

⁴⁵ .Op.cit.-p.102-103.

⁴⁶ . Hunter, W.W- The Statistical Account of Bengal-Hugli District, pp.284-291

Brahman would receive water from the hands of person belonging to it. The second class of Kaibarttas are simply poor fishermen. They are generally despised and are looked down upon as belonging to one of the very low castes.

A legend states that the great sage Vyasa, who compiled the Vedas and wrote the epic poem of Mahabharata, and who was himself the illegitimate son of a Kaibartta woman by a Brahman father, raised several individuals of the Kaibartta caste into Brahmans, and appointed them to officiate as priest to the rest. A similar tradition of western India relates how the great Brahman warrior Parasuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, invested a number of Kaibartta fishermen of the Malabar Coast with Brahmanhood, tearing off their fishing nets for the sacred thread. The Hugli Kaibartta-Brahman deny the legendary story of their admission into Brahmanhood, and assert themselves to be regular Brahman belonging to the Dravira Sreni or class, but who have fallen from pure Brahmanhood.⁴⁷ A pure Brahman, who would take water from the hands of a Kaibartta or Goala, would not touch it from the hands of a Brahman who officiated as priest to those castes.

Thus, the Kaibartta-Brahmans are alleged to have been elevated to that dignity by the sage Vyasa of the Mahabharata. These Kaibartta-Brahmans are divided into twelve gotras or septs, of which the following nine are the most important :- Sandilya, Hansarishi, Gautama, and Pundari, who are Kulins; and Bharadwaj, Kasyapa, Raghurishi, Madhukulla and Ghrita Kausika. They reside in large numbers in villages west of Serampur, and in Dwarbasini near Hugli.⁴⁸

Bengal District Gazetteers – 24-Parganas

The number of Kaibartta caste, according to the census of 1911 was 244,515. The Kaibarttas are divided into two main classes, viz., The Chasi and Jaliya. The Chasi Kaibarttas, who are beginning to discard the old nomenclature and called themselves Mahishya, are cultivators and superior in status to the Jaliya Kaibarttas, who are

⁴⁷ Same, p-285

⁴⁸ Same, p-288

fishermen. At the Census of 1911 only 4,015 Kaibarttas returned themselves as Jaliya Kaibarttas. While the number of those who stated that they were Chasi Kaibarttas or Mahishyas was 240,487.⁴⁹

A Statistical Account of Bengal- 24 Parganas

W.W.Hunter in his statistical Account of 24-Parganas divides Hindu population into four groups-Higher Castes, Sudra Castes, Intermediate Sudra Castes, and Low Castes. Among the Sudra Castes, Kaibarttas have been placed at number fourteen well below 'nabasaks'. The eight Castes, numbering ten to seventeen following nabasaks, are held in equal esteem and some of them were probably branches of the nabasaks⁵⁰. Brahmans can drink water from their hands, and one class of Brahmans forms the priesthood for all of them.

Hunter in his statistical account of 24-parganas writes that there is little doubt that the Kaibarttas were one of the aboriginal tribes of the country. They are spoken of in the Mahabharata, and also in the ancient religious books of the Hindus. The Kaibarttas have always claimed a high social rank, and Parasuram manufactured a large body of this caste on the Malabar Coast in the Brahmans. The great sage Vyasa was himself the son of a Kaibartta woman, and in order to favour a Kaibartta Raja, he made several individuals of that caste into Brahmans, and appointed them priests to the rest. These are still known as the Kaibartta-Brahman, and are numerous in the Hugli district. It is conjectured that the aboriginal tribes of Western Bengal, on settling in the plains, took upon themselves the name of Kaibartta, and adopted the Hindu religion, manners, and customs. Some of the Kaibarttas still bear the sept name of an aboriginal tribe, the Bhuiyas. The Raja of Tamruk, in the Midnapur District, is a Kaibartta, and it is probable that all the members of the caste in the 24 parganas have migrated

⁴⁹ O'Malley, L.S.S - Bengal District Gazetteers – 24-Parganas, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1914, Pp.83-84.

⁵⁰ Hunter, W.W-A Statistical Account of Bengal, Volume-i, Districts of 24- Parganas and Sunderbans, Trubner &co., London-1875, p63

from District on the West of Hugli. The caste is divided into the five following classes :- Uttar-rarhi or Chasa Kaibartta, who are cultivators and occupy the first rank, Purba-desi Kaibarttas, the cultivators ; Tunte or Dakshin-rarhi Kaibarttas, rearers of the silk-worms and cultivators ; Siuli, date-tappers ; and Mala or Jale, fishermen or boatmen. The first two divisions rank among those castes from whose hands a Brahman can take water and they are esteemed accordingly. The other three hold a very low position, and the Malas or fishermen, have now formed themselves into a separate caste, and will be alluded to in their proper place, further down in the list. Regarding the origin of the Kaibarttas, it is said that they are the offspring of a sudra father and a kshatriya mother, but as already stated, there seem to be a greater reason to class them among the aboriginal population of India. Their number in the 24-parganas in 1872 is returned at 182,486, mostly in middling circumstances.⁵¹

A Statistical Account of Bengal- Bankura District

Mr. C.F. Magrath in his District Census Compilation for Bankura has placed Kaibartta under the heading 'Agricultural Castes', numbering 12,034, other agricultural castes being Aguri, Barui, Tamli, Keori, Kurmi, Mali, Sadgop, Sarak etc. He has given a separate list of Boating and Fishing Castes and under this heading Jalia, Mahadanda, Mala, Manjhi, Pod and Tior have been included.

W.W. Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bankura District has listed 83 Hindu Castes, arranged as far as possible in the order in which they rank in local public esteem, and also showing their occupation etc. Mr. Hunter keeps Kaibarttas under **Intermediate Sudra castes** and placed at twenty-six in social hierarchy. According to him, they are Cultivators and fishermen.⁵²

⁵¹ Same, p-64

⁵² Hunter, W. W - A Statistical Account of Bengal- Bankura District, Volume iv, Districts Bardwan, Bankura and Birbhum, Trubner & Co., London, 1876, p -226.

Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Rangpur⁵³

In the Rangpur District Gazetteer, it has been argued that the Hindu lower classes, who were refused a decent status in the caste regime, adopted Islam in preference to helot Hinduism. The Keyots and Badyakars, Muhammadan fishermen and musicians respectively, are cited as examples in Rangpur there can be little doubt that they are converts⁵⁴. However, they have not been profitted by their apostacy. Muhammadans of good classes will not eat or smoke with them and their dead are buried in separate grounds⁵⁵.

The Rangpur Gazetteer put Kaibarttas under the category of fishermen. According to it, the great majority of the fishermen are Hindus – the chief castes being Manjhis, Beharas, Kaibarttas, Telengas and Namasudras. The Muhammadan fishermen are known as Dhawas, Dalias and Keyots⁵⁶.

Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers :Dinajpur

Kaibarttas are by far the most important of the pure Hindu cultivating castes, numbering as they do about 33,000. Risley, in his “Tribes and Castes of Bengal,” speaks of the Kaibarttas as “one of the characteristics castes of the deltaic districts of Bengal”. He adds: “The nucleus of the group was probably Dravidian, but their original caste features may have been refined by a slight infusion of Aryan blood. This type, as it stands as presents, is distinctly an intermediate one, equally removed from the extreme types of Aryan and Dravidian races found in Bengal.” The principal occupation of this caste appears to have been fishing, but this have been abandoned and in Dinajpur they

⁵³ Vas, J.A -Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Rangpur, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1911

⁵⁴ Same, page-40 & 45.

⁵⁵ Same, page- 42

⁵⁶ Same, P-91

hold a good position among cultivators. A few of the smaller land-holders belong to this caste.⁵⁷

A Statistical Account of Bengal - Maldah, Rangpur and Dinajpur

In his statistical Account, Hunter has listed ninety-one Hindu castes arranged in the order in which they rank in local public esteem, together with their occupation etc. The figures showing the number of each caste are extracted from Mr. C. F. Magrath's District Census Compilation for Rangpur.

In this district, Kaibarttas are listed under pure Sudra Caste and given the rank 24 in caste hierarchy. Buchanan Hamilton also classes the Kaibarttas among the pure Sudra castes, although it is generally believed that they belong to one of the aboriginal tribes of Western Bengal, who during the early period of Aryan colonization succeeded by their numbers and influence in obtaining admission to Hinduism on honourable terms. The Kaibarttas are one of the Sudra castes who are ministered to by Brahman priests who have lapsed from pure Brahmanhood. To such an extent are these lapsed Brahmans looked down upon, that although a pure Brahman may receive water from a Kaibartta without injury to his caste, yet even a respectable sudra (other than a Kaibarta) would be degraded by receiving food or water from a Brahman Priest by whom the kaibarttas are instructed. The number of Kaibarttas in Rangpur in 1872 is returned at 35,396.⁵⁸ However, in the District Dinajpur, according to the Statistical Account, Kaibarttas are placed in the Intermediate Castes Category and put at rank 23 in local public esteem among the Sudras. They are called cultivators, fishermen and boatmen with 38,301 in number in the District Dinajpur.⁵⁹

A Statistical Account of Bengal – Nadiya and Jessor

⁵⁷ Stong, F.W. - Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Dinajpur, The Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1912, p- 40.

⁵⁸ Hunter, W.W. - A Statistical Account of Bengal – Districts of Maldah, Rangpur and Dinajpur (Rangpur), Volume- vii, Trubner & co. London-1876, pp. 216-217.

⁵⁹ Same (District-Dinajpur), p. 379.

In Nadia District, Kaibarttas rank 27 in Hindu Castes hierarchy, numbering 114,857 in the Census Report of 1872. W.W. Hunter has used many synonyms for Kaibarttas, such as Chasa Das, Landholders, Merchants, Cultivators and Servants. He writes, “according to the Sastras, the original caste occupation of the Kaibarttas was that of the fishermen, but in this part of Bengal very few Kaibarttas are found who follow that employment. In general, they are fairly prosperous.”⁶⁰

In Jessor District, Kaibarttas have been placed at number 23 in local social public esteem, numbering 44, 001, and their primary occupation being agricultulre.⁶¹

In the Noakhakhali District, Kaibarttas rank at 37 in local caste hierarchy. Hunter writes that they the most numerous agricultural caste in the district and 20,263 in number by the census of 1872.⁶²

In District Tipperah, out of 43 principal Hindu castes, Kaibarttas rank at number 23, and they are the largest agricultural caste in the distret with 53,916 heads returned by the census of 1872.⁶³

Bengal District Gazetteers - Jessore

The Kaibarttas include no less than 36,195 Chasi Kaibarttas, and the remainder consists of 4,124 Jaliya Kaibarttas and 3,833 unspecified Kaibarttas, i.e. persons who returned themselves as simply Kaibarttas. The Chasi Kaibarttas, whose occupation is agriculture, and who rank higher in the social scale than the Jalita Kaibarttas, whose

⁶⁰ Hunter, W.W. - A Statistical Account of Bengal – Nadiya Volume-ii, Trubner & co. London-1875, pp.47-48

⁶¹ Hunter, W.W. - A Statistical Account of Bengal – Jessor, Volume-ii, Trubner & co. London-1875, pp.195.

⁶² Hunter, W.W. - A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.-vi, Chittagong Hill, Tracts, Chittagong, Noakhali, Tipperah, Hill Tipperah, Trubner & co. London-1876 p. 276

⁶³ . Same, p.380.

occupation is fishing, and are also known as Mahishya, this being a designation recently adopted by them.⁶⁴

Bengal District Gazetteers – Nadia

The Kaibarttas are mainly agriculturists and occasionally fishermen. They have representatives in every thana in the district, but are most numerous in Tehata, Daulatpur and Damurhuda. In the Tehata thana, they form about 20 per cent of the population. They are nearly all classed as Chasi Kaibarttas. At the time of the census they urged that they should be treated as entirely different from the Jaliya Kaibarttas, and many of them entered their caste as Mahishya, an ancient caste of much respectability which is said to be descended from a Kshatriya father and Vaisya mother. They were permitted to enter themselves as Mahishyas, as this is a name which is assumed by no modern caste and it was not likely to lead to confusion; but in the course of tabulation all the so-called Mahishyas were classed as Chasi Kaibarttas. There seems to be no room for doubt that the two sections of Kaibarttas are of common origin, and in remote tracts inter-marriage is still permitted between them; at the same time the process of differentiation has proceeded so far in the advance portions of province, that they constitute practically separate communities.⁶⁵

A Statistical Account of Bengal - Monghyr and Purniah

Mr. C. F. Magrath's District Census Compilation for Monghyr put Kaibarttas under Agricultural Castes along with Barui and Tambuli, Keori, Kurmi, Mali, Nagarand Sadgop. A separate list of Boating and Fishing, which includes Banpar, Bathua, Gonri, Kalawant, Keut, Mala, Muriyari, Surahiya and Tior, has been given.⁶⁶ In his Statistical Account, Hunter placed Kaibartta at number 38 under the category of lower castes

⁶⁴ O'Malley, L.S.S – Bengal District Gazetteers-Jessore, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1912, pp.52-53

⁶⁵ Garrett, J.H.E – Bengal District Gazetteers-Nadia, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1910, p.45

⁶⁶ Hunter, W.W. - A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.-xv, Districts of Monghyr and Purniah, Trubner & Co., London-1877, pp.53-54.

among the Hindus. Kaibarttas have been referred as agriculturists with 55 people in Monghyr.⁶⁷ While Keuts have been placed at number 78 and are called boatmen and fishermen. Further it has been written that a portion follow husbandry and 3101 in number.⁶⁸

Kaibarttas are the principal agricultural caste of Purniah, numbering 56,321. They are found chiefly in the central stripe of the country running north and south, and which includes the police divisions of Gondwara, Kadba, Arariya, and Amur-Kasba.⁶⁹ The number of Keuts in Purnia is 20,057 and they are grouped under boating and fishing castes.⁷⁰

Bengal District Gazetteers-Purnea

The Kaibarttas are a caste of cultivators chiefly resident in the centre of the district, in thans Korha, Katihar, Purnea, Kadwa and Amur Kaswa. They are a good husbandman, cultivating their lands with pains, and nearly all have occupancy rights. A few of the poorer Kaibarttas, however, are fishermen or field labourers. They speak a dialect of Bengali, and in their habits resemble their fellow castemen of the neighbouring districts of Bengal.⁷¹

The Kewats inhabit the western portion of the district, and evidently have migrated from the country west of the Kosi, where a large number of them are still to be found. They are recognized as servants of the Hindus, and also as their boatmen, but in this district they have been diverted from their original profession and the majority are cultivators like other agricultural castes, while some of them serve as field-labourers.⁷²

⁶⁷ same, p 58

⁶⁸ Same, Statistical Account of Monghyr p.59

⁶⁹ Same, Statistical Account of Purniah, p.254.

