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# A Case of Anomalous Values in Indian Civilization

MEAT-EATING AMONG THE KANYA-KUBJA BRAHMANS  
OF KATYAYAN GOTRA

R. S. KHARE

INDIAN philosophical thought has always attempted to deal with opposite or binary values. However, when faced with contradictions, social scientists try to analyze the form, meaning and function of opposed values in real social situations. The problem of opposed values becomes difficult and anomalous when the culture, at different levels, not only permits oppositions, but simultaneously sanctions them. The data on meat-eating among the Kanya-Kubja brahmans of Katyayan *gotra* (primarily an exogamous group composed of several lineages) present this type of problem to the social anthropologist.

The Kanya-Kubja brahmans are mostly vegetarians and cherish the Brahmanic ideal of vegetarianism. Yet within this group, we find that the Katyayan *gotra*—one of the highest within the caste—is permitted to eat meat. This anomalous situation, when analyzed, illuminates a general cultural problem which is not unique to this caste group or even to Indian culture. In this paper Katyayan meat-eating is studied in the light of sect affiliation and its values and also in terms of contemporary sacred and secular behavior of the group.

Field data for this study were collected during 1962–1963 in the city of Lucknow and in Gopalpur, a multi-caste village east of Lucknow. Data were also collected in two villages near Gopalpur so as to complete the rural sample. Twenty-five rural and twenty-five urban Katyayan families were chosen on the basis of maximum heterogeneity in age, education, sex, economic level, religious orthodoxy and Westernization.

Eighty informants were interviewed, ranging from staunch traditionalists to “modern elites” of the newer, urban society. Of the 50 males, 44 were literate and 15 held a university degree. Nine held high administrative, political, or educational posts. Among the 30 women informants, 17 were literate and 8 held university degrees. Six traditionalist Pandits of the Katyayan group provided scriptural statements on meat-eating. The handling, preparation and eating of meat by a Katyayan family was observed as well as sacrifice before the *Shakti* (Goddess Durga or Kali) which particular occasions demanded.

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Among the Kanya-Kubja brahmins, the people of a given gotra can have different *aspads* (titles) and different *susthans* (original places of concentration). The fifty Katyayan families under study belonged to such *aspads* as Bajpai, Misra, Shukla and Awasthi and to such different *susthans* as Manjh-gaon, Gwal-Maidan, Meera-Sarain and Khajuha. The latter four names designate villages, all within the U.P., which are famous as places of original concentration of Kanya-Kubja brahmins.

The field data seems to fall into two major categories: (1) explanations and putative alternatives, and (2) present dynamics flowing from modernization and from Vaishnavite influences. Meanwhile, textual materials help us to explore the significance of religious sect affiliation with regard to meat-eating.

As is known, with few exceptions—such as sub-groups of the Kanya-Kubja, the Konkan,<sup>1</sup> and the Saryuparin brahmins,<sup>2</sup> vegetarianism is a favored value for all brahmins. Even among meat-eating brahmin groups there are religious and philosophic rationalizations given which explain this deviant dietary habit. Like other brahmin groups, the Katyayan have such a rationale to support their meat-eating.

The Katyayan is one of six *gotras* included in the *khatakul*, or *Uttam-Ghara*, which is the highest group within the Kanya-Kubja brahmins. Each of these *gotras* is stated to have one or more rishi-ancestors or Pravara.<sup>3</sup> The Katyayan group has, according to Pandit A. P. Bajpai,<sup>4</sup> Vishwamitra, Kat and Achchil as its pravara-rishis. Kat and Achchil are said to be descendants of Vishwamitra. Within Khatkul, the people are ranked according to the *Biswa* ranking scale.<sup>5</sup> The Katyayans, though they eat meat, rank high on this scale too. Several of the informants were of the highest rank, i.e., possessing 20 *Biswas*.

Meat-eating by this group raises certain questions. Does this meat-eating *gotra*, when interdinging with other *gotras* of the same caste, cause any problem of ritual pollution? Are meat-eating Katyayans shunned in the caste group, particularly with regard to marriage? Does meat-eating raise the basic question of acceptance among the larger Kanya-Kubja group? Answers may be found in a group of factors, traditional and also modern, which operate alike on the Katyayans and on the other

<sup>1</sup> E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India* (Madras, 1909), I, 268–269.

<sup>2</sup> William Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), II.

The Saryuparin Brahmins are also called Sarwariya Brahmins. According to an informant, "They settled on the banks of the river Sarju in the time of Raja Aja, grand-father of Rama, the epic hero." They have *gotra* and local sub-divisions arranged along *aspads* or titles. However, I am not in a position to examine and compare this case of meat-eating because of insufficient data.

