buried under a pīpal tree, and a pitcher with a hole in the bottom is hung on the tree so that water may trickle down on to them. On the tenth day the caste-people assemble and are shaved and bathe and rub their bodies with oil under the tree. Unmarried men and persons dying of cholera are buried, the head being placed to the north. They consider that if they place the corpse in the reverse position it would be an insult to the Ganges equivalent to kicking the holy river, as the feet of the body would then be turned towards it.

BADHAK

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

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Badhak, Bāgri, Baoria.—A famous tribe of dacoits who flourished up to about 1850, and extended their depredations over the whole of Northern and Central India. The Bāgris and Baorias or Bāwarias still exist and are well known to the police as inveterate criminals; but their operations are now confined to ordinary burglary, theft and cheating, and their more interesting profession of armed gang-robbery on a large scale is a thing of the past. The first part of this article is entirely compiled from the Report on their suppression drawn up by Colonel Sleeman,[1] who may be regarded as the virtual founder of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department. Some mention of the existing Bāgri and Baoria tribes is added at the end. 1. Introductory notice.

The origin of the Badhaks is obscure, but they seem to have belonged to Gujarāt, as their peculiar dialect, still in use, is a form of Gujarāti. The most striking feature in it is the regular substitution of *kh* for *s*. They claimed to be 2. The Badhak dacoits.

[1] *Report on the Badhak or Bāgri Dacoits and the Measures adopted by the Government of India for their Suppression*, printed in 1849.

Rājpūts and were divided into clans with the well-known Rājpūt names of Solanki, Panwār, Dhundhel, Chauhān, Rāthor, Gahlot, Bhatti and Chāran. Their ancestors were supposed to have fled from Chitor on one of the historical occasions on which it was assaulted and sacked. But as they spoke Gujarāti it seems more probable that they belonged to Gujarāt, a fertile breeding-place of criminals, and they may have been descended from the alliances of Rājpūts with the primitive tribes of this locality, the Bhīls and Kolis. The existing Bāgris are of short stature, one writer stating that none of them exceed five feet two inches in height; and this seems to indicate that they have little Rājpūt blood. It may be surmised that the Badhaks rose into importance and found scope for their predatory instincts during the period of general disorder and absence of governing authority through which northern India passed after the decline of the Mughal Empire. And they lived and robbed with the connivance or open support of the petty chiefs and land-holders, to whom they gave a liberal share of their booty. The principal bands were located in the Oudh forests, but they belonged to the whole of northern India including the Central Provinces; and as Colonel Sleeman's Report, though of much interest, is now practically unknown, I have thought it not out of place to compile an article by means of short extracts from his account of the tribe.

In 1822 the operations of the Badhaks were being conducted on such a scale that an officer wrote: "No District between the Brahmaputra, the Nerbudda, the Satlej and the Himalayas is free from them; and within this vast field hardly any wealthy merchant or manufacturer could feel himself secure for a single night from the depredations of Badhak dacoits. They had successfully attacked so many of the treasuries of our native Sub-Collectors that it was deemed necessary, all over the North-Western Provinces, to surround such buildings with extensive fortifications. In many cases they carried off our public treasure from strong parties of our regular troops and mounted police; and none seemed to know whence they came or whither they fled with the booty acquired."[1]

[1] Sleeman, p. 10.

3. Instances of dacoities.

Colonel Sleeman thus described a dacoity in the town of Narsinghpur when he was in charge of that District:[1] "In February 1822, in the dusk of the evening, a party of about thirty persons, with nothing seemingly but walking-sticks in their hands, passed the piquet of sepoys on the bank of the rivulet which separates the cantonment from the town of Narsinghpur. On being challenged by the sentries they said they were cowherds and that their cattle were following close behind. They walked up the street; and coming opposite the houses of the most wealthy merchants, they set their torches in a blaze by blowing suddenly on pots filled with combustibles, stabbed everybody who ventured to move or make the slightest noise, plundered the houses, and in ten minutes were away with their booty, leaving about twelve persons dead and wounded on the ground. No trace of them was discovered." Another well-known exploit of the Badhaks was the attack on the palace of the ex-Peshwa, Bāji Rao, at Bithūr near Cawnpore. This was accomplished by a gang of about eighty men, who proceeded to the locality in the disguise of carriers of Ganges water. Having purchased a boat and a few muskets to intimidate the guard they crossed the Ganges about six miles below Bithūr, and reached the place at ten o'clock at night; and after wounding eighteen persons who attempted resistance they possessed themselves of property, chiefly in gold, to the value of more than two and a half lakhs of rupees; and retiring without loss made their way in safety to their homes in the Oudh forests. The residence of this gang was known to a British police officer in the King of Oudh's service, Mr. Orr, and after a long delay on the part of the court an expedition was sent which recovered a portion of the treasure and captured two or three hundred of the Badhaks. But none of the recovered property reached the hands of Bāji Rao and the prisoners were soon afterwards released.[2] Again in 1839, a gang of about fifty men under a well-known leader, Gajrāj, scaled the walls of Jhānsi and plundered the Surāfa or bankers' quarter of the town for two hours, obtaining booty to the value of Rs. 40,000, which they carried off without the loss of a man. The following

[1] Sleeman, p. 10.

[2] Sleeman, p. 57.

account of this raid was obtained by Colonel Sleeman from one of the robbers:[1] "The spy (*hirrowa*) having returned and reported that he had found a merchant's house in Jhānsi which contained a good deal of property, we proceeded to a grove where we took the auspices by the process of *akūt* (counting of grains) and found the omens favourable. We then rested three days and settled the rates according to which the booty should be shared. Four or five men, who were considered too feeble for the enterprise, were sent back, and the rest, well armed, strong and full of courage, went on. In the evening of the fourth day we reached a plain about a mile from the town, where we rested to take breath for an hour; about nine o'clock we got to the wall and remained under it till midnight, preparing the ladders from materials which we had collected on the road. They were placed to the wall and we entered and passed through the town without opposition. A marriage procession was going on before us and the people thought we belonged to it. We found the bankers' shops closed. Thāna and Saldewa, who carried the axes, soon broke them open, while Kulean lighted up his torch. Gajrāj with twenty men entered, while the rest stood posted at the different avenues leading to the place. When all the property they could find had been collected, Gajrāj hailed the god Hanumān and gave orders for the retreat. We got back safely to Mondegri in two days and a half, and then reposed for two or three days with the Rāja of Narwar, with whom we left five or six of our stoutest men as a guard, and then returned home with our booty, consisting chiefly of diamonds, emeralds, gold and silver bullion, rupees and about sixty pounds of silver wire. None of our people were either killed or wounded, but whether any of the bankers' people were I know not."

4. Further instances of dacoities.

Colonel Sleeman writes elsewhere[2] of the leader of the above exploit: "This Gajrāj had risen from the vocation of a *bandarwāla* (monkey showman) to be the Robin Hood of Gwālior and the adjacent States; he was the governor-general of banditti in that country of banditti and kept the whole in awe; he had made himself so formidable that

[1] Sleeman, p. 95. [2] Sleeman, p. 231.

the Durbar appointed him to keep the *ghāts* or ferries over the Chambal, which he did in a very profitable manner to them and to himself, and none entered or quitted the country without paying blackmail." A common practice of the Badhaks, when in need of a little ready money, was to lie in wait for money-changers on their return from the markets. These men take their bags of money with them to the important bazārs at a distance from their residence and return home with them after dusk. The dacoits were accustomed to watch for them in the darkest and most retired places on the roads and fell them to the ground with their bludgeons. This device was often practised and usually succeeded.[1] Of another Badhak chief, Meherbān, it is stated[2] that he hired a discharged sepoy to instruct his followers in the European system of drill, that they might travel with him in the disguise of regular soldiers, well armed and accoutred. During the rains Meherbān's spies (*hirrowa*) were sent to visit the great commercial towns and report any despatches of money or other valuables, which were to take place during the following open season. His own favourite disguise was that of a Hindu prince, while the remainder of the gang constituted his retinue and escort. On one occasion, assuming this character, he followed up a boat laden with Spanish dollars which was being sent from Calcutta to Benāres; and having attacked it at its moorings at Makrai, he killed one and wounded ten men of the guard and made off with 25,000 Spanish dollars and Rs. 2600 of the Company's coinage. A part of the band were sent direct to the rendezvous previously arranged, while Meherbān returned to the grove where he had left his women and proceeded with them in a more leisurely fashion to the same place. Retaining the character of a native prince he halted here for two days to celebrate the Holi festival. Marching thence with his women conveyed in covered litters by hired bearers who were changed at intervals, he proceeded to his bivouac in the Oudh forests; and at Seosāgar, one of his halting-places, he gave a large sum of money to a gardener to plant a grove of mango trees near a tank for the benefit of travellers, in the name of Rāja Meherbān Singh of Gaur

[1] Sleeman, p. 217.