⁷⁰ Same, p.255

⁷¹ O'Malley, L.S.S – Bengal District Gazetteers-Purnea, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1911, p.64

⁷² Same, p-67

A Statistical Account of Bengal - Tirhut and Champaran

In the Statistical Account of Tirhut, Kaibarttas have been grouped under agricultural Castes, with 484 in number.⁷³ According to the census of 1872, the number of the population belonging to boating and fishing castes is as follows:-Banpar-143, Dhimar-1850, Gonrhi-3625, Keut-52, 977, Malla-159, 730, Mariyari-311, Tior-873:219,508 or about 5% of the whole population. The Census returns also give, under the head of occupation – Fishermen-5942, Boatmen-1970:7912. In the rains, however, nearly every one who can spare time, catches fish, which then abound in rice-fields.⁷⁴

In Champaran, Kaibarttas are found only in Thana Lauriya with 471 in number.⁷⁵ According to the census of 1872, the number of Hindu fishing castes are as follows: -Banpars-75, Gonrhis-14,621, Keut-2279, Malas-45,531, Surahiyas-241, tiors-10: total-62,757 or 4.3 percent of the district population. The Census Report, in the occupation tables of male sex, returns the Boatmen as 928, the fishermen as 1035: total-1963.⁷⁶

A Statistical Account of Bengal –Singhbum, Tributary States of Chutia Nagpur and Manbhum

In the Singhbum District, Kaibarttas have been placed at no.23, occupation agriculturure with 114 people. While Keut or Kewat has been specifically called boatmen and placed at number 47. About the caste name, it is written that they have taken thier caste name from Hindi word Kena, meaning to row and 1293 people.⁷⁷

⁷³ Hunter, W.W- A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.xiii. Tirhut and Champaran, Trubner & Co.London- 1877, p-44

⁷⁴ Same, p-28.

⁷⁵ Same, p 244

⁷⁶ Same, p-227

⁷⁷ Hunter, W. W- A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.xvii, Singhbum District, Tributary States of Chutia, Nagpur and Manbhum, pp.65-66

In the Tributary states of Chutia Nagpur, Kaibarttas have been placed at number 21, agriculturists, 417 people and Keuts or Kewat at 48 in Hindu social hierarchy. Kewats are called as boatmen or fishermen with 2660 heads.⁷⁸

In Manbhum, Kaibarttas placed at number 29, cultivators: 3243⁷⁹, while Keut or Kewat, Called boatmen at 68 with 692 people.⁸⁰

A Statistical Account of Bengal -Bhagalpur and Santal-Parganas

Mr. C. F. Magrath, in the District Census Report for Bhagalpur, has used 'Kaibata'⁸¹ under the castes engaged agricultural activities allongwith Bauri or Tambuli, Koeri, Kurmi, Mali, Nagar, and Rajdhob, while in other districts, he has used Kaibarttas as caste name. Further, a separate list of Boating and Fishing Castes has been given, which includes Banpar, Chabi, Dhimar, Gonrhi, Kalawant, Keut, Mala, Muriyari, Surhiya and Tior. However, W.W. Hunter in his arrangement of Hindu Castes in order of Precedence has used Kaibartta, instead of Kaibata, as Caste name and placed at number 38. He further writes that though Kaibarttas are the great agricultural caste of the Bardwan Division, but thier number in Bhagalpur is only 311. They live in the two police divisions of Parmeswarpur and Madahpura, and is probably immigrants.⁸²

In the Hindu social hierarchy Keuts or Kewats are placed at number 80, according to the Statistical Account of Bhagalpur District. In the later, Hunter has used Kewat as synonyms of Keut caste. He further write that Keuts or Kewats are the largest boating and fishing caste in the district. They are divided into Nafaris and Grihashts, of whom the former are unclean eaters, and used to sell themselves and children as slaves; the

⁷⁸ Same, Chutia Nagpur, pp.163-164.

⁷⁹ Same, Manbhum, p292

⁸⁰ Same, p. 295.

⁸¹ Hunter, W.W- A Statistical Acconnt of Bengal, vol.xiv, Districts of Bhagalpur and the Santal Parganas ,p.50

⁸² Same, p.69.

later have abandoned their caste occupation, and have taken to husbandry. They number 54,594, of whom 40,356 are found in the two police divisions of Madahpura and Supul.⁸³ In the same volume, while giving the list of Hindu Castes of Santal Parganas, arranged in order of precedence both Magrath and Hunter have used the word Kaibartta as caste name, agriculture as occupation and 2,994 in number. They are placed at number 33 in Hindu Castes hierarchy⁸⁴. Kewat or Keut as fishermen or boatmen and their number 1212.⁸⁵

In the Statistical Account of Saran, it is written that Kaibartta caste belong rather to Bengal proper than to Behar with 06 in number. This caste is grouped under the category of castes engaged in agricultural activities and placed at number 30 in Hindu castes hierarchy.⁸⁶

A Statistical Account of Bengal - Districts of Hazaribagh and Lohardaga

In the Statistical Account of Hazaribagh, it is written that Kaibartta being the great agricultural caste of Bengal, numbers only 16 in this district. It is stated in the Census Report that Chasa is a name assumed by Kaibarttas who cultivate in order to distinguish themselves from the fishing jalias, who also claim to be Kaibarttas.⁸⁷ They have been placed at no.38 in Hindu castes hierarchy. Keut or Kewat caste has been placed at no.68 in social precedence, and called fishermen taking their name from Hindi kena to row, 632 in number.⁸⁸

In the Statistical Account of Lohardaga District, Kaibarttas have been placed at no.29 as agriculturists numbering 584.⁸⁹ Further, at number 66, Keut or Kewat has been

⁸³ Same, p.73.

⁸⁴ Same, p.320

⁸⁵ Same, p.321

⁸⁶ W.W.Hunter- A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.xi, Districts of Patna and Saran, p.249

⁸⁷ W.W.Hunter- A Statistical Account of Bengal, vol.xvi, Districts of Hazaribagh and Lohardaga, p.78

⁸⁸ Same, p.79.

⁸⁹ Same, District Lohardaga, p.304

placed. The caste has been specifically called boatmen, taking their name from the Hindi Kena ,to row ;678 in population.⁹⁰

Census of 1891, Vol.-V

Table XVI (1) of Census 1891 gives details of Castes, Tribes and Races by their traditional occupation or nationality. In Bengal, Kaibarttas have been clubbed together with cultivating castes, having 237 subcastes, 2,224,761 in population – 1,109,538 male and 1,115,223.⁹¹ In Bihar, however, Kewat have been put under the group of fishermen, Palki-bearers etc. There are 101 subcastes with 311,850 population- 151,333 male and 160,517 female.⁹²

Census of 1901

The Chasi Kaibarttas vehemently deny all connection with the Jaliyas and claim to be as separate Caste, yet the general opinion is that the two communities belong to one and the same caste.⁹³

The most vigorous of all the agitations that arose in connection with the social precedence of caste was that of the Chasi Kaibarttas. They urge that they are entirely distinct from the Jaliya Kaibarttas and that their proper appellation is Mahisya ,an ancient caste of much respectability which is said to be descended from a Kshatriya father and a Vaisya mother. The Chasi Kaibarttas claim to be Mahisya on the ground that they have the same origin, and quote slokas from the Padma Puran and the Brahma Vaivartta Puran in support of this claim. They have also succeeded in obtaining Vyavasthas from some eminent Pandits acquiescing in the desired identification. The sloka from the Padma Puran, however, is said not to be found in the ordinary editions and the quotation from the Brahma Vaivartta Puram is incomplete; the next sloke goes

⁹⁰ Same, p.307

⁹¹ O'Donnell, C.J. (Superintendent of Census Operation in Bengal) –Census of 1891, Vol. –V, The Caste Tables, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893, p.-2

⁹² Same, p.-8

⁹³ Gait, E.A.- Census of 1901, Volume VI, Part-I, Report, Chapter-xi, p.-353.

on to say “but by their connection with the Tivars in the Kali yuga ,they became fishermen and were fallen.

This agitation was pursued with great energy, and in the 24-parganas, Nadia, Midnapora and other districts, influential committees were formed to draw up petitions, to inform the lower classes of their community of their newly discovered status, and to urge them to return themselves as Mahisya at the census.They were allowed to adopt Mahisya as their Caste name, but at the time of tabulation they were all classed as Chasi Kaibartta.In Mymensingh, they withdrew their claim to the new title on its being stated that the word meant pertaining to a Mahish (buffalow).

This passage, therefore, even if it supports the alleged origin of the Kaibarttas as a whole, disposes at the same time of the claim of the Chasi sub-caste to be distinct from the Jaliya,and also to rank higher than they do on the strength of their alleged descent ,even if it be genuine.It is argued ,however,by the opponents of the Mahisya Movement that the whole passage is spurious and does not occur in many trustworthy editions,such as that in the Sanskrit library at Benares.It is asserted also that the protection of grain was the occupation of the Mahisyas and not agriculture.The word Kaibartta again is usually derived from ka,water and vartta,engaged,and the common patronymic is Das,a Sudra title.

There seems to be no room for doubt as to the common origin of the two sections of Kaibarttas and in remote tracts, such as the Tributary States of Orissa, inter-marriage is still permitted between them.In Dacca, some people were entered at the Census as Chasi Kaibartta by Caste and fishermen by occupation.At the same time,in the greater part of Bengal proper,the process of differentiation has proceeded so far that they now constitute practically separate communities.Water is not taken from the Chasi Kaibartas in all districts,but in some it is.In the Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Mr. Risley says regarding them, “It seems likely as time goes on that this sub-caste will rise in social estimation and will altogether sink the Kaibartta, so that eventually it is possible that they may succeed in securing a place with the Navasakha”

This was written only ten years ago and at that time, not only has the Mahisya theory not been developed, but the word is not even mentioned in Mr. Risley's book. Even now the claim is confined to Central and Western Bengal, and the lower section of the community are still but imperfectly acquainted with their new name and the improvement in their status which it is intended to connote. In Eastern Bengal Das, Halia Das, and Kaibartta Das are the names by which the Chasi Kaibartta prefers to be known. In Sylhet, when able to afford it, he takes Kayasth girls in marriage and himself as a Kayasth or Sudra. In some parts, chiefly in Eastern Bengal, the fishing section are also sinking the Kaibartta and call themselves Jaliya or Jaliya Das. In Noakhali a small section of the Chasi sub-caste, there known as Halia Das, tried unsuccessfully to get themselves returned as Deva Das.

Kaibarttas, says Dr. Grierson, seem to have been a non-Aryan race and to have entered Bengal from Orissa. They conquered by force of arms and the defeat, by them, of the Raja of Maina is the subject of a local poem. They formed several great families of which that of the Raja of Tamluk still survives.⁹⁴

In Orissa, all the Hindu Castes have been divided into seven groups, of which Kaibartta, Kewat, Rarhi, Niari have been put into group -V, along with Teli, Kumhar, Sundi (Sunri) etc. Their touch defiles the cloth. The Rarhi, Niari, Kaibartta and Kewat are supposed to spring from a common parentage, but the two former have given up fishing and taken to purchasing grain and carrying loads.⁹⁵

In Bihar Kewat have been put into group-IV, along with Beldar, Bind, Gonrhi, Kalwar, Mallh, Nunia, Teli, Tiya, Turaha etc. Water from the hands of castes belonging to this group is not usually taken by Brahmans, but who are not regarded altogether as impure and are allowed to enter the courtyards of the great temples. Their brahmans are also degraded.⁹⁶ Here there is no mention of caste Kaibartta as such in this census.

⁹⁴ Same, p.-380.

⁹⁵ Same, p.-371.

⁹⁶ Same, p.-374.

In Bengal proper, Chasi Kaibartta is put into group-IV alongwith Goala and placed well below 'nabasakhas', who are jalachariyas but whose Brahman is degraded. In this census, Chasi Kaibartta claim to be Mahisyas and to rank in a much higher scale.⁹⁷

The Kaibarttas is the great race cate of Minapore. It is also well represented in the districts east and north of this centre as far a Mymensingh and Purnea. The total strength is nearly two and a half millions, and the increase during the decade is rather more than 11 per cent. During the previous ten years, there had been a decline of 10 per cent and the number of Kaibarttas at present time is not quite 8,000 more than that returned in 1881. Possibly some items which have been shown under other heads, may then have been classed with Kaibartta. In Malda, for instance, about 26,000 persons returned as Haladhar Chasati have now been classed as Chasati. There is no such entry in the Census Tables of 1891, and it is presumed that persons in question mist then have been classed as Kaibartta. The Kewats of Orissa and Bihar (372,000 in number), who correspond to the Kaibarttas of Bengal proper, show a slight increase of 8.68 per cent. The gain would have been greater, but for the separate entry of certain communities in Orissa, which were previously treated as Kewat sub-castes.⁹⁸

Census of 1921

The division of the Kaibartta Caste into Mahishya or Chasi Kaibarttas and Jalilya Kaibarttas is a matter of more concern in Bengal and Assam than it is in this province, but a request was received from the Mahishyas, who follow the occupation of agriculture, asking that they should be carefully distinguished from the Jaliyas, whose occupation is the less esteemed one of fishing and boating. A request was also received that all Khandaits in Orissa should be returned as mahishyas, but this was refused.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Same, p.-371.

⁹⁸ Gait, E.A.- Census of 1901, Volume VI, Part-I, Report, Bengal Secretariat press, 1902, Chapter-xi-Caste, p.-391.