<sup>3</sup> *Pravara* usually refers to one or more eponymous sages including or excluding the *gotra*-founder. At present, these names are recited in daily worship, and on such occasions as the consecration of sacrificial fire and wearing a new sacred thread. In short, it is a ritual calling, much less prevalent than *gotra*.

<sup>4</sup> A. P. Bajpai, *Upmanyu Vamshavali* (Benares, 1946), pp. 7–8.

<sup>5</sup> *Biswa* scale, found only among the Kanya-Kubjas, has twenty divisions on analogy with the traditional measurement of land. According to the latter, there are 20 *biswas* to one *bigha*. Originating about 300 years ago, today this scale has definite and rather important ritual and social rank implications in marriage. The common rule is, "A Kanya-Kubja of 20 *Biswa* must marry his daughter only to one enjoying an equal rank, or, alternatively in a family in which there is a difference of only three or four *biswas*, but not more." Thus those who rank low in the *biswa* scale try to relate themselves by any means possible to those higher in it. It is usually done by means of substantial dowry, but sometimes "it is even by coercion and threat." Regarded as sowing the seeds of intra-caste and even intra-*gotra* rivalry, *biswa* is the most important scale for deciding one's ritual and social status. As this important scale of caste ranking is associated with *ank* (lineal ancestor) and *Purusha* (immediate ancestor), the latter are used as a means of ascertaining it.

Kanya-Kubja brahmins. Perhaps the most important question is: What has been the rationale (through time) for acceptance of meat-eating Katyayans and for, according to them, a high ritual rank among the Kanya-Kubjas? We look for answers as we examine factors involving religious philosophy, sect affiliation, the immediate past of the group, and the dilemma of the "modern" brahmin.

It is apparent that an important traditional dispensation for meat-eating by Katyayans came from their religious sect affiliation and its accompanying religious philosophy. *Shaktism*<sup>6</sup> has been greatly responsible for the promotion of meat-eating among Katyayans, as has been established by Sharma.<sup>7</sup> Katyayans agree that adoption of a *Shakta* sect was in accord with their ancestry and their deity of worship. Many Katyayan informants suggest that in the recent past there has been an efflorescence of recondite Shivaite-Tantric traditions which may have affected not only the image and manner of worshipping their deity, Goddess Katyayani, but also may have suggested the possession of abundant supernatural power. The sway of Tantrism in Bengal, and longstanding contacts of Kanya-Kubjas with Bengal, must have helped intensify Shakta worship.

A strong association of Shakta theology with the Katyayan *gotra* has several obvious implications for the questions raised. The fact that meat-eating among the Katyayans emerges from *gotra* theology helps to explain its acceptance. High-ranking people of the five cognate *gotras* could have no serious objections because by doing so, the Katyayans were only pursuing their "*Kul-dharma*" or "*swa-gotra dharma*" (the religious practices specific to their own lineage or clan). There has been, therefore, no question of considering the Katyayans as violating caste rules in any normal sense. Hence there has been no question of outcasting them or shunning them in marriage. By remaining within the limits of freedom provided for pursuit of one's own *Kul-dharma*, this problem—though apparently anomalous—does not in fact raise a question of caste impropriety.

Nor is the problem of meat-eating by Katyayans merely a problem of modernization. Although success in the secular world is increasingly important, and meat-eating as part of the modern way of life has been accepted by the Kanya-Kubjas as a whole, modern trends find some meat-eating Katyayans becoming vegetarians and some vegetarian Kanya-Kubjas taking to non-vegetarian diets. Thus, there is no rule that every Katyayan must eat meat while the remaining Kanya-Kubjas are vegetarians. Exceptions among both groups are on the increase, while repugnance to the eating of meat seems to be breaking down.

Nonetheless, in practice, secular success is highly valued, especially in arranging a good marriage—which means sizeable dowry gifts and high (around 20 Biswa) ritual rank. As I have reported earlier,<sup>8</sup> the latter can be acquired by modern means among the Kanya-Kubja. Thus it can be said that modernization is a very important

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<sup>6</sup> It is a religious sect which concentrates on worshipping Divine Power (variously called Shakti, Durga, Mata, Devi, Jagdamba, etc.) through rituals which might be varied and even contradictory in character. Meat-eating is usually allowed as a sect ritual.

<sup>7</sup> K. N. Sharma, "Hindu Sects and Food Patterns in North India," *Aspects of Religion in Indian Society*, ed. by L. P. Vidyarthi (Meerut, 1961), p. 53. He correlated vegetarianism with Vaishnavism and meat-eating with Shaktism and other contemporary forces of social change.

<sup>8</sup> R. S. Khare, "The Kanya-Kubja Brahmins and their Caste Organisation," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, XVI (1960), 362–363.

dispensation for meat-eating by Katyayans. Religious sect affiliation, meanwhile, provides an additional rationale for the Katyayans.