[2] Sleeman, p. 20.

in Oudh; and promised him further alms on future occasions of pilgrimage if he found the work progressing well, saying that it was a great shame that travellers should be compelled as he had been to halt without shade for themselves or their families during the heat of the day. He arrived safely at his quarters in the forest and was received in the customary fashion by a procession of women in their best attire, who conducted him with dancing and music, like a victorious Roman Proconsul, to his fort.[1]

5. Disguise of religious mendicants.

But naturally not all the Badhaks could do things in the style of Meherbān Singh. The disguise which they most often assumed in the north was that of carriers of Ganges water, while in Central India they often pretended to be Banjāras travelling with pack-bullocks, or pilgrims, or wedding-parties going to fetch the bride or bridegroom. Sometimes also they took the character of religious mendicants, the leader being the high priest and all the rest his followers and disciples. One such gang, described by Colonel Sleeman,[2] had four or five tents of white and dyed cloth, two or three pairs of *nakkāras* or kettle-drums and trumpets, with a great number of buffaloes, cows, goats, sheep and ponies. Some were clothed, but the bodies of the greater part were covered with nothing but ashes, paint and a small cloth waistband. But they always provided themselves with five or six real Bairāgis, whose services they purchased at a very high price. These men were put forward to answer questions in case of difficulty and to bully the landlords and peasantry; and if the people demurred to the demands of the Badhaks, to intimidate them, by tricks calculated to play upon the fears of the ignorant. They held in their hands a preparation of gunpowder resembling common ashes; and when they found the people very stubborn they repeated their *mantras* over this and threw it upon the thatch of the nearest house, to which it set fire. The explosion was caused by a kind of fusee held in the hand which the people could not see, and taking it for a miracle they paid all that was demanded. Another method was to pretend to be carrying the bones of dead relatives to the Ganges. The bones or ashes of

[1] Sleeman, p. 21.

[2] Sleeman, p. 81.

the deceased, says[1] Colonel Sleeman, are carried to the Ganges in bags, coloured red for females and white for males. These bags are considered holy, and are not allowed to touch the ground upon the way, and during halts in the journey are placed on poles or triangles. The carriers are regarded with respect as persons engaged upon a pious duty, and seldom questioned on the road. When a gang assumed this disguise they proceeded to their place of rendezvous in small parties, some with red and some with white bags, in which they carried the bones of animals most resembling those of the human frame. These were supported on triangles formed of the shafts on which the spear-heads would be fitted when they reached their destination and had prepared for action.

6. Countenance and support of landowners.

It would have been impossible for the Badhaks to exist and flourish as they did without the protection of the landowners on whose estates they lived; and this they received in full measure in return for a liberal share of their booty. When the chief of Karauli was called upon to dislodge a gang within his territory, he expressed apprehension that the coercion of the Badhaks might cause a revolution in the State. He was not at all singular, says Colonel Sleeman, in his fear of exasperating this formidable tribe of robbers. It was common to all the smaller chiefs and the provincial governors of the larger ones. They everywhere protected and fostered the Badhaks, as did the landholders; and the highest of them associated with the leaders of gangs on terms of equality and confidence. It was very common for a chief or the governor of a district in times of great difficulty and personal danger to require from one of the leaders of such gangs a night-guard or *palang ki chauki*: and no less so to entertain large bodies of them in the attack and defence of forts and camps whenever unusual courage and skill were required. The son of the Rāja of Charda exchanged turbans with a Badhak leader, Mangal Singh, as a mark of the most intimate friendship. This episode recalls an alliance of similar character in *Lorna Doone*; and indeed it would not be difficult to find several points of resemblance between the careers of the more enterprising Badhak leaders and the

[1] Sleeman, p. 82.

Doones of Bagworthy; but India produced no character on the model of John Ridd, and it was reserved for an Englishman, Colonel Sleeman, to achieve the suppression of the Badhaks as well as that of the Thugs. After the fortress and territory of Garhākota in Saugor had been taken by the Mahārāja Sindhia, Zālim Singh, a cousin of the dispossessed Bundela chief, collected a force of Bundelas and Pindāris and ravaged the country round Garhākota in 1813. In the course of his raid he sacked and burnt the town of Deori, and 15,000 persons perished in the flames. Colonel Jean Baptiste, Sindhia's general, obtained a number of picked Badhaks from Rājputāna and offered them a rich reward for the head of Zālim Singh; and after watching his camp for three months they managed to come on him asleep in the tent of a dancing-girl, who was following his camp, and stabbed him to the heart. For this deed they received Rs. 20,000 from Baptiste with other valuable presents. Their reputation was indeed such that they were frequently employed at this period both by chiefs who desired to take the lives of others and by those who were anxious for the preservation of their own. When it happened that a gang was caught after a robbery in a native State, the custom was not infrequently to make them over to the merchant whose property they had taken, with permission to keep them in confinement until they should refund his money; and in this manner by giving up the whole or a part of the proceeds of their robbery they were enabled to regain their liberty. Even if they were sent before the courts, justice was at that time so corrupt as to permit of easy avenues of escape for those who could afford to pay; and Colonel Sleeman records the deposition of a Badhak describing their methods of bribery: "When police officers arrest Badhaks their old women get round them and give them large sums of money; and they either release them or get their depositions so written that their release shall be ordered by the magistrates. If they are brought to court, their old women, dressed in rags, follow them at a distance of three or four miles with a thousand or two thousand rupees upon ponies; and these rupees they distribute among the native officers of the court and get the Badhaks released. These old women first ascertain from the people of the villages

who are the Nāzirs and Munshis of influence, and wait upon them at their houses and make their bargains. If the officials cannot effect their release, they take money from the old women and send them off to the Sadar Court, with letters of introduction to their friends, and advice as to the rate they shall pay to each according to his supposed influence. This is the way that all our leaders get released, and hardly any but useless men are left in confinement."[1]

7. Pride in their profession.

It may be noticed that these robbers took the utmost pleasure in their calling, and were most averse to the idea of giving it up and taking to honest pursuits. "Some of the men with me," one magistrate wrote,[2] "have been in jail for twenty, and one man for thirty years, and still do not appear to have any idea of abandoning their illegal vocation; even now, indeed, they look on what we consider an honest means of livelihood with the most marked contempt; and in relating their excursions talk of them with the greatest pleasure, much in the way an eager sportsman describes a boar-chase or fox-hunt. While talking of their excursions, which were to me really very interesting, their eyes gleamed with pleasure; and beating their hands on their foreheads and breasts and muttering some ejaculation they bewailed the hardness of their lot, which now ensured their never again being able to participate in such a joyous occupation." Another Badhak, on being examined, said he could not recall a case of one of the community having ever given up the trade of dacoity. "None ever did, I am certain of it," he continued.[3] "After having been arrested, on our release we frequently take lands, to make it appear we have left off dacoity, but we never do so in reality; it is only done as a feint and to enable our zamīndārs (landowners) to screen us." They sometimes paid rent for their land at the rate of thirty rupees an acre, in return for the countenance and protection afforded by the zamīndārs. "Our profession," another Badhak remarked,[4] "has been a *Pādshāhi Kām* (a king's trade); we have attacked and seized boldly the thousands and hundreds of thousands that we have freely

[1] Sleeman, p. 152.

[2] Sleeman, p. 127. This passage is from a letter written by a magistrate, Mr. Ramsay.

[3] Sleeman, p. 129.

[4] Sleeman, p. 112.

and nobly spent; we have been all our lives wallowing in wealth and basking in freedom, and find it hard to manage with the few copper pice a day we get from you." At the time when captures were numerous, and the idea was entertained of inducing the dacoits to settle in villages and supporting them until they had been trained to labour, several of them, on being asked how much they would require to support themselves, replied that they could not manage on less than two rupees a day, having earned quite that sum by dacoity. This amount would be more than twenty times the wages of an ordinary labourer at the same period. Another witness put the amount at one to two rupees a day, remarking, 'We are great persons for eating and drinking, and we keep several wives according to our means.' Of some of them Colonel Sleeman had a high opinion, and he mentions the case of one man, Ajīt Singh, who was drafted into the native army and rose to be commander of a company. "I have seldom seen a man," he wrote,[1] "whom I would rather have with me in scenes of peril and difficulty." An attempt of the King of Oudh's, however, to form a regiment of Badhaks had ended in failure, as after a short time they mutinied, beat their commandant and other officers and turned them out of the regiment, giving as their reason that the officers had refused to perform the same duties as the men. And they visited with the same treatment all the other officers sent to them, until they were disbanded by the British on the province of Allahābād being made over to the Company. Colonel Sleeman notes that they were never known to offer any other violence or insult to females than to make them give up any gold ornaments that they might have about their persons. "In all my inquiries into the character, habits and conduct of these gangs, I have never found an instance of a female having been otherwise disgraced or insulted by them. They are all Hindūs, and this reverence for the sex pervades all Hindū society."[2] According to their own account also they never committed murder; if people opposed them they struck and killed like soldiers, but this was considered to be in fair fight. It may be noted, nevertheless, that they had little idea of clan loyalty, and

[1] Sleeman, p. 124. [2] Sleeman, p. 125.

informed very freely against their fellows when this course was to their advantage. They also stated that they could not settle in towns; they had always been accustomed to live in the jungles and commit dacoities upon the people of the towns as a kind of *shikār* (sport); they delighted in it, and they felt living in towns or among other men as a kind of prison, and got quite confused (*ghabrāye*), and their women even more than the men.

