

*Research*

## **WHY RAJPUT PRACTICE EXOGAMY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract.** This article looks at the exogamous nature of marriage in Rajput community of subcontinent in general. The tradition of exogamy is still being practiced in Indo –Pakistan subcontinent within this ethnic group. This paper tries to explore historically a number of possible assumptions that can be employed to define the reasons for practicing the exogamous marriage type. Exogamy is explored through its biological and socio cultural aspect in relation to the Indian subcontinent that ultimately leads to Pakistani socio-cultural context. Effort has been made to grip the diverse strands of exogamy and alliance theory to see any connection if there is any between them.

**Keywords:** exogamy, marriage, social relations, Rajputs. Pakistan

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## **Introduction**

The concept of exogamy has been coupled with the issue of survival value in anthropological literature since 1877 (Morgan, 1963). Early evolutionary anthropologists searched for the origin of exogamy through Darwinian explanation of natural selection and survival of the fittest (Westermarck, 1891). Modern theories in anthropology interpret exogamy as having survival value because it reduce conflicts not only within but also other exogamous groups and increase social solidarity (Kang, 1979).

Modern socio-cultural theories describe exogamy in terms of survival value, conflicting loyalties and alliance formation. The proponents of survival value theory (Taylor, 1888; White, 1949; Murdock, 1949; Service, 1971) argue that exogamy serves two primary functions; it reduces the likelihood of the conflict within the exogamous group; and creates cross-cutting ties or alliances between exogamous units. Conflicting loyalties theories (Colson, 1953; Gluckman, 1955; Murphy, 1957; Scheffler, 1964) emphasize the notion that exogamy establishes and solidifies cross-cutting loyalties through affinal ties. These divided loyalties or differing allegiances are said to promote social solidarity and cohesiveness and to lessen internal conflict. Alliance theory (Mauss, 1966; Lévi-Strauss, 1969; Chagnon, 1968) views marriage as the primary, elementary form of exchange. Exogamy relieves tension within the exogamous unit because it eliminates competition over its own women. The positive value of exchange ensures alliances or promotes social solidarity among groups in the society (Kang, 1979).

In this paper attempt has been made to trace out the history and origin of the exogamy which is common marriage pattern in Africa and South Asian countries. In South Asian context, Rajput community is presented as case study that practice exogamy in the form of hypergamy. This research paper also discusses structural dynamics of hypergamy (Milner, Jr. 1988) by understanding the concept through the Kangra Rajputs of India (Perry, 1979) who

practice exogamy (hypergamy). This research study supports that marriage through clan exogamy plays a vital part in making alliances and social solidarity within a caste and sub caste. In this whole process of formation of alliances women from one strata of the clan to another play significant role for the members of the specific group.

### **Themes for exogamy**

Exogamy can be better understood if the concepts of kinship, marriage and incest taboo are discussed. Therefore for the better understanding of the concept of exogamy it would be appropriate if key terms such as kinship, marriage and incest taboo would be explained and understood first.

#### *Kinship*

We are all related to each other person through descent, marriage, or adaptation and we use kinship terms to designate those relationships. Persons related to us through birth or decent are consanguine or blood relative; those related to us through marriage (in-laws) are affinal relatives. In many societies a persons' societal worlds includes two main categories kin and strangers. Strangers are potential or actual enemies. Marriage is one of the primary ways of converting strangers into kins, of creating and maintaining personal and political alliances relationship of affinity (affinal relationship). In every society there are certain rules and regulations which are followed to keep society unite and harmonized. There are certain institutions which regulate and decide what is in the best interest of the society. Marriage is one of the institutions which have a significant role in the functioning and keeping harmony within family and tribes in various societies.

In anthropological literature two major kinship distinctions have been made which are important to discuss within the paradigm of marriage. One is the relationship through blood and other is through marriage.

Kinship describes a social structure that is collective in nature but whose fundamental unit remains individual, with the family forming the basis for the creation of any extended kinship structures (Malinowski, 1930). An important feature of kinship networks is that they assume a corporate structure that performs political and economic functions (Wakil, 1970).

Morgan (1963) established kinship as a focal point in anthropological analysis when he studied *Iroquois* and other Native American people. He made comparative structural assessment about the *Iroquois* people which he called “Classificatory system of relationship”. According to Parkin (1997) kinship has featured prominently in the work of Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, Evans-Pritchard, Goody, Lévi-Strauss, Dumont, Needham and Strathern; and in the USA: Kroeber, Lowie, Murdoch, Goodenough, Schuffler and Schneider.