The importance of secular aspects is obvious because the Kanya-Kubja brahmins are as a whole progressive, with much education, prestige and wealth. Their Katyayan sub-group enjoys equal prosperity and social prestige.

However, with regard to sect affiliation, we may ask what the role of Shakta theology has been for the meat-eating Katyayans. What is the rationale behind the co-existence of sacred (vegetarian) and profane (non-vegetarian) values in the case of the Katyayans? The answer to this question may also help us to understand the general phenomenon of opposition in Hindu culture.

The information given by traditionalist Katyayans is supported by scriptures, especially when they refer to Viswamitra, Kat and Achchil as rishi-ancestors of the Katyayan *gotra*.<sup>9</sup> Kat is described as an immediate descendant of the renowned *brahma-rishi* Vishwamitra.<sup>10</sup> The association with the Katyayans is stated in very clear terms by informants. Thus, like their ancestor Vishwamitra, Katyayans are entitled to warrior-like practices, including meat-eating. Hence, by adopting warrior-like social behavior they will not hurt their brahmanhood, as was exemplified by the sage Vishwamitra himself. Like Vishwamitra, they can also be successful Shaktas (worshippers of the Goddess), and when circumstances demand (as for example in the latter days of Muslim rule), the warrior-spirit—with its concomitants—can be suitably and harmlessly combined with brahman values.

In nineteenth century ethnographic accounts,<sup>11</sup> we find references to the Shakta practices of this *gotra*. In the words of Crooke: "Among the Khat-kul there is a section known as *Bala-ke-shukla*. They drink spirits and worship the goddess *Chhinamasta* or *Chhinamastika*, the decapitated or headless form of Durga. They are considered as one of the most respectable of the *Khat-kul*, and their position is not lowered by their indulgence in wine. In fact, contrary is the case; and all the respectable Khat-kul families marry with them." Bala, after whom this group is named, was a famous devotee of the goddess and had limitless power.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In the Puranic age, the word Katyayan appears as (1) a *rtvik* (presiding priest) at Brahma's *yajna* (sacrifice) in Vayu-Purana; (2) a *Pravara* in Matsyapurana; and (3) a Kasyapa *gotrakaras* (gotra founder) again in Matsyapurana. In the same work (V. R. R. Dikshitar, *The Purana Index*, Madras, 1951), the word Katyayani refers to the image of a *devi* (goddess) having "ten hands, three eyes, youthful, [sic] killing Mahisasura, and riding on the lion." That the Katyayani fast was first observed by the girls (*gopis*) of the Vraja in the early season of Hemanta (October-November) is reported by the Bhagwat (x.22., 1-27). Monier-Williams, in his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1899), also notes that Katyayani is a name of Durga appearing in Harivanshapurana, Lalitvistara and Prabodha-chandrodaya; there are also reported three *rishis* (sages) of the same name, all belonging to the *gotra* of *rishi* Kat.

<sup>10</sup> Vishwamitra, the famous epic sage, and originally a king and a Kshatriya (son of King Gadhi), provides the most glaring mythical instance in which a Kshatriya is allowed to become a Brahman "in his same *yoni* [birth] by his *tapa* [asceticism]." Symbolizing all the qualities of a ferocious Kshatriya (warrior), he had to toil hard to attain brahmanhood. But the latter was 'conferred' on him by Vasistha, a famous brahma-rishi, only after Vishwamitra had forsaken warrior values. According to almost all Katyayan informants, "a dispensation for taking up certain warrior practices, including meat-eating, comes through the fact that Vishwamitra, our ancestor, was after all initially a warrior himself."

<sup>11</sup> William Crooke, *op. cit.*; J. N. Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects* (Calcutta, 1896); Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism* (London, 1891).

<sup>12</sup> Crooke (1896) and several informants cited a famous episode of Bala's supernatural power. "Once a number of Kanya-Kubjas made a plot to spit on him (Bala) when he went to the Ganges to bathe. When he came out of the river on its banks, all spat at him. He sat down and laughingly said, 'To be spat by so many eminent Brahmins is good as a bath in Ganga ji.' So his enemies were ashamed and

With respect to the Shakta sect and its ritual, it has been pointed out by Wilson that the major rites are derived from the Tantras.<sup>13</sup> Followers of the Tantras claim them to be a fifth Veda, and they attribute to them equal antiquity and superior authority. The Shakta sect is divided into two major branches: the *Dakshinacharis* and the *Vamacharis*, or followers of the right hand and the left hand ritual. *Dakshinacharis*, who worship goddess Durga in a public manner, are also called Bhaktas. These Bhaktas offer *bali* (animal sacrifice), an offering of blood, in which many animals are each year decapitated.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the practice of animal *bali*, Wilson<sup>15</sup> remarks: "These practices are, however, not considered as orthodox, and approach rather to the ritual of Vamacharis . . . Animal victims are offered to Devi in her terrific forms only, as Kali or Durga. The worship is almost confined to a few districts, and, perhaps carried to no great extent." Concerning animal sacrifice, the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* remarks: "The animal sacrifices, it is true, gratify Durga; but they at the same time subject the sacrificer to the sin which attaches to the destroyer of animal life."