8. Caste rules and admission of outsiders.

The Badhaks had a regular caste organisation, and members of the different clans married with each other like the Rājpūts after whom they were named. They admitted freely into the community members of any respectable Hindu caste, but not the impure castes or Muhammadans. But at least one instance of the admission of a Muhammadan is given.[1] The Badhaks were often known to the people as Siārkhawa or jackal-eaters, or Sabkhawa, those who eat everything. And the Muhammadan in question was given jackal's flesh to eat, and having partaken of it was considered to have become a member of the community. This indicates that the Badhaks were probably accustomed to eat the flesh of the jackal at a sacrificial meal, and hence that they worshipped the jackal, revering it probably as the deity of the forests where they lived. Such a veneration would account for the importance attached to the jackal's cry as an omen. The fact of their eating jackals also points to the conclusion that the Badhaks were not Rājpūts, but a low hunting caste like the Pārdhis and Bahelias. The Pārdhis have Rājpūt sept names as well as the Badhaks. No doubt a few outcaste Rājpūts may have joined the gangs and become their leaders. Others, however, said that they abstained from the flesh of jackals, snakes, foxes and cows and buffaloes. Children were frequently adopted, being purchased in large numbers in time of famine, and also occasionally kidnapped. They were brought up to the trade of dacoity, and if they showed sufficient aptitude for it were taken out on expeditions, but otherwise left at home to manage the household affairs. They were married to other adopted children and were known as Ghulāmi or Slave Badhaks, like the Jāngar

[1] Sleeman, p. 147.

Banjāras; and like them also, after some generations, when their real origin had been forgotten, they became full Badhaks. It was very advantageous to a Badhak to have a number of children, because all plunder obtained was divided in regularly apportioned shares among the whole community. Men who were too old to go on dacoity also received their share, and all children, even babies born during the absence of the expedition. The Badhaks said that this rule was enforced because they thought it an advantage to the community that families should be large and their numbers should increase; from which statement it must be concluded that they seldom suffered any stringency from lack of spoil. They also stated that Badhak widows would go and find a second husband from among the regular population, and as a rule would sooner or later persuade him to join the Badhaks.

9. Religion: offerings to ancestors.

Like other Indian criminals the Badhaks were of a very religious or superstitious disposition. They considered the gods of the Hindu creed as favouring their undertakings so long as they were suitably propitiated by offering to their temples and priests, and the spirits of the most distinguished of their ancestors as exercising a vicarious authority under these deities in guiding them to their prey and warning them of danger.[1] The following is an account of a Badhak sacrifice given to Colonel Sleeman by the Ajīt Singh already mentioned. It was in celebration of a dacoity in which they had obtained Rs. 40,000, out of which Rs. 4500 were set aside for sacrifices to the gods and charity to the poor. Ajīt Singh said: "For offerings to the gods we purchase goats, sweet cakes and spirits; and having prepared a feast we throw a handful of the savoury food upon the fire in the name of the gods who have most assisted us; but of the feast so consecrated no female but a virgin can partake. The offering is made through the man who has successfully invoked the god on that particular occasion; and, as my god had guided us this time, I was employed to prepare the feast for him and to throw the offering upon the fire. The offering must be taken up before the feast is touched and put upon the

[1] Sleeman, p. 104.

fire, and a little water must be sprinkled on it. The savoury smell of the food as it burns reaches the nostrils of the god and delights him. On this as on most occasions I invoked the spirit of Ganga Singh, my grandfather, and to him I made the offering. I considered him to be the greatest of all my ancestors as a robber, and him I invoked on this solemn occasion. He never failed me when I invoked him, and I had the greatest confidence in his aid. The spirits of our ancestors can easily see whether we shall succeed in what we are about to undertake; and when we are to succeed they order us on, and when we are not they make signs to us to desist." Their mode[1] of ascertaining which of their ancestors interested himself most in their affairs was commonly this, that whenever a person talked incoherently in a fever or an epileptic fit, the spirit of one or other of his ancestors was supposed to be upon him. If they were in doubt as to whose spirit it was, one of them threw down some grains of wheat or coloured glass beads, a pinch at a time, saying the name of the ancestor he supposed the most likely to be at work and calling odd or even as he pleased. If the number proved to be as he called it several times running while that name was repeated, they felt secure of their family god, and proceeded at once to sacrifice a goat or something else in his name. When they were being hunted down and arrested by Colonel Sleeman and his assistants, they ascribed their misfortunes to the anger of the goddess Kāli, because they had infringed her rules and disregarded her signs, and said that their forefathers had often told them they would one day be punished for their disobedience.[2]

10. The wounded haunted by spirits.

Whenever one of the gang was wounded and was taken with his wounds bleeding near a place haunted by a spirit, they believed the spirit got angry and took hold of him,[3] in the manner described by Ajīt Singh as follows: "The spirit comes upon him in all kinds of shapes, sometimes in that of a buffalo, at others in that of a woman, sometimes in the air above and sometimes from the ground below; but no one can see him except the wounded person

[1] Sleeman, p. 110. [2] Sleeman, p. 131.
[3] Sleeman, p. 205.

he is angry with and wants to punish. Upon such a wounded person we always place a naked sword or some other sharp steel instrument, as spirits are much afraid of weapons of this kind. If there be any good conjurer at hand to charm away the spirits from the person wounded he recovers, but nothing else can save him." In one case a dacoit named Ghīsa had been severely wounded in an encounter and was seized by the spirit of a banyan tree as he was being taken away: "We made a litter with our ropes and cloaks thrown over them and on this he was carried off by four of our party; at half a mile distant the road passed under a large banyan tree and as the four men carried him along under the tree, the spirit of the place fell upon him and the four men who carried him fell down with the shock. They could not raise him again, so much were they frightened, and four other men were obliged to lift him and carry him off." The man died of his wounds soon after they reached the halting-place, and in commenting on this Ajīt Singh continued: "When the spirit seized Ghīsa under the tree we had unfortunately no conjurer, and he, poor fellow, died in consequence. It was evident that a spirit had got hold of him, for he could not keep his head upright; it always fell down upon his right or left shoulder as often as we tried to put it right; and he complained much of a pain in the region of the liver. We therefore concluded that the spirit had broken his neck and was consuming his liver."

11. Pious funeral observances.

Like pious Hindus as they were, the Badhaks were accustomed, whenever it was possible, to preserve the bones of their dead after the body had been burnt and carry them to the Ganges. If this was not possible, however, and the exigencies of their profession obliged them to make away with the body without the performance of due funeral rites, they cut off two or three fingers and sent these to the Ganges to be deposited instead of the whole body.[1] In one case a dacoit, Kundana, was killed in an affray, and the others carried off his body and thrust it into a porcupine's hole after cutting off three of the fingers. "We gave Kundana's fingers to his mother," Ajīt Singh stated, "and she sent them

[1] Sleeman, p. 106.

with due offerings and ceremonies to the Ganges by the hands of the family priest. She gave this priest money to purchase a cow, to be presented to the priests in the name of her deceased son, and to distribute in charity to the poor and to holy men. She got from us for these purposes eighty rupees over and above her son's share of the booty, while his widow and children continued to receive their usual share of the takings of the gang so long as they remained with us."

12. Taking the omens.

Before setting out on an expedition it was their regular custom to take the omens, and the following account may be quoted of the preliminaries to an expedition of the great leader, Meherbān Singh, who has already been mentioned: "In the latter end of that year, Meherbān and his brother set out and assembled their friends on the bank of the Bisori river, where the rate at which each member of the party should share in the spoil was determined in order to secure to the dependants of any one who should fall in the enterprise their due share, as well as to prevent inconvenient disputes during and after the expedition. The party assembled on this occasion, including women and children, amounted to two hundred, and when the shares had been determined the goats were sacrificed for the feast. Each leader and member of the gang dipped his finger in the blood and swore fidelity to his engagements and his associates under all circumstances. The whole feasted together and drank freely till the next evening, when Meherbān advanced with about twenty of the principal persons to a spot chosen a little way from the camp on the road they proposed to take in the expedition, and lifting up his hands in supplication said aloud, 'If it be thy will, O God, and thine, Kāli, to prosper our undertaking for the sake of the blind and the lame, *the widow and the orphan*, who depend upon our exertions for subsistence, vouchsafe, we pray thee, the call of the female jackal.' All his followers held up their hands in the same manner and repeated these words after him. All then sat down and waited in silence for the reply or spoke only in whispers. At last the cry of the female jackal was heard three times on the left, and believing her to have been inspired by the deity for

their guidance they were all much rejoiced." The following was another more elaborate method of taking omens described by Ajīt Singh: "When we speak of seeking omens from our gods or Devi Deota, we mean the spirits of those of our ancestors who performed great exploits in dacoity in their day, gained a great name and established lasting reputations. For instance, Mahājīt, my grandfather, and Sāhiba, his father, are called gods and admitted to be so by us all. We have all of us some such gods to be proud of among our ancestors; we propitiate them and ask for favourable omens from them before we enter upon any enterprise. We sometimes propitiate the Sūraj Deota (sun god) and seek good omens from him. We get two or three goats or rams, and sometimes even ten or eleven, at the place where we determine to take the auspices, and having assembled the principal men of the gang we put water into the mouth of one of them and pray to the sun and to our ancestors thus: 'O thou Sun God! And O all ye other Gods! If we are to succeed in the enterprise we are about to undertake we pray you to cause these goats to shake their bodies.' If they do not shake them after the gods have been thus duly invoked, the enterprise must not be entered upon and the goats are not sacrificed. We then try the auspices with wheat. We burn frankincense and scented wood and blow a shell; and taking out a pinch of wheat grains, put them on the cloth and count them. If they come up odd the omen is favourable, and if even it is bad. After this, which we call the auspices of the Akūt, we take that of the Siārni or female jackal. If it calls on the left it is good, but if on the right bad. If the omens turn out favourable in all three trials then we have no fear whatever, but if they are favourable in only one trial out of the three the enterprise must be given up."