Kinship is bifurcated into the vertical relationship between generations-decent (the link between brothers and sisters-siblings and the other link is through and by marriage- affinity. However, Red Cliffe-Brown, Fortes, Goody and Scheffler excluded marriage from kinship by making kinship a system of consanguinity (Milner, Jr., 1988).

### *Marriage*

Marriage which is usually thought to be a form of domestic partnership is hard to define. Marriage is important means of forming alliances beyond one's own kin group. Marriage transforms relationships, conveys certain rights and establishes legal parentage of the children. Besides, it gives spouses right to each other's sexuality, labour and property. No definition of marriage is broad enough to apply to all societies and situations. A commonly quoted definition comes from *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (RAIGB&I, 1951): “Marriage is a union between man and woman such that

the children born to a woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both parents.”

This definition is not universally valid for many reasons. For example there are some societies in which same- sex marriages are recognized. Also in many societies marriages unite more than two spouses. For example in Sudan a Nuer woman can marry a woman if her father has only daughters but no male heirs.

Decent or lineage basically explores the various ways in which consanguine or blood relations are structures in every social system. It is focal point of the study of kinship. Anthropologists such as Red Cliffe-Brown, Evans Prichard and Fortes viewed decent alliances as a major determinant of social structure in primitive societies. Decent plays a major role in formation of corporate groups, domestic arrangements, transmission of property and political authority. However this theory was criticized by Strauss as according to him decent theory marginalized the importance and functions of marriage. Arguments between decent and alliance theory is going on and it was very much heated debate in 1960s.

In the literature of anthropology, three types of marriage pattern are famously discussed which are as follows: *endogamy* - which tells marrying within one's own group; *hypogamy* - marrying with some one of similar background and/or interest; *exogamy* - marrying outside one own group.

Besides kinship the issues of incest and exogamy have long been of interest to anthropologists. Since both regulate sexual relations of certain individuals within family or kin groups (Seligman, 1950). In simple words, exogamy is the practice of seeking a husband or wife outside one's own. Incest refer to sexual relations with some one considered to be a close relative. All cultures have taboos against it. Although the taboo is a culturally universal phenomenon which every culture define differently. Most societies do not have different words for incest and exogamy (there is usually a word for the former

but not latter) but a great difference is felt in the seriousness of the breach of the prohibitions according to the nearness of the kinship (Seligman, 1950).

### *Incest taboo*

Incest is defined as “sexual intercourse between individuals related in certain degree of kinship” (Seligman, 1950). Like marriage, incest is found in all the societies in various forms. It prohibits sexual relation to certain close relatives. However what is close is defined is not same in all cultures. Such definition some times change with course of time. Anthropologists for the last many years have been fascinated by the explanations and reasons of incest taboo in many societies and cultures.

Lévi-Strauss (1969) sees taboo as a code - an extension of kinship terminology which governs and directs the movement of women between alliance networks.

Anthropologists themselves have many explanations for these inhibitions in different cultures. The simplest explanation is based on the idea of “human nature” which says that our species has an “instinctive” repulsion from incest. It has been investigated that human being raised together have less sexual attraction for each other. The incest taboo ensures that children and their parents who are constantly in close contact to each other avoid each other as sexual objects (Whelehan, 1985). There are different theories which explain this phenomenon. Some of them are: (i) *Inbreeding theory of incest taboos*: Anthropologists have been curious why incest taboos are so important and have offered various explanations to account for their origin. According to Morgan (1963) taboo emerged because early homo noticed that abnormal offspring were born from incestuous unions. These theories have been criticized and considered inadequate but still they are thought to be an explanation for incest. According to this the primitive men some how discovered that inbreeding has poisonous biological effects. The criticism of this notion is