The Goddess Durga has two aspects, benevolent and terrifying. Around these aspects are grouped the two sub-sects of the Shakta group. Meat-eating, in this context, is held to be an attendant *ritual* of the Shakta faith. Zimmer<sup>16</sup> has helped understand the contradictory aspects of the goddess by pointing out that the goddess is depicted as sitting on two corpse-like figures. Both figures represent Shiva, one being "alive" and the other "dead." Interpretation of this symbolism tells us that the alive and the dead Shiva-figures are two facets of the same reality. "The two are *antagonistic, yet equally valid aspects* of the Absolute, which contains and reflects all and everything, and *in which all distinctions and oppositions vanish and come to rest.*"<sup>17</sup>

By her supreme Divine Power and Virtue, the goddess *transcends* all normally maintained ritual distinctions and oppositions. She is said to lift her ardent devotees above any ritual "bondage." When in communion with Her, a devotee acts only to fulfill the Immutable Wish of the Goddess. Hence many Katyayan Pandits argue that the actions (such as *bali* sacrifice) of the devotee cannot be judged by *normal* ritual values.

Judging from data provided by personal genealogies of the Katyayans, it seems this group adopted Shakta practices in a vigorous way between 150 and 200 years ago. Since then several famous Katyayan devotees of goddess Kali have been reported. We are told some of them pleased the goddess with *bali* and with their own blood by opening veins in their hands, chopping off their tongues, and dripping blood from their foreheads at the feet of the deity. Bala, the famous Shakta of Bharadwaja *gotra*, is reported to have been of this persuasion. The practices of this sect were

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begged his pardon. Then he said, 'the reason that I bow to none is that my power is without limit, of which I will give you proof!' So he bowed to a stone lying by and it was broken into fragments. They [brahmins] were astonished, and bowing at his feet, went their way."

<sup>13</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus* (Calcutta, 1958). p. 139. This book was originally published in 1861 and edited by Ernst R. Rost.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, pp. 139-140.

<sup>16</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. by Joseph Campbell (New York, 1946), pp. 201-207.

<sup>17</sup> Zimmer, p. 205; emphasis provided by author.

accepted by the descendants of such famous devotees, and secured further dispersal in time.

However, with the decline of Tantric fervor and the rise of deities of Vaishnavism and Shaivism, the ritual implications of meat-eating began to decline. The sublime, non-violent and benevolent nature of Vaishnavite and Shaivite deities captured the imagination of many people, perhaps particularly among urban people who could not afford to please so exacting a deity (Kali) in the confines of urban life. *Bhakti-marga*, whole-hearted surrender to the infinite Grace of the Divine Being, came to determine the total approach to the deity of worship. The idea of animal sacrifice and ritual meat-eating had little or no place in such a scheme. By now, among most Katyayan families, the older ritual of sacrifice is performed in a wholly symbolic fashion, most commonly by splitting a coconut. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the role of celebrated devotees cannot be underestimated as causal agents in bringing about important changes in ritual behavior for groups or for individuals. To this rule caste groups and sub-groups are no exceptions. The importance of such agents in bringing about change in group behavior has been insufficiently understood, and the reasons for this are obvious.

In Indian studies, dominant and congruent values have been overemphasized in the face of anomalies, while thought categories and processes (value schemes) have to a large extent been understood or explained through caste and kinship behavior, and especially through the formal rules of caste.

Many of the informants contend that the eating of meat was found among Katyayans in the past at least in part because of occupational requirements. "As our forefathers joined armies freely," stated Mr. S. R. Misra, "they were men of the martial spirit. They knew how to save their religion from the repeated and protracted onslaughts of the British and Mohammedans. To uphold the religion, Katyayans freely enlisted themselves as sepoy and went to distant regions as Bihar, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The famous instance of this type of brahman regiment is found during the period of Indian Mutiny (1857)."<sup>18</sup> The same informant further argued: "During such a critical period, it was just essential and traditionally correct to take up such food habits which maintain and enhance physical strength. Meat-eating, as has been shown by the Rajputs (warrior caste), is suitable for enhancing physical strength. It was thus that our forefathers began to take meat; but only after offering it to the Goddess Durga, the Goddess famous for defeating an aggressor." Another Sanskritist informant, Pandit P. D. Shukla, emphasized the legitimacy of changes in values, saying: "The changeability of the rules of righteous action (*Dharma* and *swabhavaj-Karma*) of a *jati* (caste) or *varna* has always been dependent upon two factors, viz., the *Kala* (time) and *sthan* (place). With unfavorable changes in time and place, the guiding principles of behavior must change."