13. Suppression of dacoity.

Between 1837 and 1849 the suppression of the regular practice of armed dacoity was practically achieved by Colonel Sleeman. A number of officers were placed under his orders, and with small bodies of military and police were set to hunt down different bands of dacoits, following them all over India when necessary. And special Acts were passed to

enable the offence of dacoity, wherever committed, to be tried by a competent magistrate in any part of India as had been done in the case of the Thugs. Many of the Badhaks received conditional pardons, and were drafted into the police in different stations, and an agricultural labour colony was also formed, but does not seem to have been altogether successful. During these twelve years more than 1200 dacoits in all were brought to trial, while some were killed during the operations, and no doubt many others escaped and took to other avocations, or became ordinary criminals when their armed gangs were broken up. In 1825 it had been estimated that the Oudh forests alone contained from 4000 to 6000 dacoits, while the property stolen in 1811 from known dacoities was valued at ten lakhs of rupees.

14. The Badhaks or Baoris at the present time.

The Badhaks still exist, and are well known as one of the worst classes of criminals, practising ordinary house-breaking and theft. The name Badhak is now less commonly used than those of Bāgri and Baori or Bāwaria, both of which were borne by the original Badhaks. The word Bāgri is derived from a tract of country in Mālwa which is known as the Bāgar or 'hedge of thorns,' because it is surrounded on all sides by wooded hills.[1] There are Bāgri Jāts and Bāgri Rājpūts, many of whom are now highly respectable landholders. Bāwaria or Baori is derived from *bānwar*, a creeper, or the tendril of a vine, and hence a noose made originally from some fibrous plant and used for trapping animals, this being one of the primary occupations of the tribe.[2] The term Badhak signifies a hunter or fowler, hence a robber or murderer (Platts). The Bāgris and Bāwarias are sometimes considered to be separate communities, but it is doubtful whether there is any real distinction between them. In Bombay the Bāgris are known as Vāghris by the common change of *b* into *v*. A good description of them is contained in Appendix C to Mr. Bhimbhai Kirpārām's volume *Hindus of Gujarat* in the *Bombay Gazetteer*. He divides them into the Chunaria or lime-burners, the Dātonia or sellers of twig tooth-brushes, and two other groups, and states that, "They also keep

[1] Malcolm's *Memoir of Central India*, ii. p. 479.

[2] Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bāwaria.

fowls and sell eggs, catch birds and go as *shikāris* or hunters. They traffic in green parrots, which they buy from Bhīls and sell for a profit."

15. Lizard-hunting.

Their strength and powers of endurance are great, the same writer states, and they consider that these qualities are obtained by the eating of the *goh* and *sāndha* or iguana lizards, which a Vāghri prizes very highly. This is also the case with the Bāwarias of the Punjab, who go out hunting lizards in the rains and may be seen returning with baskets full of live lizards, which exist for days without food and are killed and eaten fresh by degrees. Their method of hunting the lizard is described by Mr. Wilson as follows:[1] "The lizard lives on grass, cannot bite severely, and is sluggish in his movements, so that he is easily caught. He digs a hole for himself of no great depth, and the easiest way to take him is to look out for the scarcely perceptible airhole and dig him out; but there are various ways of saving oneself this trouble. One, which I have seen, takes advantage of a habit the lizard has in cold weather (when he never comes out of his hole) of coming to the mouth for air and warmth. The Chūhra or other sportsman puts off his shoes and steals along the prairie till he sees signs of a lizard's hole. This he approaches on tiptoe, raising over his head with both hands a mallet with a round sharp point, and fixing his eyes intently upon the hole. When close enough he brings down his mallet with all his might on the ground just behind the mouth of the hole, and is often successful in breaking the lizard's back before he awakes to a sense of his danger. Another plan, which I have not seen, is to tie a wisp of grass to a long stick and move it over the hole so as to make a rustling noise. The lizard within thinks, 'Oh here's a snake! I may as well give in,' and comes to the mouth of the hole, putting out his tail first so that he may not see his executioner. The sportsman seizes his tail and snatches him out before he has time to learn his mistake." This common fondness for lizards is a point in favour of a connection between the Gujarāt Vāghris and the Punjab Bāwarias.

In Sirsa the great mass of the Bāwarias are not given to

1 *Sirsa Settlement Report.*

crime, and in Gujarāt also they do not appear to have special criminal tendencies. It is a curious point, however, that Mr. Bhimbhai Kirpārām emphasises the chastity of the women of the Gujarāt Vāghris.[1] "When a family returns home after a money-making tour to Bombay or some other city, the women are taken before Vihāt (Devi), and with the women is brought a buffalo or a sheep that is tethered in front of Vihāt's shrine. They must confess all, even their slightest shortcomings, such as the following: 'Two weeks ago, when begging in Pārsi Bazār-street, a drunken sailor caught me by the hand. Another day a Mīyan or Musalmān ogled me, and forgive me, Devi, my looks encouraged him.' If Devi is satisfied the sheep or buffalo shivers, and is then sacrificed and provides a feast for the caste."[2] On the other hand, Mr. Crooke states[3] that in northern India, "The standard of morality is very low because in Muzaffarnagar it is extremely rare for a Bāwaria woman to live with her husband. Almost invariably she lives with another man: but the official husband is responsible for the children." The great difference in the standard of morality is certainly surprising. 16. Social observances.

In Gujarāt[4] the Vāghris have *gurus* or religious preceptors of their own. These men take an eight-anna silver piece and whisper in the ear of their disciples "Be immortal." . . . "The Bhuvas or priest-mediums play an important part in many Vāghri ceremonies. A Bhuva is a male child born after the mother has made a vow to the goddess Vihāt or Devi that if a son be granted to her she will devote him to the service of the goddess. No Bhuva may cut or shave his hair on pain of a fine of ten rupees, and no Bhuva may eat carrion or food cooked by a Muhammadan."

The criminal Bāgris still usually travel about in the disguise of Gosains and Bairāgis, and are very difficult of detection except to real religious mendicants. Their housebreaking implement or jemmy is known as *Gyān*, but in speaking of it they always add *Dās*, so that it sounds like 17. Criminal practices.

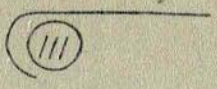
[1] It would appear that the Gujarāt Vāghris are a distinct class from the criminal section of the tribe.

[2] *Bombay Gazetteer, Gujarāt Hindus*, p. 514.

[3] Art. Bawaria, quoting from *North Indian Notes and Queries*, i. 51.

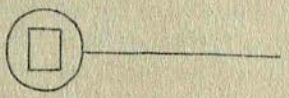
[4] *Bombay Gazetteer, Hindus of Gujarāt*, p. 574.

the name of a Bairāgi.[1] They are usually very much afraid of the *gyān* being discovered on their persons, and are careful to bury it in the ground at each halting-place, while on the march it may be concealed in a pack-saddle. The means of identifying them, Mr. Kennedy remarks,[2] is by their family *deo* or god, which they carry about when wandering with their families. It consists of a brass or copper box containing grains of wheat and the seeds of a creeper, both soaked in *ghī* (melted butter). The box with a peacock's feather and a bell is wrapped in two white and then in two red cloths, one of the white cloths having the print of a man's hand dipped in goat's blood upon it. The grains of wheat are used for taking the omens, a few being thrown up at sundown and counted afterwards to see whether they are odd or even. When even, two grains are placed on the right hand of the omen-taker, and if this occurs three times running the auspices are considered to be favourable.[3] Mr. Gayer[4] notes that the Badhaks have usually from one to three brands from a hot iron on the inside of their left wrist. Those of them who are hunters brand the muscles of the left wrist in order to steady the hand when firing their matchlocks. The customs of wearing a peculiar necklace of small wooden beads and a kind of gold pin fixed to the front teeth, which Mr. Crooke[5] records as having been prevalent some years ago, have apparently been since abandoned, as they are not mentioned in more recent accounts. The Dehliwāl and Mālpura Baorias have, Mr. Kennedy states,[6] an interesting system of signs, which they mark on the walls of buildings at important corners, bridges and cross-roads and on the ground by the roadside with a stick, if no building is handy. The commonest is a loop, the straight line indicating the direction a gang or individual has taken :



[1] Gunthorpe's *Criminal Tribes*.
[2] *Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency*, p. 151.
[3] Gunthorpe's *Criminal Tribes*, art. Badhak.
[4] *C. P. Police Lectures*, art. Badhak.
[5] Art. Bāwaria, para. 12.
[6] *Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency*, p. 179.

the addition of a number of vertical strokes inside the loop signifies the number of males in a gang. If these strokes are enclosed by a circle it means that the gang is encamped in the vicinity; while a square inside a circle and line as below means that property has been secured by friends who



have left in the direction pointed by the line. It is said that Baorias will follow one another up for fifty or even a hundred miles by means of these hieroglyphics. The signs are bold marks, sometimes even a foot or more in length, and are made where they will at once catch the eye. When the Mārwāri Baorias desire to indicate to others of their caste, who may follow in their footsteps, the route taken, a member of the gang, usually a woman, trails a stick in the dust as she walks along, leaving a spiral track on the ground. Another method of indicating the route taken is to place leaves under stones at intervals along the road.[1] The form of crime most in favour among the ordinary Baoris is house-breaking by night. Their common practice is to make a hole in the wall beside the door through which the hand passes to raise the latch; and only occasionally they dig a hole in the base of the wall to admit of the passage of a man, while another favoured alternative is to break in through a barred window, the bars being quickly and forcibly bent and drawn out.[2] One class of Mārwāri Bāgris are also expert coiners.