that close inbreeding is not necessarily damaging unless there are harmful recessive traits in the genotypes of the person. Cleopatra came of a long brother–sister marriages. Brother-sister marriages are also practiced in ruling families of Hawaii and by the *Inca of Peru* without noticeable harmful effects. This theory has been challenged on many fronts. In contrary to this, human socio-biology forwards the argument that natural selection mechanisms favors out breeding because inbreeding is dangerous for the coming generations; (ii) *Childhood association theory*: This theory explains that the development of incest taboo on the grounds that people who have been brought together from childhood like brothers and sisters, do not feel erotic attraction towards each other. This theory was proposed by Westermarck (1891) who proposed that children reared together, regardless of biological relationship form a sentimental attachment that is by its nature non-erotic. Westermarck argued that his observations that unrelated children reared together on Israeli Kibbutzim nevertheless avoided one another as sexual partners confirmed the Westermarck effect. However this theory was also criticized as brother-sister marriages were also known to the anthropologists; (iii) *Freud theory*: Sigmund Freud made opposite assumptions that strong erotic impulses are experienced within the family circle, primarily by a boy to his mother. This is the basis for the Oedipus complex postulated by him. An erotic basis attachment to the mother accompanied by feeling of hostility towards father (in case of girl towards her mother) these feeling and impulses are repressed and exist in the individual unconscious. In this theory incest taboos are regarded as reactions to the existence of incestuous desires. The weakness of this theory is that among non human primates that over long period of time there may not be any mother – son relationship (Parker 1976); (iv) *Life span considerations*: Slater (1959) explains that possibilities of incestuous relations in family groups living under primitive conditions depended on the life span of the individuals. In hunting and gathering societies the life span is generally short from 25-35 years and

puberty starts from 13 to 16 , there is not much likely that a boy may have sexual relation with his mother. If the woman has five children and lives to be 35 only the eldest child who lives in maturity could have sexual relation with his mother. By the time the children get maturity their parents die and they have to look out side for the sexual relationships. According to Slater (1959) these patterns of mating out existed before and become the basis of the development of incest taboos; (v) *Functional interpretations*: There are some interpretations which do not suggest any particular mechanism that is why incest taboos existed. If there were no incest taboo, it has been argued that there would be such disruptive sexual rivalry and tension within the family that it could no longer function as a family unit. Another functional argument is that incest taboos are required to maintain roles in the family appropriate to the socialization process (Coult, 1963).

### **Exogamy**

Exogamy is defined as the “*prohibition of marriage union within specific group*” (Seligman, 1950). Further it can be defined as “*the custom or tribal law, which prohibits marriage between members of the same tribe; marriage outside of the tribe opposed to endogamy.*”<sup>1)</sup>

A comprehensive definition is proposed by Dumont (1968):

[a]ll societies prohibits marriage with certain relatives , but some societies complement this prohibition by prescribing or preferring, marriage being prohibited between those who are children of the siblings of the same sex (parallel-cousins) while it is prescribed between children of siblings of the opposite sex (cross-cousins). This disposition is generally accompanied by exogamy (p. 19).



Exogamy is the custom of marrying outside specified group of people to which one belongs. In addition to blood relatives, marriage to members of a specific totem or other group may be forbidden.

### *Origin of exogamy*

In social sciences it is customary to distinguish between a person's *family of orientation* into which he/she is born and *the family of procreation*, established when he/she gets married (Barnouw, 1982). Therefore, a marriage thus brings together people from two different families in all societies. The group is defined if one's own immediate family alone then societies generally prohibit or at least discouraged endogamy there be promoting exogamy (*exoso* is Greek for "outside") or marriage outside the group. In all societies there are rules of exogamy affecting marriages.

McLennan (1970) introduced the term exogamy and endogamy. He argued that exogamy was originated due to scarcity of women which obliged men to seek wives outside their clans.

Anthropologists have found that marriage is governed though often informally, by rules of exogamy (marriage between members of different groups) and endogamy (marriage between members of the same groups). However, a definition of a group for the purpose of exogamy and endogamy varies in between various societies. In most stratified societies it is compulsory that one must marry outside of his /her family but within own class or race, which helps in maintaining and creating a wide social network.

Generally anthropologists prefers sociological explanation of these prohibitions which consider sexual restriction as a function of marriage regulation over biological or physiological theories in which incest taboo plays a major role.

We can trace out origin of exogamy from the history of Christianity which traces its origin in polygyny (the weak or less powerful members of a

tribe being driven to seek wives outside the tribe because the stronger, or head men, had the women of the tribe for their harems), however, the royal people of the tribes were not been expected to obey such restrictions. In early times even brothers and sisters of royal blood married; and such is the custom among certain African and Asian tribes to this day.