These arguments illustrate the fact that meat-eating and the emphasis upon Shakta faith derive from specific social conditions. Change in occupation apparently facilitated change in faith and in food. Doubtless this was reinforced by the fact that the Katyayans claimed descent from the sage Vishwamitra who was famous as a

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<sup>18</sup> The informant cited the case of Mangal Pandey, the soldier who was held to be responsible for starting the Indian Mutiny. He was a brahman. He fired the first bullet against the British in Meerut, a city in western Uttar Pradesh.

warrior and a Shakta. There was also the fact that Kannauj, the original place of concentration for the Kanya-Kubjas, was an important seat of Muslim domination for several centuries. This circumstance would presumably support views that favored development of a martial spirit. "Unremitting pressure of Mohammedan invaders forced the scripture-learning and non-violent Brahmans to become warriors by occupation, worship, dress and food," the informant Pandit T. R. Misra noted.

Although the behavioral values of a Kshatriya (warrior) and a brahman are mutually exclusive<sup>19</sup> and cannot be combined or interchanged, the *Shastras* do provide for changes required by circumstances (*desh-kaleen paristhiti*). Thus military values could seep into and stay with a brahman group and could acquire strong religious justifications. The Katyayans believe they possess such a dispensation because of their sect affiliation and because of the need to save or protect their religion. Moreover, religious repression in the Kannauj area presumably caused considerable emigration among Kanya-Kubjas. Limited in their ability to find traditional occupations in new surroundings, the Kanya-Kubjas had to take to varied forms of employment, including military service. The distance from home probably made it easier to enter different occupations, to achieve secular success, and to adopt relevant values.<sup>20</sup>

Currently many caste groups face competing values, modern and traditional. Vegetarianism is regarded as a traditional value, while the eating of meat is viewed as a modern value. In the case of the Katyayans, however, meat-eating appears as both. At the same time, the nature of the competition reflects factors other than modern versus traditional. There are family preferences, Vaishnavism, sanskritization and individual preferences at work. Because this complex competitive interaction remains highly unstable (decided mostly by secular and/or sacred factors operating at a given occasion), only situational and temporary solutions are reached by the various domestic groups, by friendship circles, or by individuals.

For Katyayans the eating of meat can be justified by traditional arguments, such as group custom or the relevance of Shakta-worship, or by modern ways of life. In the contemporary scene, status or social advancement implies increasing conformity with modern ways. The value of meat-eating among Katyayans has thus acquired a double meaning, one of which satisfied the urge to follow ideals from the past, and the other of which improves chances of socio-economic success in contemporary life. Moreover, meat-eating can also be justified by reference to modernized versions of old Sanskritic texts which show that meat-eating was prevalent in ancient times. This sheds some light on the process of modernization in India.

Modernization involves a sort of dynamic equilibrium (subject to further change)

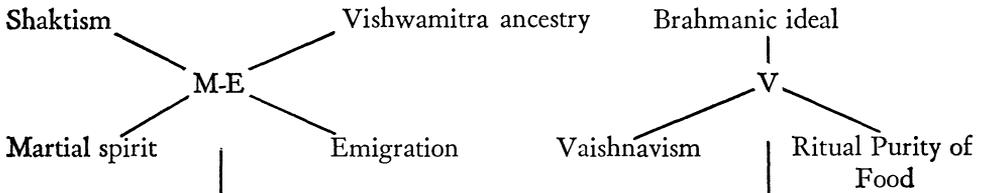
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<sup>19</sup> There is a famous mythical episode between the sages Vishwamitra and Vasistha in this regard. Vishwamitra, as a King, wanted to snatch by force a cow named Nandini, which belonged to sage Vasistha. The latter, being a Brahman, did not resort to force, he just requested the cow to protect herself. Nandini defeated Vishwamitra in the first encounter. Feeling insulted, Vishwamitra pleased Lord Shiva by austerity and penance; and he thus acquired extraordinary weapons. Once again, however, Vishwamitra was defeated as there was nothing to defeat *brahma-danda* (weapon of the Brahman) of Vasistha. Feeling more humiliated, Vishwamitra now tried to attain Brahmanhood itself by means of severe *tapa* (austerity). But Vasistha would not allow him to enter into Brahmanhood as long as Vishwamitra relied on weapons and other Kshatriya (warrior) values. Only after renunciation of these, Vishwamitra was conferred Brahmanhood and was thereafter called Brahmarishi (Brahman sage) instead of Rajrishi (warrior sage).