Bahna, Pinjāra, Dhunia.[3]—The occupational caste of cotton-cleaners. The Bahnas numbered 48,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār in 1911. The large increase in the number of ginning-factories has ruined the Bahna's trade of cleaning hand-ginned cotton, and as no distinction attaches to the name of Bahna it is possible that members of the caste who have taken to other occupations may have abandoned it and returned themselves

1. Nomenclature and internal structure.

[1] Kennedy, *loc. cit.* p. 208.
[2] Kennedy, *loc. cit.* p. 185.
[3] This article is partly based on a paper by Munshi Kanhya Lāl of the Gazetteer office.

simply as Muhammadans. The three names Bahna, Pinjāra, Dhunia appear to be used indifferently for the caste in this Province, though in other parts of India they are distinguished. Pinjāra is derived from the word *pinjan* used for a cotton-bow, and Dhunia is from *dhunna*, to card cotton. The caste is also known as Dhunak Pathāni. Though professing the Muhammadan religion, they still have many Hindu customs and ceremonies, and in the matter of inheritance our courts have held that they are subject to Hindu and not Muhammadan law.[1] In Raipur a girl receives half the share of a boy in the division of inherited property. The caste appears to be a mixed occupational group, and is split into many territorial subcastes named after the different parts of the country from which its members have come, as Badharia from Badhas in Mīrzāpur, Sarsūtia from the Sāraswati river, Berāri of Berār, Dakhni from the Deccan, Telangi from Madras, Pardeshi from northern India, and so on. Two groups are occupational, the Newāris of Saugor, who make the thick *newār* tape used for the webbing of beds, and the Kanderas, who make fireworks and generally constitute a separate caste. There is considerable ground for supposing that the Bahnas are mainly derived from the caste of Telis or oil-pressers. In the Punjab Sir D. Ibbetson says[2] that the Penja or cotton-scutcher is an occupational name applied to Telis who follow this profession; and that the Penja, Kasai and Teli are all of the same caste. Similarly in Nāsik the Telis and Pinjāras are said to form one community, under the government of a single *panchāyat*. In cases of dispute or misconduct the usual penalty is temporary excommunication, which is known as the stopping of food and water.[3] The Telis are an enterprising community of very low status, and would therefore be naturally inclined to take to other occupations; many of them are shopkeepers, cultivators and landholders, and it is quite probable that in past times they took up the Bahna's profession and changed their religion with the hope of improving their social status.

[1] Sir B. Robertson's *C.P. Census Report* (1891), p. 203.

[2] *Punjab Census Report* (1881), paras. 646, 647.

[3] *Nāsik Gazetteer*, pp. 84, 85.

The Telis are generally considered to be quarrelsome and talkative, and the Bahnas or Dhunias have the same characteristics. If one man abusing another lapses into Billingsgate, the other will say to him, '*Hamko Julāha Dhunia neh jāno*,' or 'Don't talk to me as if I was a Julāha or a Dhunia.'

2. Marriage.

Some Bahnas have exogamous sections with Hindu names, while others are without these, and simply regulate their marriages by rules of relationship. They have the primitive Hindu custom of allowing a sister's son to marry a brother's daughter, but not *vice versa*. A man cannot marry his wife's younger sister during her lifetime, nor her elder sister at any time. Children of the same foster-mother are also not allowed to marry. Their marriages are performed by a Kāzi with an imitation of the Nikāh rite. The bridegroom's party sit under the marriage-shed, and the bride with the women of her party inside the house. The Kāzi selects two men, one from the bride's party, who is known as the Nikāhi Bāp or 'Marriage Father,' and the other from the bridegroom's, who is called the Gowāh or 'Witness.' These two men go to the bride and ask her whether she accepts the bridegroom, whose name is stated, for her husband. She answers in the affirmative, and mentions the amount of the dowry which she is to receive. The bridegroom, who has hitherto had a veil (*mukhna*) over his face, now takes it off, and the men go to him and ask him whether he accepts the bride. He replies that he does, and agrees to pay the dowry demanded by her. The Kāzi reads some texts and the guests are given a meal of rice and sugar. Many of the preliminaries to a Hindu marriage are performed by the more backward members of the caste, and until recently they erected a sacred post in the marriage-shed, but now they merely hang the green branch of a mango tree to the roof. The minimum amount of the *mehar* or dowry is said to be Rs. 125, but it is paid to the girl's parents as a bride-price and not to herself, as among the Muhammadans. A widow is expected, but not obliged, to marry her deceased husband's younger brother. Divorce is permitted by means of a written deed known as 'Fārkhati.'

3. Religious and other customs.

The Bahnas venerate Muhammad, and also worship the tombs of Muhammadan saints or *Pīrs*. A green sheet or cloth is spread over the tomb and a lamp is kept burning by it, while offerings of incense and flowers are made. When the new cotton crop has been gathered they lay some new cotton by their bow and mallet and make an offering of *malīda* or cakes of flour and sugar to it. They believe that two angels, one good and one bad, are perched continually on the shoulders of every man to record his good and evil deeds. And when an eclipse occurs they say that the sun and moon have gone behind a pinnacle or tower of the heavens. For exorcising evil spirits they write texts of the Korān on paper and burn them before the sufferer. The caste bury the dead with the feet pointing to the south. On the way to the grave each one of the mourners places his shoulder under the bier for a time, partaking of the impurity communicated by it. Incense is burnt daily in the name of a deceased person for forty days after his death, with the object probably of preventing his ghost from returning to haunt the house. Muhammadan beggars are fed on the tenth day. Similarly, after the birth of a child a woman is unclean for forty days, and cannot cook for her husband during that period. A child's hair is cut for the first time on the tenth or twelfth day after birth, this being known as Jhālar. Some parents leave a lock of hair to grow on the head in the name of the famous saint Sheikh Farīd, thinking that they will thus ensure a long life for the child. It is probably in reality a way of preserving the Hindu *choti* or scalp-lock.

4. Occupation.

The hereditary calling[1] of the Bahna is the cleaning or scutching of cotton, which is done by subjecting it to the vibration of a bow-string. The seed has been previously separated by a hand-gin, but the ginned cotton still contains much dirt, leaf-fibre and other rubbish, and to remove this is the Bahna's task. The bow is somewhat in the shape of a harp, the wide end consisting of a broad piece of wood over which the string passes, being secured to a straight wooden bar at the back. At the narrow end the bar and string are fixed to an iron ring. The string is made of the

[1] Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bahna.

Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

PINJĀRA CLEANING COTTON.

sinew of some animal, and this renders the implement objectionable to Hindus, and may account for the Bahnas being Muhammadans. The club or mallet is a wooden implement shaped like a dumb-bell. The bow is suspended from the roof so as to hang just over the pile of loose cotton; and the worker twangs the string with the mallet and then draws the mallet across the string, each three or four times. The string strikes a small portion of the cotton, the fibre of which is scattered by the impact and thrown off in a uniform condition of soft fluff, all dirt being at the same time removed. This is the operation technically known as teasing. Buchanan remarked that women frequently did the work themselves at home, using a smaller kind of bow called *dhunkara*. The clean cotton is made up into balls, some of which are passed on to the spinner, while others are used for the filling of quilts and the padded coats worn in the cold weather. The ingenious though rather clumsy method of the Bahna has been superseded by the ginning-factory, and little or no cotton destined for the spindle is now cleaned by him. The caste have been forced to take to cultivation or field labour, while many have become cartmen and others are brokers, peons or constables. Nearly every house still has its *pinjan* or bow, but only a desultory use is made of this during the winter months. As it is principally used by a Muhammadan caste it seems a possible hypothesis that the cotton-bow was introduced into India by invaders of that religion. The name of the bow, *pinjan*, is, however, a Sanskrit derivative, and this is against the above theory. It has already been seen that the fact of animal sinew being used for the string would make it objectionable to Hindus. The Bahnas are subjected to considerable ridicule on account of their curious mixture of Hindu and Muhammadan ceremonies, amounting in some respects practically to a caricature of the rites of Islām; and further, they share with the weaver class the contempt shown to those who follow a calling considered more suitable for women than men. It is related that when the Mughal general Asaf Khān first made an expedition into the north of the Central Provinces he found the famous Gond-Rājpūt queen Durgāvati of the Garha-Mandla dynasty governing with success a large and

prosperous state in this locality. He thought a country ruled by a woman should fall an easy prey to the Muhammadan arms, and to show his contempt for her power he sent her a golden spindle. The queen retorted by a present of a gold cotton-cleaner's bow, and this so enraged the Mughal that he proceeded to attack the Gond kingdom. The story indicates that cotton-carding is considered a Muhammadan profession, and also that it is held in contempt.