⁹⁹ Tallents, P.C -Census of India 1921, Vol.-VII, Part-I, Bihar and Orissa, Chapter-XI, P.235

The decrease in the number of Kewats by 27,626 from 420,506 to 392,880 exaggerates the loss of this caste. The Kewats are fishermen who are found chiefly in Darbhanga and the Bhagalpur and Orissa Divisions. In the districts where the Kewats have lost the ground, the Mallahs have gained, and as Mallah is a title which is applied to most fishing castes as well as the name of a particular caste, it is probable that most of the loss of Kewats must be set off against in Mallahs.¹⁰⁰

The split between the Chasi Kaibarttas and Jaliya Kaibarttas is now complete and jealousy between the two is very great. The former now claim to be of totally different origin, though this is a comparatively new departure, and they certainly have established themselves in a somewhat better social position than the latter. In numbers, 2,210,684 the Chasi Kaibarttas or Mahishyas the largest Hindu caste in Bengal, beating the Namasudras by nearly 200,000 and Rajbansis by nearly 500,000. They are in greatest strength in Midnapore, where there are 856,000 of them and in Howrah, the 24-Parganas and Hoogly. There are many of them also in Murshidabad and Nadia, extending to adjoining parts of Jessore and across the Ganges into the Southern Districts of Rajshahi Division, and they are in strength again in Mymensingh, Dacca, Tippera, Noakhali and Sylhet in Assam. Originally they must have been the people of the delta who filled the space between the ancestors of the Bagdis just below the fringes of the rising ground to the west and ancestors of the Pods and Namasudras nearer the delta face. They have increased by 3.4 per cent since 1911 and 13.2 per cent since 1901.¹⁰¹

The Jalia Kaibarttas are traditionally an aquatic community engaged in fishing and as boatmen. They showed themselves very anxious to claim the same caste name Mahishya as the Chasi Kaibarttas have taken to using or some variant of it. In number they are much less the important, but they were returned in 1921 at 384,049 and have increased by 17.6 per cent since 1911 and by 44.8 per cent since 1901. To the question

¹⁰⁰ Same, p.243

¹⁰¹ Thompson, W.H-Census of India, Vol.-V, Bengal, Part-1, Report, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1923, Chapter-XI, p.354-355.

whether they were originally of the same stock as the Chasi Kaibarttas or not, the close parallel between the distribution of the two communities over the several districts of the province will appear significant. Both communities seem to belong to the same localities, but naturally the Jalia Kaibarttas are rather less numerous in drier districts, where there is not the same scope for the exercise of their traditional occupation than in the districts intersected by streams.¹⁰²

Census of 1931

The Kewats and Mallahas are the two principal fishing castes, but there are other minor ones, such as the Surahiyas, Gonrhis, Malos, Chains, Binds and Tiyars. There is usually a tendency to use the term 'Mallah' in describing persons who really belong to one of the other cognate castes, and this was held responsible for the exceptionally high increase in the number of Mallahs (14.7) and substantial drop (6.7) in the number of Kewats. At the present census, it would appear that the latter caste has recouped the loss thus sustained – which circumstance coupled with a normal rate of natural growth, would account for the increase of 19.8 per cent achieved by them.¹⁰³ In Cuttack district the fluctuations in the number of Kewats have been specially marked as noted below:-

1911 ---62,000

1921---48,500

1931---78,500

Chapter –XII, Subsidiary Table ¹⁰⁴

| Variation in actual and proportionate strength of certain castes, etc. since 1901 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------------------|------|------|------|-------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|---|------|------|
| Caste, Tribe or Race | locality | persons (000's omitted) | | | | percentage of variation | | | | Number per miles of provincial population | | |
| | | 1931 | 1921 | 1911 | 1901 | 1921-31 | 1911-21 | 1901-11 | 1901-1931 | 1931 | 1921 | 1911 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

¹⁰² Same, p.355.

¹⁰³ Lacey, W.G - Census of 1931, vol. VII, Bihar & Orissa, Part-1, Report, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1933 Chapter-XII, p.274

¹⁰⁴ Same, p.278

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|------|-------|----|----|----|
| Kewat | Whole province | 471 | 303 | 421 | 408 | +19.8 | -6.7 | +3.2 | +15.4 | 11 | 10 | 11 |
| Mallah | whole province Except Orissa division & feudatory states | 460 | 418 | 360 | 365 | +11.4 | +14.7 | -1.4 | +20.0 | 17 | 17 | 10 |

In the census of 1931, both Kewats and Mallahs were omitted from the list of Depressed Classes, though they were part of the somewhat similar list compiled in connection with the census of 1911. The Kewats had been part the list of 1911 on the ground that they were not served by good Brahmans as family priests, while the Mallahs were said to be denied access to the interior of Hindu temples.¹⁰⁵

Table-XVII
Race, Tribe or Caste¹⁰⁶

| Caste or Tribe, Religion, Districts or State – Bihar & Orissa | Persons | Male | Female |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Kewat</i> , Hindu | 471,389 | 228,647 | 249,743 |
| Champanan | 2,725 | 1,354 | 1,371 |
| Muzaffarpur | 7,566 | 3,506 | 4,060 |
| Darbhanga | 77,512 | 35,090 | 41,522 |
| Monghyr | 2,250 | 1,010 | 1,334 |
| Bhagalpur | 52,693 | 25,938 | 26,765 |
| Purnea | 36,854 | 18,878 | 17,976 |
| Santal Parganas | 6,008 | 2,976 | 3,032 |
| Cuttack | 78,498 | 37,749 | 40,749 |
| Balasore | 14,204 | 7,062 | 7,142 |

¹⁰⁵ Same, P.-280.

¹⁰⁶ Lacey, W.G - Census of 1931, VOL.-VII, Bihar & Orissa, Part-II, Tables, Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1932, Chapter-XII, p.138-39

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Angul | 3,111 | 1,525 | 1,586 |
| Puri | 33,754 | 16,848 | 17,406 |
| Sambalpur | 36,965 | 17,837 | 19,138 |
| Hazaribagh | 3,349 | 1,694 | 1,655 |
| Manbhum | 9,002 | 4,523 | 4,479 |
| Singhbhum | 3,209 | 1,681 | 1,608 |
| Orissa States | 99,976 | 48,560 | 51,418 |
| Chota Nagpur States | 241 | 138 | 103 |
| <u>Mallah</u> ,Hindu | 459,560 | 224,178 | 235,387 |
| Patna | 16,327 | 8,115 | 8,212 |
| Gaya | 13,166 | 6,387 | 6,770 |
| Shahabad | 15,942 | 7,451 | 8,409 |
| Saran | 22,657 | 10,273 | 12,384 |
| Chamaparan | 75,327 | 37,142 | 38,185 |
| Muzaffarpur | 128,416 | 63,408 | 65,018 |
| Darbhangha | 142,264 | 69,712 | 72,553 |
| Monghyr | 10,966 | 5,068 | 5,898 |
| Bhagalpur | 11,483 | 5,730 | 5,753 |
| Purnea | 2,402 | 1,321 | 1,181 |
| Hazaribagh | 1,618 | 790 | 828 |
| Palamnu | 15,670 | 7,639 | 8,031 |
| Singhbhum | 1,380 | 1,117 | 263 |

Adi Kaibartta is the caste shown in previous Reports as Jalia Kaivartta. On the present occasion as previously they put forward a claim to be returned as Rahbangshis or Mahishyas and it appears that in one of the sub-divisions of Dacca some Jalia Kaibartta who have actually taken to cultivation were so returned in spite of orders to the contrary. Their numbers have declined from 384,049 in 1921 to 352,072 in 1993, a decrease of 8.3 per cent. They are most numerous in Mymensingh (53,093), Tippera (43,017), Midnapore (14,723), Dacca (31,928), Jessore (26,061), Howrah (19,197), Bakarganj (14,723), Chittagong (23,928) and Hooghly (13,740). Their decline is certainly due to the claim of many of the caste to be recorded as Mahishyas whose numbers have increased by over 170,000 and undoubtedly include a number of

persons of the Jalia Kaibartta group who have taken to cultivation and for that or some other some other reason have secured their return as Mahishyas or Chasi Kaibarttas.¹⁰⁷

The Mahishyas are the most numerous caste in Bengal. They number 2,381,266 and have increased by 7.7 per cent from 2,210,684 in 1921. They are most numerous in Midnapore(883,367) and the 24-parganas(329,480), but they are found in every district except the Chittagong Hill TRacts and although their numbers have probably been swelled by the inclusion in some parts of Jalia Kaibarttas or possibly Patnis or other fishing castes claiming to have taken to agriculture and to be entitled to the use of this name, there is no reason to believe that the caste has not substantially increased during the last decade. The claim which appeared for the first time at the present census in the case of Mahishyas was to be recorded as Kshatriyas or Mahishya Kshatriyas. The history of this caste is of the same origin and derivation as the Jalis Kaibarttas and was known as the Chasi Kaibartta on first differentiating itself from them. It is sufficient to state that they have succeeded in establishing themselves as a different caste from the Jalia Kaibarttas and that they have secured the official recognition by Government of the caste name by which they appear in the present reports. In 1921, Mr. Thompson included them amongst the Depressed Classes but they have strenuously protested against that inclusion not only to the Indian Statutory Commission but also subsequently. They claim to Kshatriya status rests upon the traditional derivation of their caste said to exist in sacred writings in which they are represented as the offspring of a Kshatriya father and a Vaishya mother. In 1901 and so far as I know until the present census they have claimed to be Vaisyas and this is the status which their priests the Gaudadya Brahmans also claim for them. The actual derivation of their original name Kaibartta is now represented as being different from the derivation of the same term applied to the Jalia Kaibarttas. In the case of the Jalia Kaibarttas it is alleged that it derives from the roots ka - water and vrit - exist (ka+vritti+ach) whereas it is

¹⁰⁷ Porter, A.E-Census of India, 1931, Volume-V, Bengal & Sikkim, Part-1, Report, General Publication Branch, Calcutta-1933, p.455

contended for the Mahishyas that derivation of the same word is from an original word kim - cultivation and vrit - exist (kin+vrittti+an).The derivation deems to be clearly one which will not be favoured if a claim to Kshatriya status is persisted in.The movement is young and professes to find an identification of the Mahishyas with the Mahesris of Maharashtra and the Maheswaris of Rajputana.It is not an agitatin which has received the considered opinion of the caste association ,although considerable number of printed applications were received from districts all emanating from the same press and evidently distributed to branches of the same organisation.In Noakhali district the claim of a branch of the Mahishya community which had been originally put forward in 1901 again came forward.A number of Mahishyas in this district claim to be recorded as Deva Das.They mainly relied upon the fact that they had succeeded in registering documents under that title and the contentions that there was no inter-marriage or commensality with the other Mahishyas of the locality and that they enjoyed the services of Srotriya Napits on ceremonial occasions.These contentions were supported by a book entitled ‘Deva Das Kulavhar’which,however,was not published untill 1931 and which provides for this community a deravation similar to that alleged in the Shastras for the Brahmans and other varnas.It is contended that just as these groups came from different limbs of the Creator so the Deva Das came from His extreme eye-brow.The claim to be recorded as Deva Das was examined by the local officers and it was found that the evidence from registration of documents was inconclusive as the persons were indiscriminately described as Deva Das or Halia Das and similar other terms used by the Mahishyas whilst instances were found still to exist in which members of this community were married to Mahishyas.¹⁰⁸

Numbers of Mahishyas at each census, 1891-1931¹⁰⁹

| | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Mahishyas | 2,009,018 | 2,132,989 | 1,952,794 | 2,173,948 | 2,210,684 | 2,381,266 |

¹⁰⁸ Same, P. 477-78.

¹⁰⁹ Same, p-454

Chapter –3

The Keots of Bihar Today

In Bihar, Keots today use Keot, Kewat or Kaibartta as their caste name. Francis Buchanan in his book “An Account of the Districts of Purnea (1809-1810), as referred to in H.H. Risley’s *The Tribe and Castes of Bengal*, rightly postulates that the Kewat (i.e., Keot) of Bihar and the Kaibartta of Bengal belonged, in the earlier times, to one aboriginal tribe bearing the name Kewat and the Sanskrit name Kaibartta was adopted later.¹¹⁰ Buchanan further writes, in this district there is a very numerous class of cultivators called Kewat and Kaibarta. The people who are best informed in the customs of Mithila say that all these are properly of the same caste, and that according to the proper nomenclature of Mithila no other name but Kewat is known for them, nor is this term ever bestowed on any fisherman.¹¹¹ Lassen, by mentioning a story told by an obscure Greek Writer, Orthagoras, in his book ‘*ON THINGS INDIANS*’ writes that the passage seems to deserve quotation partly for the curious and characteristic story¹¹² which it contains, and partly for the opinion which it expresses that Kewat and Kaibartta are merely two names for the same tribe, or at any rate for the same occupation. “Kaibartat, the Sanskrit or Prakrit form, has been preserved in Bengal, and

¹¹⁰. Buchanan, Francis - An Account of the Districts of Purnea (1809-1810), Department of Art, Culture & Youth, Directorate of Museums, Government of Bihar, Reprint in 2013, page-227, also referred in H.H. Risley’s *The Tribe and Castes of Bengal*, pp.455-458.

¹¹¹. Ibid, p.227

¹¹² Greek Writer Orthagoras writes how the people of the village Koythos fed their goats upon fish, and goes on to say “seeing that in popular speech the name of the mixed caste Kaibarta, to whom the business of boating and fishing has been allotted, must become Kevaita, and the V would drop out in Greek, this village, doubtless situated on the sea or on a river, must have derived its name from the fact that it was inhabited by Kaibartas.”

is still in general use as the name of the caste in question, while the shorter form Kewat has become current in Behar.”¹¹³

In Bihar, the Keots are distributed almost all over the state, but their main centres of concentration are in the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharasa, Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran etc. They are divided into mainly three sub-groups - *Ghibihar, Garbhait or Saghar and Jathot*. The Ghibihar sub-group is mainly found in Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharasa, Supaul, Madhepura and Araria districts and the people call themselves Keots and use titles like Kamat, Chaudhary, Bhandari, Mandal, Verma, Biswas, Sharma, Lal etc., while in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Khagaria, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran etc., they use Kewat as caste name and Kamait, Kamti, Kamat, Chaudhary as their titles. The Garbhait or Saghar sub-group is found chiefly in the districts of Supaul, Saharasa, Madhepura, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Bhagalpur etc. These people call themselves Mandal and use the same title, while Keots of Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Araria, and Bhagalpur etc., call themselves Kaivarat and use titles like Das, Mandal, and Pandit etc. The Jathot sub-group is found mainly in the districts of Bhagalpur, Khagaria and Munger.

The Keots/Kaivarats are very much influenced by the Mahishya Movement of Bengal and in imitation; they had started calling themselves Mahishya, particularly in the adjoining districts of Bengal, such as Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Araria etc. Some enthusiasts got Mahishya entered as their caste name in their registered land- deals. This was the time when Jatiya Sabhas were active in almost among all the low castes and in order to place their castes on high pedestal, they traced their ancestry to some mythical heroes and made attempt to connect with lunar or solar dynasty of Kshatriya. In this period two Keot intellectuals Anuplal Mandal, Wakil and Ajablal Mandal,

¹¹³ Risley, H.H. – The Tribe and Castes of Bengal, Ethnographic Glossary, Firma Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1981, p.376

Wakil wrote a book “Mahishya Kaibartta Darpan” and got the book published by Shri Shri Kaibartta Sudhar Sabha, Purnia, in 1939¹¹⁴. Prior to the publication of Mahishya Kaibartta Darpan in 1939, another Keot intellectual Sahityratna Anup Lal Mandal started publishing a magazine “Kaibartta Kaumudi”. Gradually their temptation for upward mobility on the line of the Mahishya Movement of Bengal petered out and they have again settled down to Kaivarat/Keot.