Explaining the origins and functions of clan exogamy is one of the oldest (Taylor, 1888) and most extensively discussed issues in anthropology. It is closely tied to the debate over descent and alliance theory (Kuper, 1982; Schneider, 1965). In 1889, Taylor proposed that clan exogamy was developed because it facilitated political alliances. This idea continues to be widely accepted, but Tylor made a broader claim and argued that clan exogamy persisted because of its adaptive advantages. He further says that exogamy was politically useful to strengthen the tribe by foreign alliances.

[T]he tangential disposition of the male is expressed in the system of exogamy so characteristic of tribal life. The movement towards exogamy doubtless originates in the restlessness of the male, the tendency to make new coordination, the stimulus to seek more unfamiliar women, and the emotional interest in making unfamiliar sexual alliances. But quite aside from its origin, exogamy is an energetic expression of the male nature (Thomas, 1898).

Frazer, in his book, *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) talked that in both Assam (India) and Africa, the head of exogamous tribes marries within their own tribe. However, when pretty women were brought as a captive into the tribe, this would lead even its chiefs to get married the captured women from out side tribe.

With an accepted method of regulating decent and the institution of the classificatory system of kinship, exogamy as widely practiced that lead to so-

cial stability. Mates are chosen from family groups with whom kinship is recognized but who are outside the decent group. Thus the survival value of exogamy is seen in conjunction with the recognition of bilateral kinship, the classificatory system and unilateral descent. Social groups which are formed include large numbers of people over vast areas in which an individual can find his social footing either as a member, an affine, or an acceptable mate (Seligman, 1950).

Exogamy can be differentiated into two main definitions biological exogamy and socio cultural exogamy that are discussed in next section.

#### *Biological exogamy*

In biology, exogamy more generally refers to the mating of individuals who are relatively less related genetically: that is, outbreeding as opposed to inbreeding. This benefits the offspring by avoiding the chance of the offspring inheriting two copies of a defective gene, and also by increasing the genetic diversity of the offspring, improving the chances that more of the offspring will have the required adaptations to survive.

#### *Socio-cultural exogamy*

As it has been said that exogamy is the custom of marrying outside a specified group of people to which a person belongs in addition to blood relatives, exogamy may assert prohibitions to members of specific clan, totem, class etc. Different socio cultural theories and explanations have been proposed in order to explain the origin of the exogamy. Some of them are as below.

Taylor (1888) wrote that savage tribes face the alternatives of marrying out or being killed out and he quoted these lines from *Genesis* 34:16: “then we will give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.” This pas-

sage illustrates the process of establishing peace and broadening social bonds and ties through intermarriages.

The Role theory was proposed by Malinoswki (1930) which maintains that kinship and marriage systems are important for the visibly defined social roles. If close kins were allowed to intermarry, they would assume a alternative sets of roles , rights and responsibilities to those who are already in force thus the result will be confusion and conflict over roles and will undermine social order.

Durkheim says that exogamy derives from totemism and says it arose from a religious respect for the blood of a totemic clan, for the clan totem which is a god and especially in the blood. The relationship between exogamy and totemism has been problematic. It is a fact that in many tribes there was a custom that a man cannot marry a woman from his own totem, but must seek a wife from another totem clan. That is why many anthropologists argued that totemism and exogamy existed together as different sides of the same institution.

Westermarck (1891) says that exogamy arose in the aversion to marriage between blood relatives or near kin, what is known as the horror of incest.

McLennan (1970) proposed that exogamy was originally due to the scarcity of women, which obliged men to seek wives from other groups including marriage by capture and with passage of time it became custom in various societies.

In a classical cross-cultural study, *Social Structure*, Murdock (1949) observed that every society base its marriage system on the prohibition or restrictions of marriage and sexual relations between nuclear members. However, few societies allow marriage or sexual relation with close kin including parents and siblings and sibling's children.

Lévi-Strauss (1969) introduced the Alliance theory of exogamy which describes that small close-knit groups force their group members to marry outside. According to Levi-Strauss men in the primitive societies brought about alliances through marrying their daughters or sisters to other men. The resulting network established social cohesion by tying families and bands more closely together. This was probably a necessary strategy in hunting gathering days, when the use of weapons, unknown to non-human primates, heightened the potential dangers of strange groups (Barnouw, 1982). Lévi-Strauss (1969) also talked about reciprocal exogamy- intermarriage between members of the distinct group which he named as the defining characteristics of human societies.

In simple words, reciprocal exogamy is a social arrangement in which groups are bound together through marital unions and kinship. Reciprocal exogamy is best illustrated with the simplest system described by Strauss's restricted exchange between two exogamous groups.