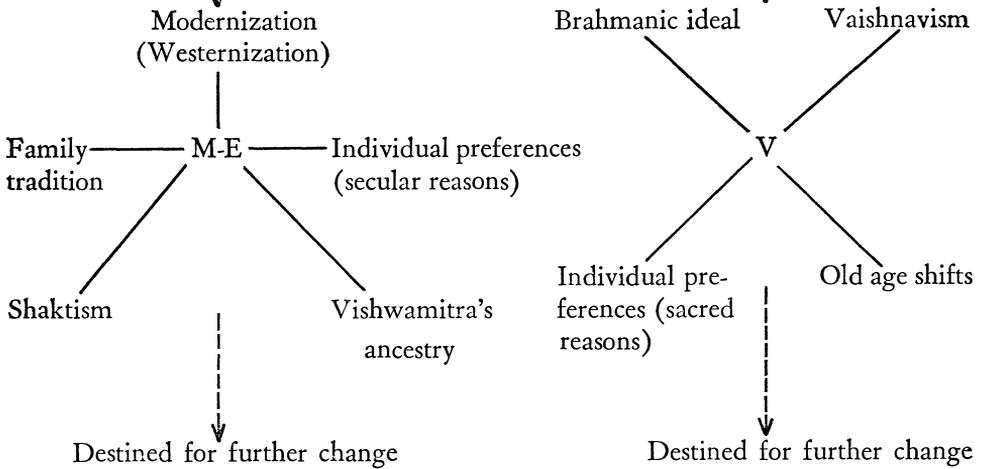
<sup>20</sup> R. S. Khare, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-353.

of adaptive forces which arise as a result of events internal as well as external to a cultural system. Internal innovations and adaptations, if supported by an intellectual resurgence on a national scale, direct and mold external stimuli for change. This may be called cultural change directed from within. India has been experiencing intensive cultural revival and reform for a century, resulting in certain additions, losses and changes of emphasis. Cultural drift may indeed—in more cases than has been realized—account for changes which in a superficial view would be said to have resulted from contact alone.<sup>21</sup> “Further drift influences what is to be taken into a culture, whether developed within or introduced from without, and offers an explanation for the reinterpretation of established patterns.”<sup>22</sup> This concept of cultural drift seems helpful in our analysis. Recent attempts to vigorously reinterpret authoritative

NINETEENTH CENTURY



TWENTIETH CENTURY



Diagrammatic representations of Dynamic Equilibria for the values of Meat-eating (M-E) and Vegetarianism (V) among the Katyayans (only some main forces being depicted).

<sup>21</sup> Fred Eggan, “Cultural Drift and Social Changes,” (Papers in honour of M. J. Herskovits) *Current Anthropology*, 1963, IV, no. 4, p. 347.

<sup>22</sup> Eggan, p. 354.

religious texts aim to adapt to modern values by developing necessary shifts in emphasis and rationale. However, such shifts do not dislodge an ideal. Thus modern traditionalists and the modern intellectuals handle original Sanskritic sources in their own ways. While the former does what he can to continue old values in the contemporary world, the latter strives to rediscover the ancient ideal in a form that is suitable to the demands of the modern world. Among the Katyayans both types of adaptation have emerged, producing drift only on small day-to-day changes. Seen over a period of time, and with the introduction of Western values, configurations exhibit a direction of change along with some major realignments in food values. This situation may be visualized as on preceding page.

In this setting, Katyayans seem to argue both for and against the traditional sanctions for meat-eating. While the sect affiliation, the deity of worship, and modern or secular forces promote the spread of meat-eating in the group, the simultaneous impact of Vaishnavism and of the Brahmanic ideal arrest or modify the tendency. The latter forces cannot be underestimated; devoid of Tantric fervor, Katyayans now favor Vaishnavised Shaktism<sup>23</sup> or Vaishnavism as such. By now a coconut pleases the deity, as before did a sacrificial goat. Our informants now point out the peaceful worship of Shiva and/or Shakti, along with an incarnation of Vishnu. Moreover, as will be noted, as individuals grow older there is an interesting change in the dimensions and functions of deities for individual worshippers (*aradhya devta/devi*).<sup>24</sup>

Among Katyayan youth there is a clear correlation between education or modernization and the eating of meat. The higher the educational attainment and consequent economic position, the greater are the chances that meat is eaten, perhaps as a symbol that one has entered the new-style elite society. For these people the eating of meat sometimes seems to be both the cause and the effect of modernization.<sup>25</sup>

However, when life histories of Katyayan individuals—both traditionalists and modernists—are examined, certain interesting shifts in the emphasis upon meat-eating become apparent. For example, it is common to convert to vegetarianism in old age. This change seems to be related to the deity of worship and its form and function in relation to the devotee. Life histories clearly show how the older Katyayans change their forms of worship (sometimes a deity also) from a more vigorous or violent nature to a non-violent (*shant*, or peaceful) and sober one. Worldly joys are given up and the path of Devotion (*Bhakti-marga*) taken; desires are replaced by resignation and calm. These changes conform with the cultural ideal which emphasized detachment. In this mode of worship, one usually leaves meat-eating completely, “as a step towards self-purification, an essential condition for becoming a devotee.”