The Keots of Bihar, according to the traditions prevalent among them, relate themselves with the lineage of King Guha, who had helped Lord Rama in many ways at the beginning of his exile. The devotion and sense of duty of the Kewat has been highlighted in Valmiki’s Ramayan and Tulsi’s Ramcharitamanas and the Keots are very much proud of their devotional association with Lord Rama. For them *the Kewat episode* is the evidence of their dignified root and esteemed position within Hindu social order and religious tradition¹¹⁵.

Let me recount the story. Prince Rama (God incarnate), his brother Lakshmana and his wife Sita, after being banished into exile, arrive at the bank of the river Ganga. Upon arriving to the riverbank, Lord Rama summons Kewat and asked him to ferry them across. To Rama surprise, Kewat declines, unless Rama allows him to wash his feet. Kewat justifies his request by referring to the story of Ahilya, a beautiful woman, who was cursed by the sage and turned into a stone until she was restored to her human form by the sacred dust lacing the Lord’s feet. As Rama witnessed the commitment and devotion of the boatmen, he concedes. Having washed God’s feet with the sacred Ganga water, Kewat drinks it and distributes the rest of the water to his family. Kewat then ferried Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana across the river. Upon arrival on the other side Sita wanted to pay the boatman his fee with all she had, her ring. Kewat rejected

¹¹⁴ Anuplal Mandal, Wakil and Ajablal Mandal, Wakil – Mahishya Kaibartta Darpan, Shri Shri Kaibartta Sudhar Sabha, Purnia, Bihar, First Edition-1939.

¹¹⁵ Ramacharitamanas, also quoted in Assa Doron ---Caste, occupation and politics on the Ganges, passage of Resistance, Ashagate publishing Limited, Surrey GU9 7PT, England p.126

her offer, saying to Rama, “We are of the same profession, you carry people across the river of life (Samsara) to the far shore of liberation (Moksha) and I carry people from this bank of the river to the other side. A washer man never charges a fellow washer man. A barber does not take money from a barber. Rama, you are also a boatman, how can I charge you? When my day comes, I ask only that you help me cross the river of life (Bhavasagar) to the far shore of liberation”. Koets consciously draw on the myth to reflect upon their social life and construct their identity in a dignified and meaningful way.

References also exist in Mahabharat about Nishad Kanya ‘Matsyagandha’, ferrying Rishi Parasara, birth of Rishi Vyasa on an Island, the marriage of ‘Matsyagandha’ (changed name Satyavati) with the king of Hastinapur Maharaja Shantanu after ‘Bhisma-Pratigya’ before Dasraj, and also about the famous Nishad archer ‘Ekalavya’, who was not considered fit for getting lessons in archery from Dronacharya, but had to offer his right thumb to his imaginary teacher.

The Keot narrates the story of Eklavya as the evidence of their dignified status and the injustices they suffered by high castes, particularly Brahmins. This myth is a branch story within the Hindu epic Mahabharata, and is essentially about a young prince, called Eklavya Nishad and his ardent devotion to his guru. The story tells about the young Eklavya who wanted to learn archery from Guru Drona, who taught warrior princes the mastery of weaponry. The latter refused to accept him as his disciple since he was a low caste shudra. Motivated by supreme devotion and determination Eklavya installed a clay figure of his guru Drona to worship and practice archery before it. Before too long he became an unrivalled archer. Meanwhile, Guru Drona was determined to make his favoured disciple, Arjuna, the most competent archer in the land. However, following an incident on a hunting trip, Drona and Arjuna became aware that there existed an archer even more accomplished than Arjuna. To their surprise this was the low caste Eklavya, who attributed his skilled archery to Drona. As his guru, Drona demanded from the disciple to pay his customary fee (Dakshina) in

the form of his right-hand thumb, and with due humility and devotion, Eklavya cut off his thumb and placed at the feet of his guru. Thus, Eklavya could no longer remain the best archer in the land. For the Keots, Eklavya is a hero, whose devotion and sacrifices must be celebrated and commemorated. As such, the story of Eklavya is implied to emphasize the marginalization of the community, both in the past and today.

The Keots of Bihar contend after citing above examples from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat and the Ramacharitamanas that in all these sacred literatures the primary occupation of Nishads has been shown as ferrying and boating. This has already been amply demonstrated by two verses of Yajurvedas, which testify that the Aryans assigned important royal works to fishermen and Nishads on the basis of their respective qualities, at the same time they also testify that traditional occupation of both fishermen and Nishads veered in and around water.

नदीभ्यः पौंजिष्ठ मृक्षीकाभ्यो नैषादं पुरुषव्याघ्राय दुर्मदः ।

(अध्याय – 30, मंत्र – 8)

For Rivers a fisherman; For Rikshikas a Nishada 'son; for the Man-tiger a madman, for the Gandharvas and Apsarases a Vratra ;for Motives one demented ; for serpents Genie an untrustworthy man ;for Dice a gambler ;for Excitement a non-gambler ;for Pisachas a woman who splits cane ;for Yatudhanas a Woman who works in thorns .

White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-08

सरोभ्यो धैवरमुषस्थावराभ्यो दाश वैशन्ताभ्यो वैन्दं नडूभ्यः शोष्कलं पाराय

मार्गारमवाराय केवर्तं तीथेभ्य आन्दं विषमेभ्यो मैनाला स्वनेभ्यः पर्णाकं गुहाभ्यः

किरात सानुभ्यो जम्भकं पवतेभ्यः किम्पूरुषम् ॥16 ॥

(अध्याय – 30, श्लोक – 16)

(For lakes a fisherman; for standing waters a fisher; for Tank-Waters a Nishada, for Reed-beds a fish-vender; for the Opposite Bank one who gropes for fish; for This Bank a Kewat; for Fords an Andas; for Shallows a Mainala; for Sounds a Bhilla; for Caverns a Kirata; for Mountain –heights a Destructive Savage; for Mountains a Wild –man.)

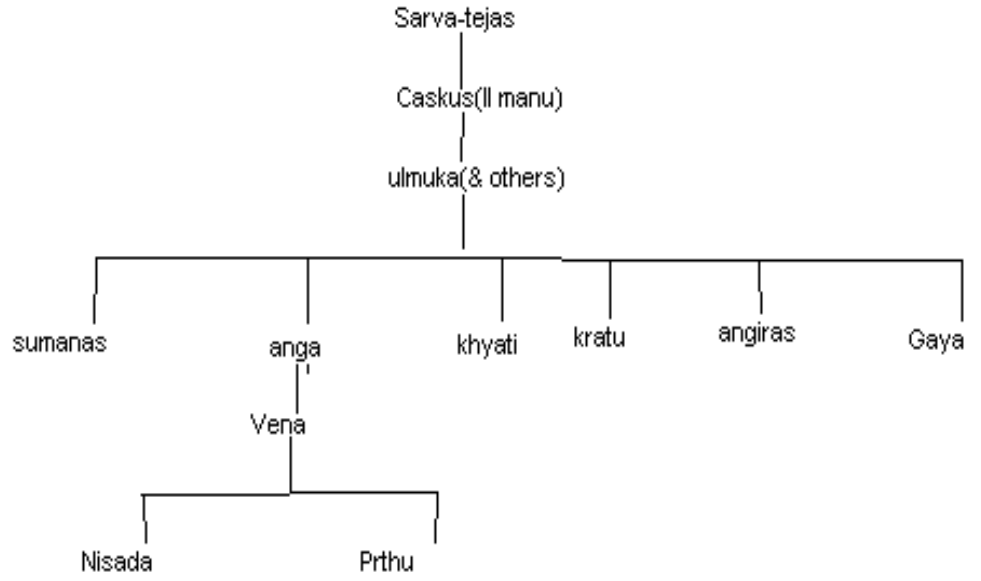
White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-16

That is the reason why both fishermen and Nishads trace their ancestry from the same and in the later days fishermen started adopting Nishad as their title. The definition of Nishad provided by lexicographer Vaman Shivram Apte in his Practical Sanskrit English Dictionary¹¹⁶ - one of the wild aboriginal tribes of India such as hunters and fishermen – seems to be based on this later development and does not attest the traditional occupation of Nishad caste, which was boating and fishing.

The Bhagavata purana provides us genealogy of Nishad as well as a story about their origin.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ . Apte, Shivram Apte –The Practical Sanskrit English Dictionary ,part ii, Editors: P.K.Gode & C.D.Karve, Prasad Prakashan ,Poona, 1958, p.949

¹¹⁷ . The Bhagavata Purana ,part –ii ,Section –iv ,chapter -13 (Dhruba’s descendants :King Anga’s abdication) & 14, Motilal Banarsidass, page-504-515



According to the story, Nishad was the son of the mythological king Vena, who became a victim of the curse of the rishis and lost his life. Thus, the state became headless, anarchy prevailed and there was a danger that the race of the royal sage Anga would come to an end, as king Vena had died sonless. Then the sages produced two sons by churning forcibly the thigh and the arms of the deceased king - from thigh appeared his elder son who having dwarfish and black in complexion was named 'Nishad' and from arm came the younger one who having fair complexion was named Prithu. Prithu got the royal throne and Nishad got forest life where he had water, forests and mountains under his hegemony. King Vena story is there in Vishnu Purana¹¹⁸, Harivansh Purana¹¹⁹ and Brahma Purana¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ . The Vishnu Purana, Book-1, Section-13

¹¹⁹ . Harivansa Purana, Harivansa Parva-i, section-5.

¹²⁰ . Brahma Purana, Chapter-i

Distribution of Keots in Various Districts of Bihar

| Sl. No. | Name of Districts | Number of Villages | Estimated Population |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Supaul | 85 – 95 | 250000 – 300000 |
| 2. | Madhubani | 130 – 140 | 200000-225000 |
| 3. | Madhepura | 90 - 100 | 200000- 225000 |
| 4. | Darbhanga | 75 - 85 | 150000- 175000 |
| 5. | Araria | 85 – 95 | 250000- 300000 |
| 6. | Purnia | 75 – 85 | 150000- 175000 |
| 7. | Saharsa | 70 – 80 | 70000-80000 |
| 8. | Katihar | 100 – 110 | 250000 – 275000 |
| 9. | Kishenganj | 65 – 75 | 50000- 60000 |
| 10. | Samastipur | 70 – 80 | 50000 – 55000 |
| 11. | Sitamarhi | 60 – 70 | 50000 – 55000 |
| 12. | Muzaffarpur | 40 – 45 | 25000 – 30000 |
| 13. | Vaishali | 35 – 40 | 25000 -30000 |
| 14. | West Champaran | 80 – 85 | 50000 – 55000 |
| 15. | West Champaran | 80 – 85 | 50000 – 55000 |
| 16. | East Champaran | 30 – 35 | 20000 – 25000 |
| 17. | Bhagalpur | 70 – 80 | 50000 – 60000 |

(Data based on Field Study, Interview & Survey Report)

Political Consciousness

In the post-Independence India, the Keots have not received their due weightage and share in the caste ridden democratic set up of Bihar. But the people of this caste had

been very much active during freedom struggle. The village Tikapatti, which is about 10 kilometre south-east from Block-Rupauli and about 60km from Purnia, had been an important centre of freedom movement. It is a Keot majority village and has the distinction of being the birth-place of a large number of freedom fighters from this community. A “Swaraj-Ashram” was established here in the year 1931 and it was inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad who became the first President of the Independent India. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, had come to this Village in the aftermath of 1934- earthquake. To commemorate Gandhi’s Visit, the people of this village established ‘Gandhi Sadan’ which is still functional, though Swaraj-Ashram has become non-existent. Bholu Paswan Shastri, the former Chief-Minister of Bihar and Dr. Lakshmi Narayan Sudhanshu, the former Speaker of Bihar Vidhan Sabha used to stay here. Similarly the Sarvodya leaders Basudev Prasad Singh, Jaglal Choudhary and Baidyanath Choudhary used to stay here. Vinoba Bhave, the great Sarvodya leader, too, had visited this village. During Civil Disobedience Movement; the Salt-Satyagraha started here from a place known as Nonia-Deeh.¹²¹

During the Quit-India Movement, 1942, Purnia District was at the centre-stage and Mohit Lal Pandit and Hardev Mandal, both Keot by caste were the leading lights of Quit India Movement in this part of the country. Tikapatti Swaraj Ashram was seized by the police on August 1, 1942.¹²² On August 11, a large number of rallies and demonstrations were carried out and at many places hartals were observed. The Congress flag was hoisted at Kishenganj Kachehari Bhawan, railway lines and telephone wires were cut between Banmankhi and Sarsi. The Koshi Bridge near Kursela was damaged, despite the prohibitory orders issued by the District Magistrate of Purnia on August 12. The people were asked to assemble near Gokul Krishna Ashram, the then Congress Office at Purnia, with a view to breaking jail and looting

¹²¹ . Information is based on interview taken from Janendra Kumar, Vill. Tikapatti, Purnia and presently Secretary of Shree Kalika Hindinath Samiti. A centenary celebration of this Samiti was held on 8-10 April 2015 at Tikapatti.

¹²² . Dutta, DR. K. K – *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Part-3, Bihar Hindi Granth Academy, Patna, Second Edition, February-1999, p-66

treasury. However, before they could materialise their plan, they were lathi-charged at Maranga near Purnia. In Tikapatti, a freedom fighter named Surya Narayan Mandal (Keot) was beaten to death by the police.

An interview was taken with Shri Narsingh Prasad Mandal, aged about 105 years, village Gopalpatti, North of Sohtha under Falka Block, about 12 km west of Gerabari, Katihar on October 9, 2015. According to him, the local people had participated in the Quit India Movement under the leadership of Hardev Mandal alias Bhagat of Bhangaha Village, Block-Falka. From his village Gopalpatti, Narayan Mandal, son of Babu Lal Mandal, Hari Mandal, son of Phasik Lal Mandal, Ajab Lal Mandal, son of Maluhu Mandal, Kako Mandal, son of Mogal Mandal etc. (all from Keot Caste) had taken part in the Quit India Movement.

At Rupauli Thana, a Daroga was burnt alive. In the Rupauli Thana burning incident, seven freedom fighters were awarded death-sentence. They were:-

- (1) Mohit Lal Pandit, vill. Gaddighat, a Keot by Caste
- (2) Narsingh Mandal, Vill. -Maheshpur, a Keot by Caste
- (3) Nakshtra Malakar
- (4) Lakshmi Mandal, Vill. -Pakaria, a Kurmi by Caste
- (5) Gore Lal Yadav, Vill. -Rupauli
- (6) Narsingh Singh, Vill. -Sarbi
- (7) Anup Lal Mehta, Vill. -Damgara, a Koiri by Caste

But Death Sentence could not be implemented since the country got independence in 1947.