Alliance theory is about making alliances of the members of the immediate circle of relationships to build alliances with other groups. Strauss sees basis of society not in decent groups but rather in relations of marital exchange which exists between the groups. Kinship groups are merely units of a system of alliance expressed in marriage (Fox, 1967).

### **Literature review**

The phenomena of exogamy have been studied enormously across the world. In various societies exogamy is practiced and accepted as norm and law. Some societies also punish the people who breach the law of exogamy by disassociation from the group, boycotting of social networking and physical and social punishment.

An exhaustive and very clear account of Australian exogamy has been given by Frazer (1910) in his book *Totemism and Exogamy*.

Westermarck in his book *History of human marriage* (1891) discusses many cases of exogamy in many tribes of Africa. These cases describe what sexual restrictions were imposed and how the breaching of those restrictions is dealt with. Some of the examples are as under

Exogamous classes with descent in maternal line are found in Ponape and Mortlock Islands belonging to the Caroline group and in Pelew Island. The Mortlock islander regard sexual intercourse between persons of the same clan as incest of the most heinous sort and any member of the clan would be ready to avenge such an outrage. In most of the tribe known to us there is not only class exogamy but clan exogamy as well, i.e. Dieri, Wotjobalink, Howih. Class exogamy is found in Vogue among a large number of African people

The Tallensi tribe makes a clear distinction between kinship by blood and affinal kinship. The rules of exogamy are that no woman may be married with whom there is any genealogical kinship. Marriage with a woman of the mother's lineage is also excluded. There are no super natural penalties for breaching exogamous rules but Fortes say "the Tallensi avoid infringing these rules not for fear of super natural penalties, but for the fear of "spoiling kinship" (Seligman, 1950).

Among the "Moriori" of the Chatham islands – a group of islands situated at a distance of 480 miles in the south eastern direction from Wellington" the marriage of close connection such as first cousins was disapproved of and even when not so closely related as in the case of second and third cousins, the others to show their disapprobation of marriages between close relatives who sang a song by the way of contempt, calling it Tivare (incestuous) (Seligman, 1950).

The Micronesia clan practice exogamy. The people of the Nauru of the Marshall Islands are divided into twelve clans which strictly practice exogamous marriage. Marriage within clan is regarded as the greatest crime if

committed, the culprits become objects of general contempt and are expelled from the clan and no child born of such union is allowed to live.

In Herero clans, the marriage of cousins who are the children of a brother and of a sister respectively is favored, where as marriage or sexual intercourse between the children of the two brothers or two sisters is regarded with horror as incest and subject to the culprits to the consequences of the blood feud (Seligman, 1950).

Eastern Bantui of South Africa define exogamy as "no man of any coast tribe would marry a girl whose relationship by blood to himself on his father's side could be traced, no matter how distantly connected they might be (Seligman, 1950).

Cis-Natalian Kafirs explain exogamy that "at any rate near relatives, patrilineal and matrilineal avoid marriages with each other and although no penalty is attached to such marriages, custom is so strong on this point that the general rule is seldom broken. So according to Warner, union which are regarded as incestuous are not punished by law among Kafirs" but they have a far more powerful preventative in their superstitions fears which teach them to dread that some supernatural evil will befall the parties committing such act; hence such crimes are seldom committed. Consanguineous marriages are prohibited by custom rather than by law (Seligman, 1950).

Among the Baronga of Delagoa tribe" marriage is absolutely prohibited between all the descendent of the grandfather, viz between first cousins. Between second cousins it is permitted conditionally and between third cousins it is allowed (Seligman, 1950).

The Masai of Eastern Equatorial Africa first cousin and second cousin may not marry but there is no objection to the third cousin marrying if the relationship is no nearer than Ol-le-Sotwe. If a man is knowingly guilty of incest or has sexual intercourse with a daughter of his own sub clan, he is punished by his relatives who flog him and slaughter some of his cattles. Clan ex-

ogamy combined with Totemism or not is found in many other tribes of British East Africa such as the Mweru, the Suki, the Turkana and some of the Kanasian in Baringo district.

Among the Ibo-speaking people of Nigeria a man is always forbidden to marry in his own sept (a body of people claiming descent from a single ancestor and marriage into the father or mother's family is never allowed.

In ancient Rome marriage between persons under the same *patria potestas* that is cognate related within the 6<sup>th</sup> degree (the degree of second cousins) were considered immoral and unlawful they were nefarious et incestuous nuptial (Seligman, 1950).