At present, meat-eating as a modern value and vegetarianism as a traditional value tend to coexist within individual families, but the equilibrium so attained remains uncertain. Both values are tolerated. Vegetarian Katyayan parents do not usually forbid their sons and daughters to eat meat for avowed reasons of social advancement.

<sup>23</sup> Vaishnavised Shaktism abolishes animal sacrifice, dwells on benign aspects of the Goddess, and strongly favors teetotalism. Katyayans are increasingly taking to this version of Shaktism.

<sup>24</sup> It is a common observation that moods of the deity of worship change with the devotee's age. It has, however, nothing to do explicitly with the well-known *Vanaprastha* and *Samyasa* ashramas of old age. The theory of ashramas is hardly applicable in the life of a modern Hindu. I am describing some subtle changes in faith and world view of a modern Hindu as he grows old.

<sup>25</sup> Those who want to rise in the secular arena start eating meat. Those who have risen socially and economically start eating meat as a reflection of their sophistication.

However, restrictions are observed by such parents in order to maintain ritual purity in the kitchen. For example, the utensils for cooking vegetarian foods are kept separate. In many cases aluminum utensils are reserved for the cooking of meat, while brass or bronze vessels are used for vegetarian foods. In many of the urban Katyayan families, I observed separate kitchens for cooking vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, managed by two cooks working exclusively. This is indicative of the well-defined conceptual opposition maintained between the values for meat-eating and the values for vegetarianism.

There is of course a related aspect to the problem: Does this anomaly of meat-eating create any difficulties of adjustment in the transferral of girls with marriage? The Katyayans as a *gotra* must always marry outside their own *gotra*. This raises the question of the training of Katyayan women regarding meat. Katyayan girls generally do not eat meat but have no scruples about cooking it for the families of their husbands. These girls, therefore, when they marry into another *gotra* (where meat is not consumed), do not find adjustment difficult. The girls from other *gotras* who marry into Katyayan families have to change according to the demands of the husband's household. If the husband is a meat-eater, the wife may cook for him although she may not eat meat. This is a common arrangement. According to Mrs. Bajpeyi, "Meat-eating is primarily a concern of men. Husbands and sons may decide as they please on the question of meat-eating in the family, but we as women know the responsibilities and duties of a girl who is unmarried. We do not allow our daughters either to be ignorant about meat preparations, or to be indulgent about meat-eating. Both extremes are bad at present."

Herein I have adduced evidence, both diachronic and synchronic, to answer questions related to the rationale behind meat-eating preferences among the Katyayans. The rationale comes from diverse sources: myths, legends, sect rituals, immediate history (approximately 200 years) of the group, and from the dilemma of the modern brahman. When considered over time, there is evidently a drift in emphasis on and relation of forces which keep up meat-eating in the group. Importance of cultural drift in studying social change among caste groups is underlined. Dynamic equilibria are conceptualized.

Vegetarianism and meat-eating are studied as philosophical values and in social usage. Philosophically, they represent opposition in thought categories which is studied through the myth of the Shakti sect, from which the Katyayan's anomaly arises. Dialectics of thought try to justify the seemingly contradictory life-preserving and life-annihilating aspects of one deity. This has direct implications for our analysis. Religious and philosophical rationalizations stand at the back of rituals, and in order to understand an anomaly of ritual behavior, one has to extend enquiry to thought categories and their interrelations. Moreover, one must consider famous personages as important to the drift within a social system.

Abstractions from a social system should not be confused with concrete social behavior as the former involve a difference in the level of rationalization and thought processes. This danger is more pronounced in the study of complex civilizations, which generally have several levels of abstractions.

Differences in the levels of abstractions between usage and ritual, and between values and cultural ideal must be recognized. If we confuse one for another, and use them as premises for further logical deductions, the validity of our conclusions will

be questionable. Evans-Pritchard<sup>26</sup> has notably shown the need for deriving abstractions from concrete social data and of interrelating abstractions into a system. In the study of civilizations, there is a similar need to differentiate between concrete social behavior and its abstractions at various levels. Abstractions from religious behavior organize and form a conceptual whole, providing a system of rationale for a charter of rituals.