5. Proverbs about Bahnas.

Various sayings show that the Bahna is not considered a proper Muhammadan, as

Turuk to Turuk
Aur Bahna Turuk,

or 'A Muhammadan (Turk) is a Muhammadan and the Bahna is also a Muhammadan'; and again—

Achera,[1] *Kachera, Pinjāra,*
Muhammad se dūr, Dīn se niyāra,

or 'The Kachera and Pinjāra are lost to Muhammad and far from the faith'; and again—

Adho Hindu adho Musalmān
Tinkhon kahen Dhunak Pathān,

or 'Half a Hindu and half a Muhammadan, that is he who is a Dhunak Pathān.' They have a grotesque imitation of the Muhammadan rite of *halāl*, or causing an animal's blood to flow on to the ground with the repetition of the *kalma* or invocation; thus it is said that when a Bahna is about to kill a fowl he addresses it somewhat as follows:

Kāhe karkarāt hai?
Kāhe barbarāt hai?
Kāhe jai jai logon ka dāna khāt hai?
Tor kiāmat mor niāmat,
Bismillāh hai tuch,

or "Why do you cackle? Why do you crow? Why do you eat other people's grain? Your death is my feast; I touch you in the name of God." And saying this he puts a knife to the fowl's throat. The vernacular verse is a good

[1] The word Achera is merely a jingle put in to make the rhyme complete. Kachera is a maker of glass bangles.

imitation of the cackling of a fowl. And again, they slice off the top of an egg as if they were killing an animal and repeat the formula, "White dome, full of moisture, I know not if there is a male or female within; in the name of God I kill you." A person whose memory is not good enough to retain these texts will take a knife and proceed to one who knows them. Such a man will repeat the texts over the knife, blowing on it as he does so, and the Bahna considers that the knife has been sanctified and retains its virtue for a week. Others do not think this necessary, but have a special knife, which having once been consecrated is always kept for killing animals, and descends as an heirloom in the family, the use of this sacred knife being considered to make the repetition of the *kalma* unnecessary. These customs are, however, practised only by the ignorant members of the caste in Raipur and Bilāspur, and are unknown in the more civilised tracts, where the Bahnas are rapidly conforming to ordinary Muhammadan usage. Such primitive Bahnas perform their marriages by walking round the sacred post, keep the Hindu festivals, and feed Brāhmans on the tenth day after a death. They have a priest whom they call their Kāzi, but elect him themselves. In some places when a Bahna goes to the well to draw water he first washes the parapet of the well to make it ceremonially clean, and then draws his water. This custom can only be compared with that of the Rāj-Gonds who wash the firewood with which they are about to cook their food, in order to make it more pure. Respectable Muhammadans naturally look down on the Bahnas, and they retaliate by refusing to take food or water from any Muhammadan who is not a Bahna. By such strictness the more ignorant think that they will enhance their ceremonial purity and hence their social consideration; but the intelligent members of the caste know better and are glad to improve themselves by learning from educated Muhammadans. The other menial artisan castes among the Muhammadans have similar ideas, and it is reported that a Rangrez boy who took food in the house of one of the highest Muhammadan officers of Government in the Province was temporarily put out of caste. Another saying about the Bahnas is—

Sheikhon kī Sheikhi,
Pathānon kī tarr,
Turkon kī Turkshāhi,
Bahnon ki bharrr . . .

or 'Proud as a Sheikh, obstinate as a Pathān, royal as a Turk, buzzing like a Bahna.' This refers to the noise of the cotton-cleaning bow, the twang of which as it is struck by the club is like a quail flying; and at the same time to the Bahna's loquacity. Another story is that a Bahna was once going through the forest with his cotton-cleaning bow and club or mallet, when a jackal met him on the path. The jackal was afraid that the Bahna would knock him on the head, so he said, "With thy bow on thy shoulder and thine arrow in thy hand, whither goest thou, O King of Delhi?" The Bahna was exceedingly pleased at this and replied, 'King of the forest, eater of wild plums, only the great can recognise the great.' But when the jackal had got to a safe distance he turned round and shouted, "With your cotton-bow on your shoulder and your club in your hand, there you go, you sorry Bahna." It is said also that although the Bahnas as good Muhammadans wear beards, they do not cultivate them very successfully, and many of them only have a growth of hair below the chin and none on the under-lip, in the fashion known as a goat's beard. This kind of beard is thus proverbially described as '*Bahna kaisi dārhi*' or 'A Bahna's beard.' It may be repeated in conclusion that much of the ridicule attaching to the Bahnas arises simply from the fact that they follow what is considered a feminine occupation, and the remainder because in their ignorance they parody the rites of Islām. It may seem ill-natured to record the sayings in which they are lampooned, but the Bahnas cannot read English, and these have an interest as specimens of popular wit.

BAIGA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. *The tribe and its offshoots.*
2. *Tribal legends.*
3. *Tribal subdivisions.*
4. *Marriage.*
5. *Birth and funeral rites.*
6. *Religion.*
7. *Appearance and mode of life.*
8. *Dress and food.*
9. *Occupation.*
10. *Language.*

Baiga.[1]—A primitive Dravidian tribe whose home is on the eastern Satpūra hills in the Mandla, Bālāghāt and Bilāspur Districts. The number of the Baigas proper was only 30,000 in 1911. But the Binjhāls or Binjhwārs, a fairly numerous caste in the Chhattīsgarh Division, and especially in the Sambalpur District, appear to have been originally Baigas, though they have dropped the original caste name, become Hinduised, and now disclaim connection with the parent tribe. A reason for this may be found in the fact that Sambalpur contains several Binjhwār zamīndārs, or large landowners, whose families would naturally desire a more respectable pedigree than one giving them the wild Baigas of the Satpūras for their forefathers. And the evolution of the Binjhwār caste is a similar phenomenon to the constitution of the Rāj-Gonds, the Rāj-Korkus, and other aristocratic subdivisions among the forest tribes, who have been admitted to a respectable position in the Hindu social community. The Binjhwārs, however, have been so successful as to cut themselves off almost completely from connection with the original tribe, owing to their adoption of another name. But in Bālāghāt and Mandla the Binjhwār

1. The tribe and its offshoots.

[1] This article is based largely on a monograph by the Rev. J. Lampard, missionary, Baihar, and also on papers by Muhammad Hanīf Siddīqi, forest ranger, Bilāspur, and Mr. Muhammad Ali Haqqāni, B.A., Tahsīldār, Dindori. Some extracts have been made from Colonel Ward's *Mandla Settlement Report* (1869), and from Colonel Bloomfield's *Notes on the Baigas*.

subtribe is still recognised as the most civilised subdivision of the Baigas. The Bhainas, a small tribe in Bilāspur, are probably another offshoot, Kath-Bhaina being the name of a subtribe of Baigas in that District, and Rai-Bhaina in Bālāghāt, though the Bhainas too no longer admit identity with the Baigas. A feature common to all three branches is that they have forgotten their original tongue, and now speak a more or less corrupt form of the Indo-Aryan vernaculars current around them. Finally, the term Bhumia or 'Lord of the soil' is used sometimes as the name of a separate tribe and sometimes as a synonym for Baiga. The fact is that in the Central Provinces[1] Bhumia is the name of an office, that of the priest of the village and local deities, which is held by one of the forest tribes. In the tract where the Baigas live, they, as the most ancient residents, are usually the priests of the indigenous gods; but in Jubbulpore the same office is held by another tribe, the Bharias. The name of the office often attaches itself to members of the tribe, who consider it as somewhat more respectable than their own, and it is therefore generally true to say that the people known as Bhumias in Jubbulpore are really Bharias, but in Mandla and Bilāspur they are Baigas.

In Mandla there is also found a group called Bharia-Baigas. These are employed as village priests by Hindus, and worship certain Hindu deities and not the Gond gods. They may perhaps be members of the Bharia tribe of Jubbulpore, originally derived from the Bhars, who have obtained the designation of Baiga, owing to their employment as village priests. But they now consider themselves a part of the Baiga tribe and say they came to Mandla from Rewah. In Mandla the decision of a Baiga on a boundary dispute is almost always considered as final, and this authority is of a kind that commonly emanates from recognised priority of residence.[2] There seems reason to suppose that the Baigas are really a branch of the primitive Bhuiya tribe of Chota Nāgpur, and that they have taken or been given the name of Baiga, the designation of a village priest, on migration into the Central Provinces. There is reason to

[1] In Bengal the Bhumia or Bhumij are an important tribe.

[2] Colonel Ward's *Mandla Settlement Report* (1868–69), p. 153.

believe that the Baigas were once dominant in the Chhattisgarh plain and the hills surrounding it which adjoin Chota Nāgpur, the home of the Bhuiyas. The considerations in favour of this view are given in the article on Bhuiya, to which reference may be made.