The Oraons of Chota Nagpur have an aversion to marriage between a young man and a girl of the same village and such a marriage is generally believed to lode ill for one or both of the married pair. In India apart from the restrictions based on the exogamous groups and the prohibited degree of relationship there is often a rule that a man should not marry a girl of his own village. Thus Rajputs and Lewa Kunbis of Baroda regard all the caste people living in the same village as related to each others and marriages must therefore be arranged with persons living else where. A similar rule obtains amongst the Mundas and other tribes of Chota Nagpur. It is observed in the eastern Punjab and Himalayas (Roy, 1915).

In his study of Michigan's Native American people', Cleland (1992) says that since the daughter of each band is required to marry into other families a custom known as exogamy in which band in fact trade their daughters. As the daughters become wives of men in the families of other bands, they transformed unrelated people into in-laws. Thus marriage bonds are very important for economic, social and political reasons. These bonds tie family to family and band to band through a network of mutual kin rights and obligations.



## **History and introduction of Rajputs**

The term Rajput is traditionally applied to the original Suryavanshi, Chandravanshi and Agnivanshi clans, the ancient Hindu ruling dynasties of South Asia. The origin of the Rajput caste is very complicated. It is interesting to study the clans of the Rajput. There are more than a hundred clans of Rajput. The clans are strictly exogamous, and marriage within the clan amounts to incest and is punished by excommunication.

Most of the Rajasthan kings belong to the Rajput caste whose traditional duties are fighting and ruling. The word Rajput means “son of a king” and indicate that shared Rajput assumption that all though not all caste members have been princes, all have descended from kings and so have inherited royal blood. Despite the class difference represented by the three groups, Rajputs maintain that they are all related to one another, however distantly either by descent or marriage. They openly acknowledge that the genealogies of all real Rajputs intersect some where or other. More over they consider all Rajputs members of single, if scattered Rajputs communities. This community is the entire Rajputs caste or *Jati* within which there daughter must be married (Harlan, 1992).

Babur's son Humayun was a ruler who was forced to spend long periods in exile. His son Akbar, however, consolidated his inheritance and expanded what had been the Delhi sultanate into a wide empire. Part of the reason for his success was his inclusion of native Rajput chiefs into the ruling class of his empire. The Rajput chiefs cemented the alliance with marriages, with numerous Rajput noblewomen being wed to Mughal grandees. The Kachwahas were the first to extend matrimonial alliances with Akbar; they pioneered a trend that soon turned pervasive and played no small role in extending Rajput influence across the Indian sub-continent. Indeed, two successive Mughal emperors, Jahangir and Shah Jehan, were born to Rajput mothers.

Rajput chiefs served as Mughal officers and administrators across the Mughal Empire and enjoyed much influence in the government. In this period, the aristocratic image of the Rajputs can be said to have crystallized; consequently, caste divisions became rigid. The trend of political relations between Rajput states and the central power of the Mughal emperors was the precursor for similar relations between them and the British.

This is a strong tradition that exists amongst the most distinguished of Rajputs of all faiths, the recording of family names and continuance of the family tree. Muslim Rajputs of prominence hold and continue to record their genealogical trees since their Hindu past even after their conversion to Islam, to the present day. The less distinguished Rajputs or claimants of Rajput heritage will more than likely not have ancestral records of family lineage.

### **Institution of marriage in Rajput**

The institution of marriage as found in Rajputs today has been the result of impact of forces, social, cultural, religious and political. It has evolved through generations from Svayamvara (self-chosen husband) or Apaharna (kidnapping), into its present form in which the parents of the bride are (supposed) to make a present of their daughter, with due formality to the bride groom the technical term being kanyadana. But the suffix "Dan" (donation) is not palatable to the Rajputs blood, who by nature would resent to accept a donation. Today as of the old main idea governing marriages is hypergamy. Rajput tends to marry across long distances. Although most Mewari brides come from other regions in Rajasthan, a few come from ore distant places like Himachal Pradesh, Mardya Pradesh and Orrisa (Khan, 2005).

The principles governing the selection of a partner are those of exogamy and hypergamy. No boy or girl can marry into patrilineal clan nor would a girl be married generally into a family of lower or say equal status. Exchange marriages are not favored nor have they been found to be successful

and hence discouraged. Further girls are not given to families from whom girls have been taken.