List of the freedom fighters ¹²³

1. Jagdev Prasad Mandal, S/oPrem Mandal Village-Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli,Purnia, (Tamra-Patra Receptient)
2. Tarni Prasad Nirjhar,S/o Bateswar Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia *
3. Nageswar Mandal,S/o Bateswar Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia
4. Viswanath Mandal,S/O Bechan Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia**
5. Prithvi Chandra Keshari, S/O Makkhan Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia
6. Harish Chandra Keshari, S/O Makkhan Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia
7. Tilak Chandra Keshari, S/O Makkhan Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia
8. Madan Mandal, S/O Dasrath Mandal,Vill.Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli ,Purnia
9. Hardev Prasad@Bhagat S/OMadhusudan Bhagat,Village-Bhangha,Block-Falka,Purnia *** (Tamra-Patra Receptient)
- 10.Madhusudan Bhagat,S/o Kutai Bhagatb Village-Bhangha,Block-Falka,Purnia(Tamra-Patra Receptient)
- 11.Sant Lal Mandal, Village-Bhangha,Block-Falka,Purnia, (Tamra-Patra Receptient)
- 12.Mahadev Mandal, Village-Bhangha,Block-Falka,Purnia
- 13..Harimohan Pandit, Village-Bhangha,Block-Falka,Purnia
- 14.Narayan Mandal, S/O Babu Lal Mandal, Vill. -Gopalpatti,Block-Falka,Katihar
- 15.Hari Mandal, S/O Phasik Lal Mandal, Vill. -Gopalpatti,Block-Falka,Katihar
- 16.Ajab Lal Mandal, S/O Maluhu Mandal, Vill. -Gopalpatti,Block-Falka,Katihar

¹²³ .List of freedom fighters is based on the information collected from my fieldwork and interview taken from a large number of peoplesuch as Jai Prakash Mandal,Grandson of Hardev Prasad,Vill.-Bhangha, Shaligram Singh,A retired Teacher,Vill.-Tikapatti,Krishna Dev SIngh,Grandson of Bir Bateswar,vill.-Tikapatti,Bijay Kamat,Grandson of Anant Lal Kamat,Vill.Garba,Ram Chandar Choudhary,Grandson of JIYA Keot,Vill.Bishanpatti,Upendra Chaudhary,vill.-Shahpur,Madhubani,Neeraj Kumar,grandson of Jagdish Narain Choudhary,Shiv Sunder Choudhary, vill.Mirzapur ,Narkatia Chowk,Block-Rajnagar,Madhubani,Baleswar Choudhary,Vill-Chakdah,Madhubani etc.

17. Kako Mandal, S/O Mogal Mandal, Vill.-Gopalpatti, Block-Falka, Katihar
18. Kusum Lal Mandal, S/O Ayodhi Mandal, Vill. Siripur, Block-Bhawanipur, Purnia
19. Kalananda Mandal, S/O Maharaja Mandal, Vill. Siripur (Pahaltoli), Block-Bhawanipur, Purnia
20. Baldeo Mandal, S/O Faudi Mandal, Vill.- Siripur, Block-Bhawanipur, Purnia
21. Mohit Lal Pandit, S/O Sukhai Pandit, Vill.-Gaddighat, Block-Rupauli, Purnia****
22. Surya Narayan Mandal, Village-Tikapatti, Block-Rupauli, Purnia
23. Anant Lal Kamat, S/o Harinandan Kamat, Vill.-Garba, Block-Ghoghardiha, Madhubani (Tamra-Patra Receptient)
24. Jiya Keot S/O Nirshan Keot, vill.-Bishanpatti, Post-Sonre, Block – Lakhanaur, Madhubani (Tamra-Patra receptient)
25. Anand Saran, Vill.-Sunder Birajeet, Block-Madhepur, Madhubani
26. Maheswar Vyas, vill. -Pauni, Block-Madhepur, Madhubani
27. Chhabi Lal Kamat, Vill. Sonvarssa, Block-Madhepura, Madhubani
28. Jagdish Narayan Choudhary, S/O Bunni Lal Kamat Vill. -Vikramsher, Block-Babubarhi, Madhubani.
29. Bauyan Choudhary S/O Yadunandan choudhary, vill. shahpur, block-pandaul, Madhubani
30. Ram Chandra Choudhary, Vill. -Shahpur, Block- pandaul, Madhubani
31. Ram Gulam Bhandari, S/O Gopaljee Bhandari, Vill.-Jhanjharpur, Block-Jhanjharpur, Madhubani
32. Nageswar Bhandari, Vill. -Jhanjharpur, Block-Jhanjharpur, Madhubani
33. Khushi Lal Kamat, Vill.-Sarauti, Block-Ghoghardiha, Madhubani
34. Ramphal Choudhary, Vill. +Block -Andhra-Thadi, Madhubani
35. Sitaram Choudhary, Vill. -Chakdah, Block-Pandaul, Madhubani
36. Shiv Sunder Kamat, S/O Parau Kamat, Vill.-Mirzapur, Narkatia Chowk, Block-Raj Nagar, Dist.-Madhubani
37. Surya Narayan Choudhary, Vill. -Mirzapur, Tole-Mahanthipatti, Panchayat-Satghara, Block-Rajnagar, Madhubani. He was MLC as well.

38. Jitu Mandal, Vill. -Lachhmipur, Panchayat-Hansa, Block-Raniganj, Araria
39. Jaggarnathi Mandal, Vill. -Basgara, Panchayat-Kopari, Block-Raniganj, Araria
40. Prithvi Chandra Mandal, Vill. -Basgara, Panchayat-Kopari, Block-Raniganj, Araria. (*See Specimen pictures of Tamra Patra-19&20*).

* Tarni Prasad Nirjhar and Nageswar Mandal were brothers. Tarni Prasad Nirjhar was the district president of Purnia Khadi Gramodhyoj Bhandar. It is said that he had written a history of Purnia district, but the said book was not published.

** Prithvi Chandra Keshari, Harish Chandra Keshari and Tilak Chandra Keshari were brothers.

*** Hardev Mandal@Bhagat and Madhusudan Bhagat were both son and father and both of them were the recipient of Tamra-patra.

**** Mohit Lal Pandit was in the Lohia Group of Socialist Party and he was MLA from Rupauli Assembly Constituency from 1952-1957.

List of Public Representatives ¹²⁴

1. MLAs

| Sl. No. | Name | Year | Name of Party | Constituency | Victory Margine | Defeated Candidates |
|---------|--------------------|------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Mohit Lal Pandit | 1951 | Socialist Party | Roupauli | 8339- 6008 = | Sri Basudeo Prasad (I N C) |
| 2. | Ram Phal Choudhary | 1969 | S S P | Jhanjharpur | 22508 – 13843 = | Sri Rajendra Jha (B J S) |
| 3. | Jagdish Mandal | 1980 | INC(I) | Tribeniganj | 40715 -40213 = | Anup Lal Yadav (JNP (SC)) |
| 4. | Ramawtar Chaudhary | 1995 | JD | Jhanjharpur | 42748 – 19719 = | Deo Chandra Jha (INC) |

¹²⁴ . Information is based on the data collected from Bihar Vidhan Sabha Library, Patna, Parliamentary Library, New Delhi and fieldwork.

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 5. | Vishwa Mohan Kumar | 1995 | INC | Tribeniganj | 36960 – 31193 = | Anup Lal Yadav (JD) |
| 6. | Pradip Ku. Das | 1995 | BJP | Kasba | 31344 – 26473 = | Shiv Charan Mehta (JD) |
| 7. | Vijoy Kumar Mandal | 1995 | BPP | Araria | 23061 – 16829 = | Durga Das Rathor (BJP) |
| 8. | Jagdish Narayan Chaudhary | 2000 | RJD | Jhanjharpur | 34313 – 24264 = | Nitish Mishra (BJC (R)) |
| 9. | Bijay Kumar Mandal | 2000 | IND | Araria | 21698 – 20981 = | Moidur Rahman (INC) |
| 10. | Pradip Kr. Das | 2000 | BJP | Kasba | | Md. Afaque Alam |
| 11. | Kapil Deo Kamat | 2005 | (JD-U) | Babu Barhi | 21698- 20981 = | Umakant Yadav (INC) |
| 12. | Vishwamohan Kumar | 2005 | (JD-U) | Triveniganj | 32222 – 26553 | Anita Yadav (IND) |
| 13. | Murlidhar Mandal | 2005 | JD –U | Sikti | | Aftab Azim (RJD) |
| 14. | Pradip Kumar Das | 2005(Oct.- Nov.) | BJP | Kasba | 49113- 43104= | Md.Afaque Alam (RJD) |
| 15. | Dileshwar Kamait | 2009 (bye Election) | JD – U | Triveniganj | 41523- 30104 | Dinbandhu Yadav (LJP) |
| 16. | Sujata Devi | 2010 | JD(U) | Pipra | 44833- 30197= | Dinbandhu Yadav(LJP) |
| 17. | Kapil Deo Kamat | 2015 | JD(U) | Babubarhii | 61486- 41219= | Binod Kr.Singh (LJP) |

2. MLCs

1. Dr. Jai Narayan Mandal – 1978 – Janta Party – Sameli – Katihar
2. Shri Surya Narayan Choudhary – 1990 – Janta Dal – Raj Nagar - Madhubani

3. Shri Birendra Kumar Choudhary – 2004 – JD (U) – Chaura Mahrail-Madhubani
4. Shri Uday Kant Choudhary – 2010 – JD (U) – Shahpur – Madhubani

3. Lok Sabha Members

1. Shri Vishwa Mohan Kumar - 2009 – Supaul – JD (U)
2. Shri Birendra Kumar Choudhary – 2014 – Jhanjharpur – BJP

4. Rajya Sabha Member

1. Prof. Ramdev Bhandari – 1992, 1998, 2004 – RJD

5. Members of Board/ Nigam¹²⁵

1. Sri Uday Kant Choudhary – Chairman – Sairat Commission & Chairman EBC Commission, Patna, 2006, 2010
2. Shri Surya Narayan Kamat, Advocate – Member, EBC Commission, Patna

Social Life¹²⁶

Keots have both nuclear and extended families. A man's property is shared equally by his sons, though they have patrilineal rule of descent. The eldest son becomes the custodian of the paternal property after the death of his father. They are aware of the law by which the women may get a share from their paternal property. But

¹²⁵ . Interview from Viswa Mohan Kumar, Ex-MP. Birendra Kumar Choudhary, MP, Uday Kant Choudhary, former MLC and Surya Narayan Kamat. Former Member EBC Commission, Patna.

¹²⁶ . Information Collected from fieldwork and People of India: Bihar By Hetukar Jha and Surendra Gopal

the girls generally do not take their share. Succession follows the male line and the eldest son succeeds his father.

In the absence of a son, father's property is inherited by and divided equally among the daughters. The Keots place no restriction on the movement of their women, who are free to go outside the village to work as agricultural labourers or do any other work as per their abilities. They contribute to the family income and share economic burden of their families with their husbands.

Social division exists at gotra level, viz. Ghibihar, Garbhait and Jathot. The differentiation of gotras regulates marriage alliances and indicates descent. They reckon themselves as Shudra and are recognised as such by other communities. They are endogamous and they belong to Kashyap gotra. They regulate their marriage calculating five generations on father's side and three generations from mother's side in descending line. The age at marriage for boys ranges between twenty and twenty-five years and for girls between fifteen and twenty years, though occasionally child-marriage takes place.

The marriages are generally settled through negotiations and the girl's parents put the proposal. Sindur (vermilion) mark on the forehead and laithis (lac bangles) are given in the form of cash, ornaments, utensils and other things. They have patrilocal rule of residence.

The marriage ceremony takes place in the bride's house after a formal agreement between the parents of the boys and the girls on an auspicious date, fixed according to panjika in consultation with the priest. The bridegroom arrives at the bride's house accompanied by his friends and relatives on the marriage day and brings new saris, ornaments and sindur (vermilion for the bride). The bride's brothers and her sister's husband carry the bridegroom in their lap; female relatives of the bride welcome the bridegroom by touching his face with mango leaves or betel-leaves. It is called *Galsajni*. Then Jaimal (garlands exchange ceremony) takes place. Thereafter the

bridegroom is taken to the Marwa where in the presence of a Brahman priest and nai, the marriage ceremony is performed with priest chanting Vedic mantras. However, in some places, particularly in Madhubani district, Brahman priests have been replaced by the priests of own castemen. On the occasion a yajna is performed with the bride and bridegroom casting lavas (parched paddy) in the sacred fire while moving round it seven times. After that eight members including the bridegroom beat paddy in a wooden pot amidst chanting of mantras by a priest. It is called *othangar Kutai*. Thereafter the bridegroom puts vermilion mark on the forehead of the bride.

On the following day the bride accompanies her husband to his house. The bride's brothers and cousin brothers, called *lau-kaniya*, also come with the bride. On the fourth day of marriage, the bride and bridegroom remove their bridal knot and the sisters of the bridegroom immerse the *Maur and Patoasi* into a pond. The couple is bathed with *Laghar (Naghar)* water preserved in earthen pot.

Chuta-chuti (divorce) is permitted though it is now rare. Both husband and wife have the right to divorce each other. Nothing is given to the divorced woman for her maintenance. Children generally stay with father, but in the case of minor, children may stay with mother. Widows, Widowers and divorcees can all remarry, but such a marriage takes place without any ceremony or with simple ceremony, if any.

No pre-delivery ritual is observed during pregnancy but certain pre-delivery restrictions exist such as prohibition on movement outside during afternoons and evenings. Generally childbirth takes place in the house with *Chamain* (woman of the Hari community) attending the mother during delivery. She nurses the mother and her new-born child up to twelve days. A period of pollution for six days after the birth of a child is observed. The *chatti –chilla* is done on the sixth day and the new born is given a name. In the case of male child, the mundan (tonsure) ceremony is performed either on the first year or subsequent odd year.

They cremate the corpse. The dead body is carried to the burning ghat, on a chachri of green bamboo covered with white clothes (Kafan). The dead body is placed on the pyre (Chita) with the head towards north. Usually the eldest son lights the funeral pyre.

The mourning period extends to thirteen days. On the tenth day the males of the family and lineage members get their beard and head hair shaved and have their nails pared before taking bath; the female members also get their nails pared. This ritual is known as *dasakarma or nakh-bal*. On the eleventh day, the sradha ceremony called *Ekadasha* is performed in the presence of Mahapatra and Hajam. The Mahapatra performs the rituals on the banks of a pond or a river when the *Karta* offers *pinda* and worships the ancestors. On the twelfth day the sampindan ceremony is performed with the help of the Mahapatra. During our field work, we found that in some part of Madhubani district, the sampindan ceremony is performed with the help of the priest of own caste. On that day *the Karta and the Pachak* wear coloured new clothes and all the elder kins give *durbakshat* (blessings). The ancestors are remembered and in the evening a vegetarian feast is given to the kins and friends. On the thirteenth day, they enjoy a non-vegetarian diet along with the family members, and finally on the fourteenth day, a Satyanarayan Puja is performed and thus, they are purified and they start doing normal works.

