

BHANOTES AND THEIR SYSTEM OF “SATI WORSHIP” IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Bhanot-s are Rajput warriors, having migrated from Rajasthan and settled in Garhshankar block of Hoshiarpur district in Punjab. Even though, nearly a century has passed these warriors remain limited to the twelve villages originally adopted by them. It is presumed that they were part of Rana Pratap’s Army who had fought the Mughals and ultimately took shelter in the forests to protect themselves from the onslaught of the invaders and hence called “*Ban-Hote*,” meaning ‘found in the forests’. There are certain castes of the Rajputs whose origin is not very old, for instance, the Bhanot sub-caste is a nomenclature of those who lived in the woods (*ban*) or away from others. When they exercised some influence in and around the areas they lived, they proudly liked to be called ‘Bhanot-s’ (or Bhanots) though they are the brethren of the Naru Rajputs. In due course of time the Banhote-s were influenced by the Muslims and started worshipping their *Peers* and *Paigambars* but without leaving their own “*Jathere-s*.”

Their Queen, who committed “Sati” on seeing the slain head of her king, is still worshipped by them till date, even though the law of the land forbids Sati worship in any form. Bhanotes have a mixed culture of Hinduism, Muslims and Sikhism. The twelve villages are full of Temples, Gurudwaras, old Mosques, Tombs of Muslim *Peers* and *Paigambars*. The research done by the Scholar is a rare part of historical literature.

KEY WORDS:

SATI (A woman who perishes on the burning pier of her husband)

BHANOT (Rajput warriors living in jungles)

JATHERA (Community saint)

RAHON (A small town on the River *Satluj*),

BHATPUR (Village on the foot of the *Shivalik* hills where the queen performed sati)

PEERS, PAIGAMBERS (Saints of the religion of Muslims)

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