Marriages to Rajput as to all Hindus is not a contract but a cultural initiation which lasts as long as the female member lives but is broken with her death even if the male member survives. The Bombay Gazetteer explains that "Rajputs are never careful about the age of the husband who is sometimes two or three years older or younger than the girl. The important factor is not the difference in age as much as the clan superiority or the higher family status of bridegroom which is a natural concomitant of the hypergamous attitude (Harlan, 1992).

In Rajput tribes, there are two kinds of rituals related to marriages. One is the *sword marriage* and the ordinary kind of marriage in which the bridegroom proceeds to bride house. The latter is called *Hathevala* and former is the *Khandu* the sword marriage is still practiced in Kutch, Suvarashtra and Gujarat. It has never existed among other Rajputs in any other part of India. It is possible that sword marriage was an outcome of hypergamous outlook of bridegroom who would not go into the socially lower group but would send for his bride to come to him. It was also stated sword marriage arose out of sense of insecurity in journeys in ancient times in banditry and clan rivalry in old Kathiawar. Forbes states "the practice originated probably in the necessity of scarcity in certain cases and it has been retained for convenience sake and especially as a means of avoiding expense (Singhji, 1994).

The women in an aristocratic Rajput house tend to come from a variety of regional and financial backgrounds. The general history of Rajput marriage alliances demonstrate that *Zanana* have always been more cosmopolitan than *Mardana* (Singhji, 1994).

### **Status relation in South Asia**

Milner, Jr. (1988) discusses exogamy (hypergamy) in relation to general theory of status alliances by borrowing the idea from Max Weber. According to him” in some social systems the possessions of wealth or political power is almost the sole source of status. Max Weber called these groups as ‘status groups’ who have a specified life style. This life style requires substantial economic and political resources. Milner, Jr. (1988) relates the source of status to social associations which are created and maintained by the status group people to enjoy their status. He also explains that higher status people tend to increase their status while lower status people usually try to increase their associations with higher status people. Whereas higher status people carefully limit and regulate their associations.

Milner, Jr. (1988) also discusses some structural characteristics and dynamics of exogamy as the system of marriage alliances with references to status alliance theory. He mentions Parry’s (1979) research study among Rajputs of Kangra (India) who practice exogamy and hypergamy within their clans. The Kangra Rajputs are divided into four main biradari which roughly means brotherhood. Principally the members of the single biradari are equal and can intermarry, that means wives should come from within the biradari or from biradari immediately below. Daughters are given to the high status biradari. He further discuss the structural dynamics of hypergamy which is also discussed in the latter part of this paper.

According to Milner, Jr. (1988) “the most obvious source of hypergamy is the ideology of ‘Kanyadan or ‘the gift of the virgin’. This doctrine specifically calls for the gift of a virgin bride to the superior and forbids acceptance of any things in return”. Trautmann (1981) has pointed out that these notions came from the Brahmins thought which requires that daughters must be given in higher biradari and not to the lower clan. He further added that wife giver was not take money or other women in return for the women they

give. However, they are also required to provide a substantial dowry and other gifts to bride-taker (Trautmann, 1981). Thus general theory suggests that such exchanges are particularly characteristics of certain form of worship in Hindu culture in which groom is considered as a deity.

While talking about structural dynamics Milner, Jr. (1988) says that inferiority of the wife givers significantly makes asymmetrical relationships in which explicit gifts are exchanged for acceptance by the superiors. This practice is not only culturally sanctioned attractive pattern but also limits the exchange marriages within Rajputs. Due to this institutionalized hypergamous pattern of marriages as mentioned by Milner, Jr. (1988) three processes occur as an out come.

*First*, the number and geographical distribution of exogamous relationships which means that those who are in one *jati*<sup>2)</sup> cannot marry within their own *jati* which tends to be larger relative to non hypergamous regions. This is generally rationalized in terms of four *gotra*<sup>3)</sup> rule and prohibition against marrying *sapinda*<sup>4)</sup> (Trautmann, 1981; Parry, 1979). The major motivation behind this notion is to reduce the possibility of exchange marriages and repeated alliances. In this way the circle of those with whom marriage alliances cannot be made is extended by with new biradari people with whom the marriage alliances have been formed in the past. Thus, larger group of people form alliances with each other.

*Second* out comes is an increase in the size of endogamous group. It can be explained that if daughters cannot be given to the lower status the there is a possibility that number of eligible grooms will be decreased. Moreover, the smaller the upper strata, the fewer the potential grooms here. But this issue is solved by the expansion of the boundaries of the exogenous.