In villages, an aged and wise Keot is chosen as their marar (leader). He plays an important role along with others in cases of social disputes or in according sanction for remarriage and divorce and for fixing the amount of fines levied on the violators of social norms. After the introduction of the Statutory Panchayat, the Mukhia has replaced the marar, especially in cases where members of other communities are involved and the Keots are steadily turning towards the modern judicial system. Above the village comes *Sabha* headed by *Mainzain* (Caste head). A Sabha consists of several Keot Villages and any major decision concerning caste has to get approval of the Sabha. In Katihar, we find evidences of 84-Marar Sabha (*Chaurashi Marar Sabha*). In

1939, an 84-Marar sabha was held at Shripur Village, Present day Bhawanipur Block, District Purnia, in which a book entitled *Kaivartta Mahishya Darpan* written by *Anup Lal Mandal* was distributed. This sabha was held under the banner of Shree Kaivartta Sudhar Sabha, Purnia. In this sabha late Bhup Lal Mandal, Marar of Tikapatti, late Anup Lal Mandal Wakil of Tikapatti, late Ajab Lal Mandal Wakil of Sadhupur, District Bhagalpur, late Uchit Lal Pandit Wakil of Gaddighat, Pothia, District Purnia played the leading role.¹²⁷

Meetings of Keot Mahasabha¹²⁸

It is noteworthy to mention the Keot Caste Organisation. The attempt to form the organisation of this caste and the caste reforms started in the early 20th century. Srikant, the Director, Jagjiwan Ram Research Institute, Patna and the famous writer of the book entitled “Bihar Men Chunav – Jati Hinsa aur Booth Loot” has written about the establishment of Kewat Mahasabha in the year 1911.¹²⁹ Under the auspices of Keot Mahasabha, Caste discourse and Caste awakening got prominence among the Keots of Madhubani, Darbhanga, Saharsha and Madhepura Districts. We have evidences of Kaiwartta Mahasabha at Singheswar Sthan in 1932. Then in the year 1941, a Kaiwarta Mahasabha was held at Devnath Patti under the presidentship of Late Ramnarayan Bhandari (Jhanjharpur) and the Secretaryship of Late Maheshwar Lal Vyas (Pauni).

We got the evidences of two Kaiwarta Mahasabhas in 1942 – First Mahasabha was held under the presidentship of Late Ramroop Kamat (Kamarkala), in the same year the second Mahasabha was held at Village Jhitki. In 1946 a Kaiwarta Mahasabha was held at Shahpur under the presidentship of late Lakshmi Narayan Bhandari. In 1964 a Kaiwarta Mahasabha was held at Jhanjharpur which was presided by Late

¹²⁷ Information is based on the interview with Shir Pravin Kumar Mandal, a resident of Khaira, Saimaili of Katihar District and a retired teacher of National High School, Kishenganj.

¹²⁸ . Essay in Karwat, edition-2, December-2016, essay in Kaibartta Navnirvan by Uday Kant Choudhary, Advocate, Patna High Court and Interview with Kashinath Bhandarri, Secretary, Akhil Bhartiya Kaibartta Kalyan SAMiti, Kolkatta.

¹²⁹ . Srikant - *Bihar Men Chunav – Jati, Hinsa aur Booth Loot*, vani Prakashan, New Delhi-110002, p.1911

Anant Lal Kamat (Garba) and Late Anand Saran (Sundar Virajit) was the secretary. Late Anant Lal Kamat was again elected the president of Supaul Mahasabha on 26.05.1964.

In the districts of Purnia, Katihar and Bhagalpur Caste Discourse and Caste Awakening were performed by *Kaiwarta Sudhar Sabha* and *84-Marar Sabha*. There are evidences of the convention of last Kaiwarta Sudhar Sabha at Shripur, Present Bhawanipur, Block – Rupauli, Purnia in 1939. In this convention late Bhup Lal Mandal, Late Anuplal Mandal, Wakil (Tikapatti), Late Ajablal Mandal, Wakil (Sadhupur) Present Bhagalpur District, Late Uchit Lal Pandit Wakil, Gaddighat played the leading role. In this Shripur 84-Marar Sabha, a book “Mahisya Kaiwarta Darpan” written by late Anuplal Mandal was distributed.

A meeting of 14 sub-castes of Keots was held in the year 1978 at Dharmpur Ghandi High School, Krishna Nagar (Narhia) under the presidentship of Dr. Jai Narayan Mandal. In this Jati Milao Sabha, a unanimous resolution was taken to merge the entire sub- castes and in future a common caste name “Nishad” will be used. Prior to this Mahasabha, a meeting was held at Patna in the year 1976 in which Dr. Jai Narayan Mandal and Late Raso Mandal (Saimeli) had prominently participated. In this meeting, it was decided to publish a caste magazine “Kaiwarta Navnirman” under the editorship of Sri Uday Kant Choudhary, Advocate, Patna High Court. Consequently, the first issue of *Kaiwarta Navnirman Patrika* was brought out in 1976. We have evidences of last Kaiwarta Mahasabha in 1986 at Supaul under the presidentship of Prof. Ramdev Bhandari and Sri Yogeshwar Mandal, Advocate as Secretary. In this Mahasabha another group was formed under the Presidentship of Sri Ramjee Mandal Sastri and Sri Uday Kant Choudhary as Secretary.

On the perusal of caste activities and caste reform sabha in the 20th Century, it is evident that while the other caste organizations were busy awakening their castes, the Keot Sabhas were still at the lower level of social consciousness. It is the need of

the hour that this caste should be properly educated, awakened and an honest attempt must be made in the direction of its sustained and continuous development.

Education

Educationally the Keots are backward, but now a days they encourage their boys and girls to receive education. They have two educational Hostels in operation for the education of caste boys –one in the district Headquarters of Madhubani and another at Nirmali in Supaul District. They have given generous contribution to build a hostel at Patna and the land has been purchased for the construction of the proposed Hostel there.

Kaiwart Chhatrawas, Laheriaganj, Madhubani is built on a three Katha land donated by late Harinandan Kamat of Mangrauni village and is being managed by Akhil Bhartiya Kaibartta Kalyan Samiti, Kolkotta. It was inaugurated on 26 April 1980 by the literary genius of this caste, late Anup Lal Mandal. Then there were only four rooms, but presently there are fourteen rooms for the housing of caste students of poor families. (*See pictures -17&18*)

In Nirmali, the Hostel is known as “Vedvyas Chhatrawas” .It was built on a piece of land (one Katha ,Fourteen Dhur) purchased from donation of castemen and was inaugurated by former Member of Parliament, Shri Viswa Mohan Kumar on 18 March 2018. There are four rooms for the housing of poor students from the caste. (*See pictures -15&16*).

We find evidences of four caste magazines. ***Kaiwartta Koumudi*** was the first magazine published from Patna. We did find a copy of its fifth edition published in February 1927 and late Anup Lal Mandal was the editor of this monthly magazine. Its avowed objective was to arouse and awaken new life in Kaibartta Caste. (*See pictures -21*)

Kaibartta Awaz was the second magazine published by the Akhil Bhartiya Kaibartta Kalyan Samiti, Kolkata and Yasodananda Kamat of village Suriyahi (Madhubani) was the editor. Now-a-days, *Kaibartta Awaz* is being published in the form of annual Smarika. (See pictures -22&23).

Kaibartta Navnirvan was the third magazine published from Patna under the editorship of Uday Kant Choudhary, Advocate, Patna High Court. Its first issue was published in 1976.

Karwat is the fourth magazine being published under the aegis of Vedvyas Chetna Samiti, Patna since 1911. Dr.Nagendra Prasad Verma is the editor of this magazine. (See pictures -24).

Religious life

The Keots are Hindus and they worship gods and goddesses of the wider Hindu pantheon. They worship Kali, Bandi, Goraiya and Narsingh as family as well as regional deities and make offerings of goats, rice, milk, sweetmeat etc. In some part of Madhubani district, they believe that the worship of Bandi and Goraiya are the worship of Saheb Khabas and Mahadev Khabas. They also believe that Narsingh and Mahadev Khabas cannot be worshipped together. According to them, Saheb Khabas and Mahadev Khabas are worshipped together with Kali, Bandi and Goraiya. They are worshipped in the form of Pinda and offered Janar (naivedya).¹³⁰

It is believed that Saheb Khabas and Mahadev Khabas were both brothers and great wrestlers. Originally they were the residents of Chakauti Village, situated west of Brahmpur village, near Kadam Chauk in the modern day Jale Block of Darbhanga district. Their Akhara (Wrestling Ground) was in Nandanwan Dhagjaree, situated in

¹³⁰ . This information and custom is based on the interview with Shri Kumar Chandra Chaudharyny, Village-Gaur-Andhara, District-Madhubani and a retired Sanskrit teacher of High school, Nehra and presently working as a (Dharma-Guru) religious teacher.

the areas around Gaur to Murukia and Balirajgarh etc. Saheb Khabas fought with a number of lions and he killed them all. Finally lioness appeared and asked him to fight with her, but saheb Khabas refused to fight on the ground that he cannot fight with a female. But she- lion was adamant to take revenge and continued to challenge him. Ultimately he surrendered without a fight to lioness and she- lion took her revenge by killing him. There is another saying that Mahadev Khabas was so tall that when he died his legs had to be cut to put him on funeral pyre.

The Keots worship the snake god Bisashari as a family deity and some members of the community abstain altogether from killing snakes. They also believe that a special goddess Chaurasi Devi dwells in their boats and prevents them from sinking. They worship their ancestors and offer pinda at Gaya, called “Gayawala Shradha”

They visit major Hindu pilgrim centres and participate in all the major Hindu religious festivals. Generally, the Maithil Brahman officiates as their priest, but during our field-work we observe that recently they have opted priest from their own caste as part of Cultural Revolution against Bhahmin’s superstitions and dominance.

In Purnia District, some keots are also Anandmargis or Baba Nam Kevalam¹³¹. At some places they are the followers of Maharsi Mehindas, particularly in the districts of Araria, Purnia and Katihar.

Though the Keots are generally the followers of Hinduism, many of them are Kabirpanthis as well. In Babubarhi Block of Madhubani district, we find evidences of Bhagatahi Branch of Kabirpanthi Sect, locally this place is known as Swami Gunakar Bhagat Sthan, Village Bagaul (*Pl.see pictures 12-14 in Appendices*).and present Mahanth is Shri Makeswar Bhagat.¹³² Professor Sukdev Singh, Ancient Hindi

¹³¹ . Interview with Madhav Kumar Chaudhary, Village+post-Srinagar, Panchayat-Khuti-Dhunauli, About 21 kilometer north of Purnia Town

¹³² . Interview with Agam Lal Kamat, a retired high school teacher, village-Bagaul, Babubarhi Block, District-Madhubani

Department, Kashi Hindu Viswavidyalaya, Varanasi in his book “Sant Kabir and Bhagatahi Panth” has written in detail about Swami Gunakar Bhagat.¹³³

Sonay Maharaj-Folk Deity of the Keots

Sonay Maharaj is the most popular and revered folk deity of the Keot Clan.¹³⁴ While his Bhagata is celebrated his hymn is carolled by his worshippers. Sonay Maharaj was born (12th Century A.D.) in Village Dhurgoan (*Pl.see pictures 07-08 in Appendices*) about three kilometers south-west from Belari Village (located to the east of Singhewar Sthan) under Madhepura District of Bihar¹³⁵. His father's name was Baishi Marar. He had one son named Sonay and one daughter named Sonamati. Baishi Marar shifted to village Dhurgoan from his native village Satokhar situated to the west of Singhewar Sthan. His was the only Keot family in Dhurgoan and so his son Soany used to spend much of his time in Keot majority village Belari. Belari Thakur-badi Mahantha, Gudar Das, was his spiritual guide and teacher. He used to herd the cattle in the 64-forests near Belari.

Once, in the king's court of Darbhanga, a falcon escaped from the hands of the King and flew away. Many attempts were made to catch it back but in vain. Even witches and sententious ones were called to help catch the falcon but they, too, failed. Then being enraged, the king got the witches and the wise caught and pushed to the Bansar (prison). At last, the divine and deity spirit of Sonay Maharaj was tested. When his effort, too, was of no avail, the king became highly incensed and ordered to imprison Soany as well. Just thereafter, ten falcons appeared in the court of the King. The King became happy and as he voiced for his own falcon to come, it fluttered of its flock and perched on his hand. The King got his falcon back with the divine grace of Sonay.

Having perceived the deity –power of Sonay, the King said to him to ask for his mouth-spelt and heart-felt desire. Then Sonay asked for favour from the King for the welfare

¹³³ . Singh, Sukdev - Sant Kabir and Bhagatahi Panth, Viswavidyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi, 1998, pp.-62-66.

¹³⁴ . Interviews with Ramkrishna Mandal, Village-Murliganj, Madhepura, Pappu Mandal, ex-Mukhia, vill.-Parwa, Shiv Narayan Mandal, Vill.+post.-Belari, Block-Kumarkhand, Jagdish Mandal, Vill.-Ramnagar, Dist.-Supaul

¹³⁵ . Bihar Lok-Sanskrit Kosh (Mithila Khand), pp.-238-240

of his Keot clan. The King said “So be it”. From that day-after, ‘Gahbars’ (place of worship) were made in a number of Keot villages. The Jagir (Prize-land) was given from the Darbhanga Maharaj to meet the expenditure of these ‘Gahbars’. These pieces of land are yet tax-free. In Bhaun-tekhathi village to the west of Madhepura town, a Jagir measuring 2.5 bighas is meant for the Gahbar of Sonay Maharaj. In Belari a jagir of one and half bigha plus six katha is demarcated for Sonay Maharaj and Belari middle school is named after him. A decision has been taken that in every Keot (Mandal) village; at least five kathas of lands must be registered in the name of Sonai Maharaj and there must be a Sonai Chabutara (Platform).

Sonay Maharaj used to herd cows in the forest of Chandi-thana Baratpur. A time came when he desired to go his own home. He gave ‘Romahi’ (cattle-care) of cows to the Khedan Maharaj and went home. After a few days, Sonay entreated his father to get permission to go to the forest. His father sensed him an air of fear of tigers and told (him) to stay further for a few days. But Sonay, avoiding his father’s advice, left for the cattle-court. On the way, there fell a forest called Bengaha Jungle. He was stopped there by a pack of tigers. But by virtue of his deity-power, he killed seven hundred tigers. Then all the tigresses came to fight with Sonay. But Sonay said, “It is not the moral appeal of a male to kill females. So I’ll not fight with you all”. Even after such utterances those tigresses did not let him go scot-free. At last he stretched his body against a branch of a forest – peepal tree in the north-south direction and slept. Tigresses hit Sonay with their claws to death. The soul of Sonay started wandering around. Next morning a wayfarer was passing to Belari Village along that route. Then Sonay appeared in the deity-form of a man and requested him to convey the message of his death to his castemen at Belari. There was much commotion in the village on death-message. He was cremated in Laukaha – Chap near Belari village with thirty-six varieties of woods.