2. Tribal legends.

The Baigas, however, are not without some conceit of themselves, as the following legend will show. In the beginning, they say, God created Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin, the first of the human race, and asked them by what calling they would choose to live. They at once said that they would make their living by felling trees in the jungle, and permission being accorded, have done so ever since. They had two sons, one of whom remained a Baiga, while the other became a Gond and a tiller of the soil. The sons married their own two sisters who were afterwards born, and while the elder couple are the ancestors of the Baigas, from the younger are descended the Gonds and all the remainder of the human race. In another version of the story the first Baiga cut down two thousand old *sāl*[1] trees in one day, and God told him to sprinkle a few grains of kutki on the ashes, and then to retire and sleep for some months, when on his return he would be able to reap a rich harvest for his children. In this manner the habit of shifting cultivation is accorded divine sanction. According to Binjhwār tradition Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin dwelt on the *kajli ban pahār*, which being interpreted is the hill of elephants, and may well refer to the ranges of Mandla and Bilāspur. It is stated in the *Ain-i-Akbari*[2] that the country of Garha-Mandla abounded in wild elephants, and that the people paid their tribute in these and gold mohurs. In Mandla the Baigas sometimes hang out from their houses a bamboo mat fastened to a long pole to represent a flag which they say once flew from the palace of a Baiga king. It seems likely that the original home of the tribe may have been the Chhattīsgarh plain and the hill-ranges surrounding it. A number of estates in these hills are held by landowners of tribes which are offshoots of the Baigas, as the Bhainas and Binjhwārs. The point is

[1] *Shorea robusta.*

[2] Jarrett's *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. ii. p. 196.

further discussed in the article on Bhuiya. Most of the Baigas speak a corrupt form of the Chhattīsgarhi dialect. When they first came under the detailed observation of English officers in the middle of the nineteenth century, the tribe were even more solitary and retired than at present. Their villages, it is said, were only to be found in places far removed from all cleared and cultivated country. No roads or well-defined paths connected them with ordinary lines of traffic and more thickly inhabited tracts, but perched away in snug corners in the hills, and hidden by convenient projecting spurs and dense forests from the country round, they could not be seen except when nearly approached, and were seldom visited unless by occasional enterprising Banias and vendors of country liquor. Indeed, without a Baiga for a guide many of the villages could hardly be discovered, for nothing but occasional notches on the trees distinguished the tracks to them from those of the sāmbhar and other wild animals.

3. Tribal sub-divisions.

The following seven subdivisions or subtribes are recognised: Binjhwār, Bharotia, Narotia or Nāhar, Raibhaina, Kathbhaina, Kondwān or Kundi, and Gondwaina. Of these the Binjhwār, Bharotia and Narotia are the best-known. The name of the Binjhwārs is probably derived from the Vindhyan range, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit *vindhya*, a hunter. The rule of exogamy is by no means strictly observed, and in Kawardha it is said that these three subcastes intermarry though they do not eat together, while in Bālāghāt the Bharotias and Narotias both eat together and intermarry. In both places the Binjhwārs occupy the highest position, and the other two subtribes will take food from them. The Binjhwārs consider themselves as Hindus and abjure the consumption of buffalo's and cow's flesh and rats, while the other Baigas will eat almost anything. The Bharotias partially shave their heads, and in Mandla are apparently known as Mundia or Mudia, or "shaven." The Gondwainas eat both cow's flesh and monkeys, and are regarded as the lowest subcaste. As shown by their name they are probably the offspring of unions between Baigas and Gonds. Similarly the Kondwāns apparently derive their name from the tract south of the

Mahānadi which is named after the Khond tribe, and was formerly owned by them.

Each subtribe is divided into a number of exogamous septs, the names of which are identical in many cases with those of the Gonds, as Markām, Marāvi, Netām, Tekām and others. Gond names are found most frequently among the Gondwainas and Narotias, and these have adopted from the Gonds the prohibition of marriage between worshippers of the same number of gods. Thus the four septs above mentioned worship seven gods and may not intermarry. But they may marry among other septs such as the Dhurua, Pusām, Bania and Mawār who worship six gods. The Baigas do not appear to have assimilated the further division into worshippers of five, four, three and two gods which exists among the Gonds in some localities, and the system is confined to the lower subtribes. The meanings of the sept names have been forgotten and no instances of totemism are known. And the Binjhwārs and Bharotias, who are more or less Hinduised, have now adopted territorial names for their septs, as Lapheya from Lāpha zamīndāri, Ghugharia from Ghughri village in Mandla, and so on. The adoption of Gond names and septs appears to indicate that Gonds were in former times freely admitted into the Baiga tribe; and this continues to be the case at present among the lower subtribes, so far that a Gond girl marrying a Baiga becomes a regular member of the community. But the Binjhwārs and Bharotias, who have a somewhat higher status than the others, refuse to admit Gonds, and are gradually adopting the strict rule of endogamy within the subtribe.

4. Marriage.

A Baiga must not take a wife from his own sept or from another one worshipping the same number of gods. But he may marry within his mother's sept, and in some localities the union of first cousins is permitted. Marriage is adult and the proposal comes from the parents of the bride, but in some places the girl is allowed to select a husband for herself. A price varying from five to twenty rupees is usually paid to the bride's parents, or in lieu of this the prospective husband serves his father-in-law for a period of about two years, the marriage being celebrated after the first year if his conduct is satisfactory. Orphan boys who have no parents to arrange

their marriages for them often take service for a wife. Three ceremonies should precede the marriage. The first, which may take place at any time after the birth of both children, consists merely in the arrangement for their betrothal. The second is only a ratification of the first, feasts being provided by the boy's parents on both occasions. While on the approach of the children to marriageable age the final betrothal or *barokhi* is held. The boy's father gives a large feast at the house of the girl and the date of the wedding is fixed. To ascertain whether the union will be auspicious, two grains of rice are dropped into a pot of water, after various preliminary solemnities to mark the importance of the occasion. If the points of the grains meet almost immediately it is considered that the marriage will be highly auspicious. If they do not meet, a second pair of grains are dropped in, and should these meet it is believed that the couple will quarrel after an interval of married life and that the wife will return to her father's house. While if neither of the two first essays are successful and a third pair is required, the regrettable conclusion is arrived at that the wife will run away with another man after a very short stay with her husband. But it is not stated that the betrothal is on that account annulled. The wedding procession starts from the bridegroom's house[1] and is received by the bride's father outside the village. It is considered essential that he should go out to meet the bride's party riding on an elephant. But as a real elephant is not within the means of a Baiga, two wooden bedsteads are lashed together and covered with blankets with a black cloth trunk in front, and this arrangement passes muster for an elephant. The elephant makes pretence to charge and trample down the marriage procession, until a rupee is paid, when the two parties embrace each other and proceed to the marriage-shed. Here the bride and bridegroom throw fried rice at each other until they are tired, and then walk three or seven times round the marriage-post with their clothes tied together. It is stated by Colonel Ward that the couple always retired to the forest to spend

[1] Colonel Ward gives the bride's house as among the Gonds. But inquiry in Mandla shows that if this custom formerly existed it has been abandoned.

the wedding night, but this custom has now been abandoned. The expenditure on a marriage varies between ten and fifty rupees, of which only about five rupees fall on the bride's parents. The remarriage of widows is permitted, and the widow is expected, though not obliged, to wed her late husband's younger brother, while if she takes another husband he must pay her brother-in-law the sum of five rupees. The ceremony consists merely of the presentation of bangles and new clothes by the suitor, in token of her acceptance of which the widow pours some tepid water stained with turmeric over his head. Divorce may be effected by the husband and wife breaking a straw in the presence of the caste *panchāyat* or committee. If the woman remains in the same village and does not marry again, the husband is responsible for her maintenance and that of her children, while a divorced woman may not remarry without the sanction of the *panchāyat* so long as her husband is alive and remains single. Polygamy is permitted.

5. Birth and funeral rites.

A woman is unclean for a month after childbirth, though the Binjhwārs restrict the period to eight days. At the ceremony of purification a feast is given and the child is named, often after the month or day of its birth, as Chaitu, Phāgu, Saoni, and so on, from the months of Chait, Phāgun and Shrāwan. Children who appear to be physically defective are given names accordingly, such as Langra (lame), or Bahira (deaf). The dead are usually buried, the bodies of old persons being burnt as a special honour and to save them from the risk of being devoured by wild animals. Bodies are laid naked in the grave with the head pointing to the south. In the grave of a man of importance two or three rupees and some tobacco are placed. In some places a rupee is thrust into the mouth of the dying man, and if his body is burnt, the coin is recovered from the pyre by his daughter or sister, who wears it as an amulet. Over the grave a platform is made on which a stone is erected. This is called the Bhīri of the deceased and is worshipped by his relatives in time of trouble. If one of the family has to be buried elsewhere, the relatives go to the Bhīri of the great dead and consign his spirit to be kept in their company. At a funeral the mourners take one black

and one white fowl to a stream and kill and eat them there, setting aside a portion for the dead man. Mourning is observed for a period of from two to nine days, and during this time labour and even household work are stopped, food being supplied by the friends of the family. When a man is killed by a tiger the Baiga priest goes to the spot and there makes a small cone out of the blood-stained earth. This must represent a man, either the dead man or one of his living relatives. His companions having retired a few paces, the priest goes on his hands and knees and performs a series of antics which are supposed to represent the tiger in the act of destroying the man, at the same time seizing the lump of blood-stained earth in his teeth. One of the party then runs up and taps him on the back with a small stick. This perhaps means that the tiger is killed or otherwise rendered harmless; and the Baiga immediately lets the mud cone fall into the hands of one of the party. It is then placed in an ant-hill and a pig is sacrificed over it. The next day a small chicken is taken to the place, and after a mark supposed to be the dead man's name is made on its head with red ochre, it is thrown back into the forest, the priest exclaiming, 'Take this and go home.' The ceremony is supposed to lay the dead man's spirit and at the same time to prevent the tiger from doing any further damage. The Baigas believe that the ghost of the victim, if not charmed to rest, resides on the head of the tiger and incites him to further deeds of blood, rendering him also secure from harm by his preternatural watchfulness.[1]

They also think that they can shut up the tiger's *dār* or jaws, so that he cannot bite them, by driving a nail into a tree. The forest track from Kānha to Kisli in the Banjar forest reserve of Mandla was formerly a haunt of man-eating tigers, to whom a number of the wood-cutters and Baiga coolies, clearing the jungle paths, fell victims every year. In a large tree, at a dangerous point in the track, there could recently be seen a nail, driven into the trunk by a Baiga priest, at some height from the ground. It was said that this nail shut the mouth of a famous man-eating tiger of the locality and prevented him from killing any

[1] Forsyth's *Highlands of Central India*, p. 377.

more victims. As evidence of the truth of the story there were shown on the trunk the marks of the tiger's claws, where he had been jumping up the tree in the effort to pull the nail out of the trunk and get his man-eating powers restored.