CATEGORY OPPOSITION			LEVELS OF ABSTRACTIONS	
Life	×	Death	I	Opposition in thought (philosophic problem)
	or			
Life preserving forces	×	life destroying forces		
	or		II	Opposition (represented) through symbols
Non-violence (ahimsa)	×	violence (himsa)		
Red One (Jagdamba)	×	Black One (Kali)	III	Opposition (reflected) in Charter of rituals
Dakshinachari (right-hand ritual)	×	Vamachari (left-hand ritual)		
Vegetarianism	×	non-vegetarianism	IV	Opposition in ritual eating (later on in concrete social behaviour) (e.g., Katyayans' meat-eating).

} Conceptualization of opposition through a religious sect (Shakta)

We may now look at the problem in light of some conclusions reached by Sharma. In his article, Sharma dealt with vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism in relation to religious sect affiliation on an all-India basis. He remarked, *inter alia*, "(1) vegetarianism is specially a value of Vishnuism, so is teetotalism. They are *not values of Brahmans as such*, (2) thus the adoption of vegetarian food and teetotalism . . . has been to equip and entitle oneself for salvation . . . (3) in the group of secularized Hindus, westernized persons holding high social status are disseminating the scientifically-superior value of non-vegetarian food . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Let us first note the similarities between his arguments and those presented here. Sharma's third point is fully supported in this study. Katyayans like all other social groups are changing their food habits because of modern or Western influences. Meat-eating thus emerges as a status symbol. In his second observation on vegetarian food, Sharma touches upon an important point but only vaguely. From his standpoint, all modern studies of status evaluation in caste point falsely to teetotalism

<sup>26</sup> E. E. Evans Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford University Press, 1940); *Social Anthropology* (London, 1951); *Nuer Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1956). He has clearly dwelt upon the need for abstracting from a body of social events in his *Social Anthropology*. He has exemplified this method of analysis extensively in two other works cited above.

<sup>27</sup> K. N. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54; emphasis provided by author.

and vegetarianism as an ideal caste value.<sup>28</sup> He also comments, in his first point, that vegetarianism and teetotalism are not brahmanical values *as such*.

This same problem has been explored here by studying the rationalizations behind such group activities as meat-eating. Levels of rationalization have been differentiated for (a) the Katyayan *gotra*, (b) other brahman caste groups, (c) the Brahmanic ideal, and (d) Hindu religious and philosophical thought as in Shaktism. The main argument is that sufficiently strong rationalizations should uphold such practices as meat-eating in order to be condoned by the majority. Religious purpose is held to be more important than the means (rituals) to achieve it. Rituals help in reaching religious or mystical goals. Meat-eating thus appears only as a way to approach a particular mood of the deity. Thus meat-eating is of greater concern in ritual rather than social practice. If it had been viewed otherwise, the Katyayans should have toppled from their high brahman position to the levels of those untouchable castes which destroy life and deal with its remnants. In this situation brahmins can be condoned only insofar as what they do is in line with their spiritual pursuits. Meat-eating is not normal for brahman castes. No brahman who eats beef can be pardoned on any account! It is thus erroneous to conclude that vegetarianism and teetotalism are not brahman values. Brahman values are not altered by certain anomalous sectarian rituals.<sup>29</sup> The latter are only accommodated. But we must ask how and for what reasons. The answer to this question, as has been suggested, is to be found by analysis of structure of thought as symbolized in mythology and scriptures, and as conceived by a majority of interested persons at a given point in time.

It would also be faulty to argue that caste groups do not consider vegetarianism as an element of caste ranking. Vegetarians among the Kanya-Kubja brahmins are always regarded as behaving in a more brahmanic way than those who eat meat for any reason. For the sake of brahmanic ideals, most Katyayans, though Shakta by faith, do not offer *bali*, and many do not eat meat. However, many Katyayans eat meat for sectarian as well as for non-sectarian reasons. Such an opposition provided an opportunity to study further the nature of interconnections it has with social structure (caste system) and with religious rationalizations (sect theology).

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<sup>28</sup> Sharma, pp. 43–44.

<sup>29</sup> Another interesting example of anomalous sect practices is described by Carstairs ("Pattern of Religious Observances in Three Villages of Rajasthan," *Aspects of Religion in Indian Society*, ed. by L. P. Vidyarthi, *Journal of Social Research*, 1961 IV, no. 1–2, 59–113) in which the "ritual act of sex" is practiced by the rural Rawats of Rajasthan. "The name of Ram-Devji is also associated with the worship of Sakti, or female energy, as personified by the Goddess Devi. This form of worship is akin to the other *panth*, but with the difference that the supreme object of their devotion is not represented by light or fire, but by the act of sexual intercourse, and by semen, which is believed to issue from both male and female in that act."