It is said that he was a contemporary of Chauhar Mal, the Raja of Mokama. Sonbarssa was then under the control of Badal Paswan, a representative of Chauhar Mal. Badal Paswan was tyrannical and people were frightened with his rule. There were two

daughters of a man named Nishad - Kamala and Kaushiki, famous for their beauty. Badal Paswan wanted to have both the girls in marriage by force. Nishad fled away with his daughters for safety and started to wander here and there. Later on, some well-wishers suggested him to meet Soany Maharaj, only he could save him from the ill-will of Badal Paswan. On his request, Sonay Maharaj went to Sonbarssa, defeated Badal Paswan in wrestling and finally killed him and thus saved the people from the tyranny of Badal Paswan.

Sonay Maharaj married Reshma, a gardener girl from Moranga of Nepal. In the battle of Moranga, he received help from Ugri Maharaj, a carpenter, Lala Maharaj, a Cobbler, Khedan Maharaj, a Gwala (Milkman) and Lal Khan, a Muslim. In Dhurgoan, the birth-place of Sonay Maharaj, he is worshipped along with his above four companions. They are worshipped mainly by the Hindus. In the evening Holy Deepak (lamp) is kindled. The people from far and near come to this place with their unfulfilled and anxious desire and wishes with the divine blessings from Sonay Maharaj. After fulfilment of their wishes; the worshippers celebrate a feast to five Vaishnavas (non-vegetarian people).¹³⁶ In all Keot villages in Supaul, Saharsa and Madhepura districts, *(Pl.see pictures 06, 09, 10 & 11 in Appendices)*. Sonay Maharaj Puja is performed with gaiety and fervour on the Purnima (full moon day) of Aashaad (15 June to 16 July) every year and Kheer (milk boiled rice) is offered as Prasad. His puja is performed in the form of Pinda along with Gahil Mai. Gahil Mai is considered his Guru. *(Pl.see pictures 01-05 in Appendices)*.

Keots and their relations with other cognate Castes

There are a number of castes whose traditional occupation revolves in and around water, i.e, boating, ferrying and fishing. Keot, Kewat and Kaibartta are mainly boatmen who supplement their income chiefly by pursuing agriculture and occasionally by fishing. While Gonrhi, Khulwant, Chaie, Muriari, Chabi, Surahiya, Banapar, Tiar,

¹³⁶ .information by Yogendra Narayan Yadav, Ward no.-5, Dhurgoan, Madhepura and Santosh Kumar Sharma, Vill.- Belari

Beldar, Gangauta, Dhimar etc. are chiefly fishermen and they supplement their income by boating and cultivation. The latter group is also called Mallah or Machua in common parlance. The Mallah community also claims descent from Guha Nishad, the legendray boatmen who ferried Lord Rama across the Ganga, and hence prefer to call Nishad as their community name. Previously Boatmen group forming Keot, Kewat, and Kaibartta etc. and Mallah or Sahni group considered themselves separate caste and had almost negligible relationship between them, but recently both the groups are coming closer and even some marital relationships have been reported. Now at the society level, both the groups consider themselves as close affine.

Chapter-4

Findings and Conclusions

The present UGC sponsored Major Research work entitled “History and Myth of Keot Caste of Bihar” is not a mere historical account of the Caste under study. Being principally a community study, the past is studied only with reference to the present and with an eye on the future.

The Keot, also called Kewat, is a Tadbhav derivation from Sanskrit Kaibartta. Keots, being a widely distributed community, have various synonyms in different states of India. Some of the synonyms have etymological meanings, while some others are based on mythological stories. Etymologically, the word Kaibartta is derived from ‘*Ka*’ - water and ‘*Varta*’ –livelihood, i.e, *ka+vriddhi+ach*, meaning thereby the people who earn their livelihood by way of boating and ferrying; another etymological derivation of Kaibartta is ‘*Kim*’-cultivation and ‘*Vrit*’ – exist, i.e *kin+vriddhi+an*, the people whose primary occupation is cultivation. Similarly, the word ‘Nishad’ is supposed to be a compound of ‘*Nib*’ connoting special and ‘*Sad*’ connoting knowledge. Thus, a Nishad is one who possesses the special knowledge of navigation. Kaibartta, the Sanskrit or Prakrit form, has been preserved in Bengal and is still generally used as the name of the caste, while the shorter form Keot or Kewat has been current in Bihar.

In Bihar, the Keots are distributed all over the state, but their main centres of concentration are in the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharasa, Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishenganj, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran etc. They speak Angika, Hindi and Maithili and use the Devanagari script. In West-Bengal and Tripura, this community enjoys the status of scheduled-caste, while in Bihar they are notified as extremely backward class.

In Vedic literatures, Nishad is the generic term used for all the people whose occupations is now-a-days anyway related to in and around water. We find many references of the word “panca-jana” in Vedic literatures. The Nishads have been referred as the fifth Varna and carried respectable and important place.

In Ayodhya Kanda of Valmiki ‘s Ramayan, we find frequent uses of the term Nishad and Nishadapati for king Guha whose capital was Sringaverapur and he was a friend of prince Rama. We also find uses of the words दाशाश्च and कैवर्तीनां for Nishadas. नदीरक्षाः सर्वे दाशाश्च (112.84.711) and नावां शतानां पञ्चानां कैवर्तीनां शतं शतम्। (112.84.811).It seems that King Guha was a powerful king and with the help of his kinsmen, he had established a powerful kingdom in the areas around Prayag and had full control over river Ganga. His kinsmen were engaged in the profession of boating. -ततो निषादाधिपतिर्गुहो जातीनचोदयत्।12.52.77।।

In Mahabharata, the variant of Keot has been used frequently. We have many references of the words Dasraj and Nishad .In this age ,we find references of the two powerful Keot Kingdoms –one under the rule of Dasraj Vasu, the father of kewart Kanya Satyavati and another under King Hiranydhanu ,the father of great archer Eklavya.It seems that Keot /Nishad/Das carries respectable and important position in the society in this age and they could have matrimonial relations with the then ruling classes .when Prince Devavrata went to meet Dasraj soliciting him to give his daughter satyavati in marriage to King Santanu , the former shown great restraint and all the time used respectable adjective for Dasraj as “दाशराज्ञो महात्मन” , “दाशो धर्मात्मा”. It seems that in the age of Mahabharata, boating and ferrying was the main profession of the kith and kin of Dasraj. Even the close relatives of King Dasraj took pride of performing their traditional vocation (Aadiparva, Adhyaya-94, Slok-44).

Though, the story of Eklavya is subject to various interpretations..... For the Nishads, Eklavya is a hero, whose devotion and sacrifice must be celebrated and commemorated...

In the Ramacharitamanas, Kevata, Kevatu, Kevatahi, Nisada, Nisadahi, Nisadapati, Nisadu etc. words have been used for ferrymen or boatmen. The social status of Keot/Kevata seems to have been lower by the time of Tulsi's Ramacharitamanas. In Chaupais 2:88:03, King Guha is shown as saying - मैं जनु नीचु सहित परिवारा -(my family and myself are your humble servants). Again, in Chaupais 2:196:1, Nishad Chief Guha is portrayed as saying

कपटी कायर कुमति कुजाती। लोक बेद बाहेर सब भाँती॥
राम कीन्ह आपन जबही तैं। भयउँ भुवन भूषन तबही तैं॥१॥

(False, cowardly, evil-minded and low-born as I am and cast off from society as well as from the fold of the Vedas in every way, I have become the ornament of the world ever since Sri Rama took me for his own.)

In the early medieval period, Keot enjoyed very respectable and high status in the society. *Ramacharita* of *Sandhyakara Nandi* gives a detailed account of the Kewart Revolt led by Dibyoka and Bhima against Pala King Mahipal. Ramacharita is a historical record of the Pala Dynasty. Kaivartas were very powerful and warlike people in North Bengal. Mahasweta Devi in her historical novel "Kaiwart Khand" writes that kewarts had established a very powerful kingdom in Varendri and they enjoyed very respectable position and their society was highly developed in Radha-Gaur-Banga and Varendri. She further wrote that Kewarts had established independent state and their capital was Damarnagar. Kewart king Bhima was called 'Sun of Varendri'.

Prof. Ram Sharan Sharma in his book *Indian Feudalism*, Third Edition 2006, Macmillan Publishers India LTD, page 325 writes that *the Kaivartas were Peasants and their revolts can be seen as assertion of their land rights.*

According to the *Bengal District Gazetteers -Midnapore*, **Kaivarttas** have been traced to a very early period, being mentioned as Kevarttas in the Vajasaneyi Samhita, as Kaivarttas in the Epics and the Manu-Samhita, and as Kevatas in a Pillar edict of Ashoka. Not improbably they held the old kingdom of Tamralipti. They seem to have consisted originally of a congeries of tribes, which coalesced owing to the similarity of their functions. As land was gradually reclaimed from the waste and came under settled cultivation, they took more and more to agriculture. The cultivating portion then gradually drew away from the rest and set up a higher caste with degraded Brahmans for priests. Their power, wealth and number eventually secured for them a higher social status and an acknowledgement that water might be taken from them (jalacharaniya) by Brahmans and other higher castes. Socially, the Kaibarttas are frugal and industries, ranking among the best cultivators of the district.

The Chasi Kaibarttas vehemently deny all connection with the Jaliyas and claim to be as separate Caste in the Census of 1901. The most vigorous of all the agitations that arose in connection with the social precedence of caste was that of the Chasi Kaibarttas. They urge that they are entirely distinct from the Jaliya Kaibarttas and that their proper appellation is Mahisya, an ancient caste of much respectability. However, the division of the Kaibartta Caste into Mahishya or Chasi Kaibarttas and Jalilya Kaibarttas is a matter of more concern in Bengal and Assam than it is in this province of Bihar.

In Bihar, Keots today use Keot, Kewat or Kaibartta as their caste name. They are distributed almost all over the state, but their main centres of concentration are in the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharasa, Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Purnia,

Katihar, Kishenganj, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Vaishali, West Champaran, East Champaran etc. They are divided into mainly three sub-groups - *Ghibihar, Garbhait or Saghar and Jathot.*

The Keots of Bihar contend after citing examples from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat and the Ramacharitamanas that in all these sacred literatures the primary occupation of Nishads has been shown as ferrying and boating. This has already been amply demonstrated by two verses of Yajurvedas, which testify that the Aryans assigned important royal works to fishermen and Nishads on the basis of their respective qualities, at the same time they also testify that traditional occupation of both fishermen and Nishads veered in and around water.

नदीभ्यः पौजिष्ठ मृक्षीकाभ्यो नैषादं पुरुषव्याघ्राय दुर्मदः ।

(अध्याय – 30, मंत्र – 8)

For Rivers a fisherman; For Rikshikas a Nishada 'son; for the Man-tiger a madman, for the Gandharvas and Apsarases a Vratra; for Motives one demented; for serpents Genie an untrustworthy man; for Dice a gambler; for Excitement a non-gambler; for Pisachas a woman who splits cane; for Yatudhanas a Woman who works in thorns.

White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-08)

सरोभ्यो धैवरमुषस्थावराभ्यो दाश वैशन्ताभ्यो वैन्दं नडूभ्यः शोष्कलं पाराय

मार्गारमवाराय केवर्त तीथेभ्य आन्दं विषमेभ्यो मैनाला स्वनेभ्यः पर्णाकं गुहाभ्यः

किरात सानुभ्यो जम्भकं पवतेभ्यः किम्पूरुषम् ॥16 ॥

(अध्याय – 30, श्लोक – 16)

(For lakes a fisherman; for standing waters a fisher ; for Tank-Waters a Nishada ,for Reed-beds a fish-vender ; for the Opposite Bank one who gropes for fish ;for This

Bank a Kewat ;for Fords an Andas ;for Shallows a Mainala ;for Sounds a Bhilla ;for Caverns a Kirata ;for Mountain –heights a Destructive Savage ;for Mountains a Wild –man.

White Yajur-Veda, Book-30, Verse-16)

In the post-Independence India, the Keots have not received their due weightage and share in the caste ridden democratic set up of Bihar. But the people of this caste had been very much active during freedom struggle.

Educationally the Keots are backward, but now a days they encourage their boys and girls to receive education.They have two educational Hostels in operation for the education of caste boys –one in the district Headquarters of Madhubani and another at Nirmali in Supaul District. They have given generous contribution to build a hostel at Patna and the land has been purchased for the construction of the proposed Hostel there.

The Keots are Hindus and they worship gods and goddesses of the wider Hindu pantheon. Sonay Maharaj is the most popular and revered folk deity of the Keot Clan.

There are a number of castes whose traditional occupation revolves in and around water, i.e, boating, ferrying and fishing.Keot, Kewat and Kaibartta are mainly boatmen who supplement their income chiefly by pursuing agriculture and occasionally by fishing. While Gonrhi, Khulwant, Chaie, Muriari, Chabi, Surahiya, Banapar, Tiar, Beldar, Gangauta, Dhimar etc. are chiefly fishermen and they supplement their income by boating and cultivation.The latter group is also called Mallah or Machua in common parlance. The Mallah community also claims descent from Guha Nishad, the legendray boatmen who ferried Lord Rama across the Ganga, and hence prefer to call Nishad as their community name.Previously Boatmen group forming Keot, Kewat, and Kaibartta etc. and Mallah or Sahni group considered themselves separate caste and had almost negligible relationship between them, but recently both the groups are coming closer

and even some marital relationships have been reported. Now at the society level, both the groups consider themselves as close affine.

On the perusal of caste activities and caste reform sabhas of the Keots, it is evident that while the other caste organizations are busy awakening their castes, the Keot Sabhas are still at the lower level of social consciousness. It is the need of the hour that this caste should be properly educated, awakened and an honest attempt must be made in the direction of its sustained and continuous development.