*Third* process is an increase in the openness and formalization of the ranking within endogenous castes. That means families and lineages within a caste are grouped into specific named sub-categories and ranks such as the

biradaris of the Rajputs (Parry, 1979). The development of these sub- castes and ranking is probably formed due to two reasons. One of them can be that it came out as a response to the difficulties which were faced by the elders in determining the rank of the potential marriage partner in a large and widely dispersed caste. Secondly, through these subcategories and ranks formal authority such as biradari council can mediate and impose its decisions on the group.

It is worth mentioning here that the strata to the top face the problem of a surplus of daughters. Among Rajputs this was frequently reduced by high rates of female infanticide and polygyny (Plunkett, 1973) despite the fact that these remedies produce other serious problems. However this problem is resolved by taking brides from the caste below. This shortage of wives has some benefits for the lower strata; they can surreptitiously charge a bride price for their daughters (Parry, 1979) though it is contradictory to the idea of Kanyadan. This creates another type of contradiction. These groups of people must give large dowries in order to get higher group to accept their daughters as wives and at the same time they may have to pay a high bride price to secure brides for their sons. According to the Parry (1979) system of hypergamy are inherently unstable or more accurately tend to be in what he calls 'oscillating equilibrium' (Milner, Jr. 1988). This form of hypergamy depends upon the inferiority of wife givers and the ideology of Kanyadan which is very much prevalent in South Asia.

### **The context of marriage in Pakistani Punjab: special reference to Rajputs**

There are certain common themes regarding marriage institution which prevail throughout South Asia and people living in Pakistani Punjab. They also share some of the common underlying themes are patriarchal control over recourses (Cain et al., 1979) hierarchy and significant role of women as mak-

ing alliances. Egler (1960) says that the most important social group outside the immediate household is the patriline or biradari and marriage is a critical biradari function where group people participate more specifically within the biradari and marriages outside this group are considered hypergamous (Ahmad, 1974).

Das (1973) summarized the order of the marriage preferences for the Muslim villages and India as follows: (a) marriage to cousins is preferred to marriage with non-relatives; (b) marriage of a set of brothers to a set of sisters is a desirable pattern, although exchange marriage in which daughters are exchanged between households are low status; (c) village exogamy is preferred to village endogamy.

Though marriage confers advantages in form of new cooperative alliances (Egler, 1960); it also carries with it certain risk too. Parry (1979) suggested that for the Rajputs that repetition of marriage to the same group of affines for many generations is a part of risk reduction strategy. These affines are of a known quantity and have limited ability to afford risk which is a safest marriage prospect.

### **Conclusion**

Controlling sexual relations among certain group of people within one's caste provides the opportunity to people of that group to maximize their social networking, reduce conflicts, making their alliances within and between exogamous groups. Therefore, marriage plays a significant role by building alliances with others who are not related to one's blood group. In all of this process women play very crucial role which are given and taken within the restricted clans. Exogamy along with hypergamy is not a recent phenomenon, it has been very old tradition which was and is still practiced in various African and Asian tribes. The significant feature of this marriage pattern is the exchange of women which are given and taken within different clans in the

same caste. Exogamy benefits the members of its group in terms of expending social networking, political and economic power through making alliances.

#### NOTES

1. <http://dictionary.die.net/exogamy>

2. *jati*, also spelled jat, caste, in Hindu society. The term is derived from the Sanskrit *jāta*, “born” or “brought into existence,” and indicates a form of existence determined by birth. In Indian philosophy *jati* (genus) describes any group of things that have generic characteristics in common. Sociologically, *jati* has come to be used universally to indicate a caste group among Hindus

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/301596/jati>

3. *gotra*, lineage segment within an Indian caste that prohibits intermarriage by virtue of the members’ descent from a common mythical ancestor, an important factor in determining possible Hindu marriage alliances.

4. “*Sapinda*” relationship with reference to any person extends as far as the third generation (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the mother, and the fifth (inclusive) in the line of ascent through the father, the line being traced upwards in each case from the person concerned, who is to be counted as the first generation.

Two persons are said to be “*sapindas*” of each other if one is a lineal ascendant of the other within the limits of “*sapinda*” relationship, or if they have a common lineal ascendant that is within the limits of “*sapinda*” relationship with reference to each of them <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapinda>

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