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Appendices



Figure- 1 Sonai Maharaj Sthan, Belari, Madhepura



Figure -2 Sone Maharaj Sthan, Belari, Mdhepura



Figure -3 Sonai Maharaj Sthan Belari Deiting / Garbha Griha



Figure-4 Sonai Maharaj Sthan Belari Deiting / Garbha Griha



Figure-5 Pipal Tree in front of Sonai Asthan, Belari



Figure- 6 School Named after Sonai Maharaj



Figure- 7 Birthplace of Sonai Maharaj, Dhurwoan, Madhepura



Figure- 8 Birthplace of Sonai Maharaj, Dhurwoan, Madhepura



Figure- 9 A Cast Meeting under the Banner of Eklavya Sonai Saina, Parwa, Madhupura



Figure- 10, the President of Eklavya, Sonai Saina, Ram Krishna Mandal, Parva



Figure- 11 Sonai Chabutara at Ramnagar, Supaul



Figure- 12 Gunakar Bhagat Sthan, Bagaul, Madhubani



Figure- 13 Gunakar Bhagat Sthan, Bagaul, Madhubani



Figure- 14 Gunakar Bhagat Sthan, Bagaul, Madhubani



Figure -15, Vedvyas Chatrawas, Nirmali, Supaul



Figure -16



Figure- 17, Doner of land for Kaibartta Chhatrawas, Madhubani



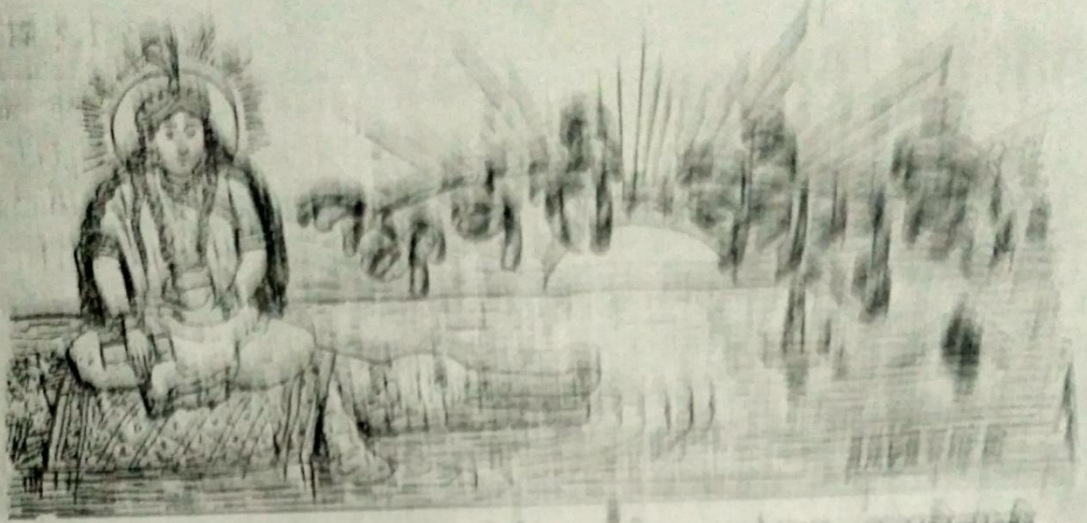
Figure -18, Kaibartta Chhatrawas Bhawan, Madhubani



Figure- 19, Tamra Patra



Figure -20, Tamra Patra



अखिल भारतवर्षीय केवले जातिमें नवजीवन संसार करिनीकी
विविध विषय-विभूषित मुख्य मासिक पत्रिका ।

उत्सिन्धुन जायुन माय्य वसतिनीवन ।
स मन्ध्र ध्व संवध्व संवा मजाति जागताम् ।
देवा भारं यथा पूर्व संजानानां उपासते ॥

वर्ष १]

पटना, माघ १९८३ : फरवरी १९८७ ई०

[अंक ५]

श्री रामविनय ।

ले०—श्रीवृन् "गीता" ।

हे रामवन्द्य ! क्यातु परमात्म्य ईश कहाडी ।
निज दीर्घ मैन, विशाल भुज, मुल पदम अन्व्य विलास्ये ॥
कामदेव असंख्य सम छवि पुनि कोटि रवि जिमि भीसई ।
हे जानकी-वर हृदय मम निज प्रेम-धार : वहास्ये ॥
धुमल कर शर चाण शोभित अरु भीम-पङ्क कटिमें धरे ।
मुकुट सीस विचित्र सीहे नित रूप अरु विशालास्ये ॥
दुख-दग्ध-द्वेष-दरिद्रता-दल दुष्ट धानव दूर ही ।
तवके हृदय मई भक्ति दे शुभ ज्ञान-ज्योति जगास्ये ॥
धर्मेन स्वकेगा कौत कर तुवक खरित अमरधार ही ।

Figure -21



Figure- 22



Figure- 23

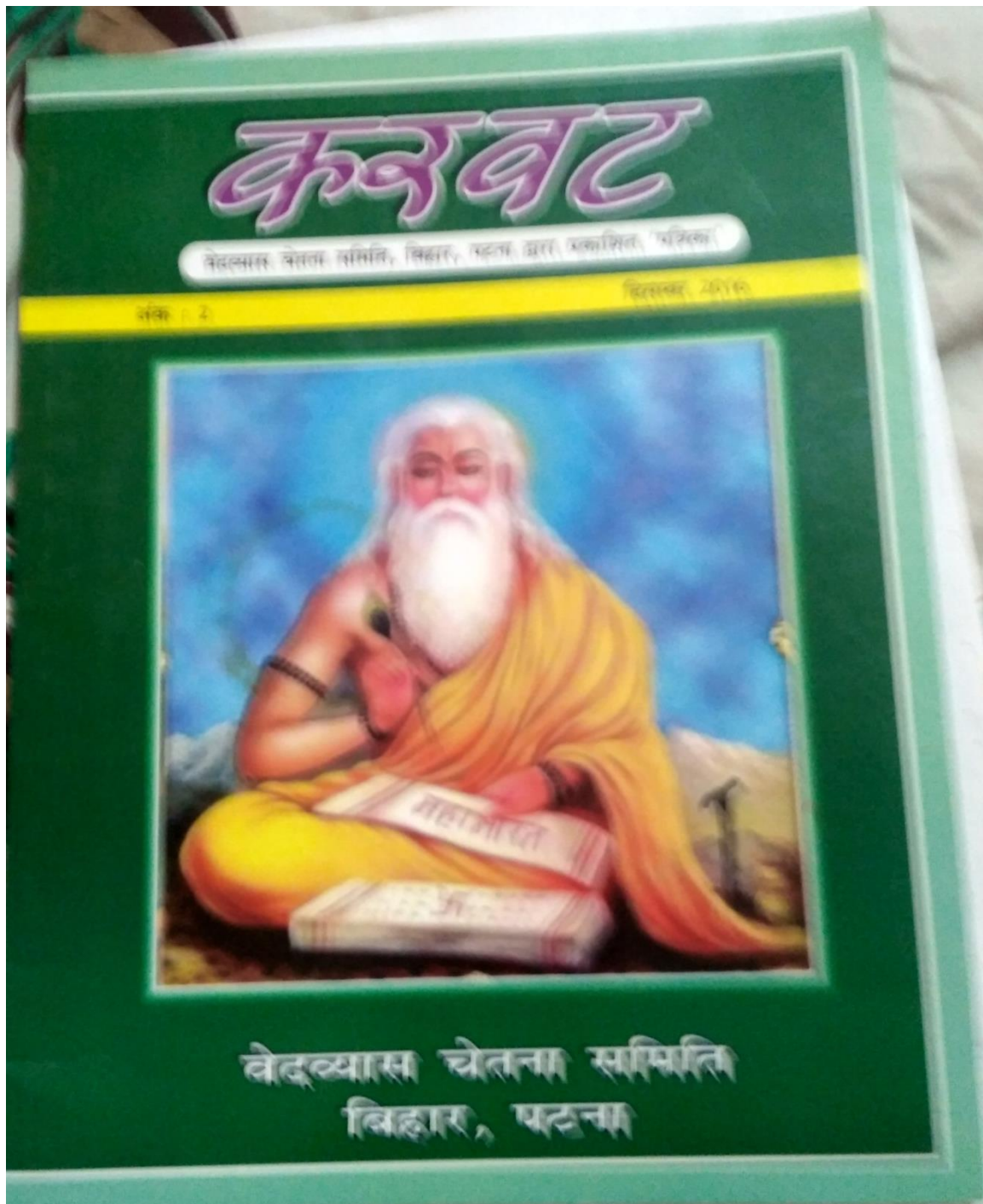


Figure- 24

बिहार के क्योट/कैवर्त)Keotजाति का ऐतिहासिक एवं सामाजिक अध्ययन (Kaivart/

प्रश्नावली (QUESTIONNAIRE)

1. गाँव का नाम :
 - a. पंचायत
 - b. प्रखण्ड
 - c. जिला
 - d. राज्य
2. गृह सं० : (जनगणना प्रदत्त)
3. गृह स्वामी का नाम :
4. गृह स्वामी का धर्म :
जाति : उपजाति :
5. गृह में सदस्यों की कुल संख्या :
पुरुष : महिला :
6. सामाजिक वर्ग :
(अनुसूचित जनजाति /अनुसूचित जाति/ अत्यंत पिछड़ा वर्ग/ पिछड़ा/ सामान्य)
7. यदि दूसरे क्षेत्र से आये हों तो उसका विवरण एवं कारण :
8. सामाजिक सोपान में स्तर
(उच्च, मध्यम, निम्न)
9. वंशानुगत उद्भव से जुड़े तथ्य :
10. क्या सामाजिक स्तर पर उन्नयन का अनुभव करते हैं? यदि हाँ, तो किस सीमा तक :
11. परिवार में शिक्षा का स्तर :

(प्राथमिक / माध्यमिक / स्नातक / स्नातकोत्तर / तकनीकी)

पुरुष :

महिला :

12. महिला का परिवार में स्थान :

(क) पैतृक संपत्ति में हिस्सेदारी

(ख) सामाजिक निर्णय में सहमति

13. विवाह का उम्र :

पुरुष

महिला

14. महिलाओं में पर्दा-प्रथा का प्रचलन :

15. विधवाओं की स्थिति :

16. क्या महिलायें नौकरी करती हैं?

17. पारिवारिक पेशा :

पुरुष

महिला

18. पारंपरिक पेशा में संलिप्तता :

(नौकायान / फिशिंग / कृषि)

19. गृह में कामगारों का विवरण :

पुरुष

महिला

20. अपनी उपजाति के साथ संबंध :

21. परिवार की वार्षिक आय :

बी.पी.एल.

ऐ. पी.एल.

22. भू-संपत्ति का विवरण :

(क) एक एकड़ से कम भूमि
(ग) 3 एकड़ से अधिक भूमि

(ख) 1-3 एकड़ के बीच भूमि

23. कृषि योग्य भूमि :

सिंचित असिंचित
गैर कृषि योग्य भूमि

24. मकानों का विवरण : गाँव

शहरी

25. प्रयुक्त निर्माण सामग्री :

26. रसोई में प्रयुक्त ईंधन :

27. क्या परिवार में वाहन है ? यदि हां, तो विस्तृत ब्योरा :

28. परिवार के सदस्यों की राजनीति में अभिरूचि :

29. आधुनिक जीवन शैली के प्रति आग्रह :

(अ) नये फैशन –

(आ) बाजार के नये उत्पादों में अभिरूचि –

(इ) पारंपरिक मूल्यों के प्रति रुझान –

(ई) राष्ट्रीय एवं अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय व्यवहार एवं मिश्रण की प्रवृत्ति –

(सहजीविता / सामंजस्य)

30. भाषागत आकर्षण

राष्ट्रभाषा

मातृभाषा

विदेशी भाषा

31. स्वास्थ्य संबंधी जागरूकता :

दैवी अनुकम्पा

वैज्ञानिक इलाज

32. प्राकृतिक परिवेश :

(क) जल के निकट
(ग) वनक्षेत्र में

(ख) पर्वतीय क्षेत्र में
(घ) कृषि क्षेत्र में

33. विभिन्न पर्व-त्योहारों में सधर्मी जातियों से अंतरक्रियाये :

34. पूर्वजों से ज्ञात वैचारिक सार/मान्यताये :

35. अनुपालित / नानुपालित मान्ताये :

बिहार के क्योट/कैवर्त (Keot/Kaivart) जाति का ऐतिहासिक एवं सामाजिक अध्ययन

“ अनुसूची (Schedule) ”

1. (क) जिला का नाम : (ख) विकास प्रखंड का नाम :
(ग) गाँव/शहर का नाम :
(घ) जनगणना गृह संख्या :
2. गृह स्वामी का नाम :
3. मूल निवासी/ प्रवासी :
(यदि प्रवासी हैं तो कहाँ से और कब तथा आने का प्रयोजन क्या है?)
4. पूर्वजों में महत्वपूर्ण व्यक्तियों के नाम एवं उनके महत्व के कारण :
5. पूर्वजों से ज्ञात ऐतिहासिक एवं वंशगत संबद्धता :
6. पूर्वजों से ज्ञात वैचारिक सार / मान्यतायें :
(क) अनुपालित / नानुपालित मान्यताएँ :
7. गृह : निज / किराया
(क) प्रकार : (संयुक्त / अन्य)

(ख) निर्माण सामग्री :
(ग) कमरों की संख्या :
(घ) पेयजल सुविधा :
(ङ) शौचालय (यदि हों, तो घर के अन्दर या बाहर) :
(च) गृह मुख्य सड़क के किनारे / गली में :

- (छ) प्रकाश के श्रोत :
- (ज) प्रयुक्त ईंधन :
8. गृह में सदस्यों की कुल संख्या :
पुरुष : महिला :
9. 15 साल से कम उम्र तथा 60 साल या अधिक उम्र के सदस्यों की संख्या :
(क) पुरुष (ख) महिला
10. विवाह का उम्र
11. विधवाओं की स्थिति :
12. साक्षरता का प्रतिशत : (क) पुरुष : (ख) महिला :
13. उप जातियों से संबंध :
14. अन्य जातियों के साथ सामंजस्य :
(क) अपने से उच्च के साथ जातिये संबंध :
(ख) अपने से निम्न जातियों के साथ संबंध :
(ग) अन्य धार्मिक समुदायों के साथ संबंध :
15. विभिन्न पर्व-त्योहारों में सधर्मी जातियों से अंतरक्रियायें :
16. परिवार में आय के स्रोत :
(क) कृषि (ख) व्यवसाय
(ग) सरकारी सेवा (घ) अन्य
17. पारंपरिक पेशे के प्रति रुझान :
18. कृषि योग्य भूमि :

(क) सिंचित

(ख) असिंचित

19. क्या परिवार में अप्रवासी सदस्य है, यदि हां, तो किस देश में तथा पेशे का प्रकार :

20. परिवार की कुल वार्षिक आय :

21. राजनीति में अभिरूचि एवं स्तर :

22. स्थानीय सरकारी प्रयासों में सहभागिता :

23. गैर-सरकारी संगठनों के प्रति विचार :

24. पर्यावरण के प्रति विचार