6. Religion.

Although the Binjhwār subcaste now profess Hinduism, the religion of the Baigas is purely animistic. Their principal deity is Bura Deo,[1] who is supposed to reside in a *sāj* tree (*Terminalia tomentosa*); he is worshipped in the month of Jeth (May), when goats, fowls, cocoanuts, and the liquor of the new mahua crop are offered to him. Thākur Deo is the god of the village land and boundaries, and is propitiated with a white goat. The Baigas who plough the fields have a ceremony called Bidri, which is performed before the breaking of the rains. A handful of each kind of grain sown is given by each cultivator to the priest, who mixes the grains together and sows a little beneath the tree where Thākur Deo lives. After this he returns a little to each cultivator, and he sows it in the centre of the land on which crops are to be grown, while the priest keeps the remainder. This ceremony is believed to secure the success of the harvest. Dulha Deo is the god who averts disease and accident, and the offering made to him should consist of a fowl or goat of reddish colour. Bhīmsen is the deity of rainfall, and Dharti Māta or Mother Earth is considered to be the wife of Thākur Deo, and must also be propitiated for the success of the crops. The grain itself is worshipped at the threshing floor by sprinkling water and liquor on to it. Certain Hindu deities are also worshipped by the Baigas, but not in orthodox fashion. Thus it would be sacrilege on the part of a Hindu to offer animal sacrifices to Nārāyan Deo, the sun-god, but the Baigas devote to him a special oblation of the most unclean animal, the pig. The animal to be sacrificed is allowed to wander loose for two or three years, and is then killed in a most cruel manner. It is laid across the threshold of a doorway on its back, and across its stomach is placed a stout plank of *sāj*-wood. Half a dozen men sit or stand on the ends of this, and the fore and hind feet of the pig are pulled backwards and forwards alternately over

[1] 'The Great God. The Gonds also worship Bura Deo, resident in a *sāj* tree.'

the plank until it is crushed to death, while all the men sing or shout a sacrificial hymn. The head and feet are cut off and offered to the deity, and the body is eaten. The forests are believed to be haunted by spirits, and in certain localities *pāts* or shrines are erected in their honour, and occasional offerings are made to them. The spirits of married persons are supposed to live in streams, while trees afford a shelter to the souls of the unmarried, who become *bhūts* or malignant spirits after death. Nāg Deo or the cobra is supposed to live in an ant-hill, and offerings are made to him there. Demoniacal possession is an article of faith, and a popular remedy is to burn human hair mixed with chillies and pig's dung near the person possessed, as the horrible smell thus produced will drive away the spirit. Many and weird, Mr. Low writes, are the simples which the Baiga's travelling scrip contains. Among these a dried bat has the chief place; this the Baiga says he uses to charm his nets with, that the prey may catch in them as the bat's claws catch in whatever it touches. As an instance of the Baiga's pantheism it may be mentioned that on one occasion when a train of the new Satpūra railway[1] had pulled up at a way-side forest station, a Baiga was found offering a sacrifice to the engine. Like other superstitious people they are great believers in omens. A single crow bathing in a stream is a sign of death. A cock which crows in the night should be instantly killed and thrown into the darkness, a custom which some would be glad to see introduced into much more civilised centres. The woodpecker and owl are birds of bad omen. The Baigas do not appear to have any idea of a fresh birth, and one of their marriage songs says, "O girl, take your pleasure in going round the marriage-post once and for all, for there is no second birth." The Baigas are generally the priests of the Gonds, probably because being earlier residents of the country they are considered to have a more intimate acquaintance with the local deities. They have a wide knowledge of the medicinal properties of jungle roots and herbs, and are often successful in effecting cures when the regular native doctors have failed. Their village priests have consequently a considerable reputation as skilled

[1] Opened in 1905.

sorcerers and persons conversant with the unseen world. A case is known of a Brāhman transferred to a jungle station, who immediately after his arrival called in a Baiga priest and asked what forest gods he should worship, and what other steps he should take to keep well and escape calamity. Colonel Ward states that in his time Baigas were commonly called in to give aid when a town or village was attacked by cholera, and further that he had seen the greatest benefit to result from their visit. For the people had so much confidence in their powers and ceremonies that they lost half their fright at once, and were consequently not so much predisposed to an attack of the disease. On such an occasion the Baiga priest goes round the village and pulls out a little straw from each house-roof, afterwards burning the whole before the shrine of Khermāta, the goddess of the village, to whom he also offers a chicken for each homestead. If this remedy fails goats are substituted for chickens, and lastly, as a forlorn hope, pigs are tried, and, as a rule, do not fail, because by this time the disease may be expected to have worked itself out. It is suggested that the chicken represents a human victim from each house, while the straw stands for the house itself, and the offering has the common idea of a substituted victim.

7. Appearance and mode of life.

In stature the Baigas are a little taller than most other tribes, and though they have a tendency to the flat nose of the Gonds, their foreheads and the general shape of their heads are of a better mould. Colonel Ward states that the members of the tribe inhabiting the Maikal range in Mandla are a much finer race than those living nearer the open country.[1] Their figures are very nearly perfect, says Colonel Bloomfield,[2] and their wiry limbs, unburdened by superfluous flesh, will carry them over very great distances and over places inaccessible to most human beings, while their compact bodies need no other nutriment than the scanty fare afforded by their native forests. They are born hunters, hardy and active in the chase, and exceedingly bold and courageous. In character they are naturally simple, honest and truthful, and when their fear of a stranger has been

[1] *Mandla Settlement Report* (1868–69), p. 153.
[2] *Notes on the Baigas*, p. 4.

dissipated are most companionable folk. A small hut, 6 or 7 feet high at the ridge, made of split bamboos and mud, with a neat veranda in front thatched with leaves and grass, forms the Baiga's residence, and if it is burnt down, or abandoned on a visitation of epidemic disease, he can build another in the space of a day. A rough earthen vessel to hold water, leaves for plates, gourds for drinking-vessels, a piece of matting to sleep on, and a small axe, a sickle and a spear, exhaust the inventory of the Baiga's furniture, and the money value of the whole would not exceed a rupee.[1] The Baigas never live in a village with other castes, but have their huts some distance away from the village in the jungle. Unlike the other tribes also, the Baiga prefers his house to stand alone and at some little distance from those of his fellow-tribesmen. While nominally belonging to the village near which they dwell, so separate and distinct are they from the rest of people that in the famine of 1897 cases were found of starving Baiga hamlets only a few hundred yards away from the village proper in which ample relief was being given. On being questioned as to why they had not caused the Baigas to be helped, the other villagers said, 'We did not remember them'; and when the Baigas were asked why they did not apply for relief, they said, 'We did not think it was meant for Baigas.'

8. Dress and food.

Their dress is of the most simple description, a small strip of rag between the legs and another wisp for a head-covering sufficing for the men, though the women are decently covered from their shoulders to half-way between the thighs and knees. A Baiga may be known by his scanty clothing and tangled hair, and his wife by the way in which her single garment is arranged so as to provide a safe sitting-place in it for her child. Baiga women have been seen at work in the field transplanting rice with babies comfortably seated in their cloth, one sometimes supported on either hip with their arms and legs out, while the mother was stooping low, hour after hour, handling the rice plants. A girl is tattooed on the forehead at the age of five, and over her whole body before she is married, both for the sake of ornament and because the practice is considered beneficial to the health.

[1] Mr. Lampard's monograph.

Bemrose Collo., Derby.

BAIGA VILLAGE, BĀLĀGHĀT DISTRICT.

The Baigas are usually without blankets or warm clothing, and in the cold season they sleep round a wood fire kept burning or smouldering all night, stray sparks from which may alight on their tough skins without being felt. Mr. Lampard relates that on one occasion a number of Baiga men were supplied by the Mission under his charge with large new cloths to cover their bodies with and make them presentable on appearance in church. On the second Sunday, however, they came with their cloths burnt full of small holes; and they explained that the damage had been done at night while they were sleeping round the fire.

A Baiga, Mr. Lampard continues, is speedily discerned in a forest village bazār, and is the most interesting object in it. His almost nude figure, wild, tangled hair innocent of such inventions as brush or comb, lithe wiry limbs and jungly and uncivilised appearance, mark him out at once. He generally brings a few mats or baskets which he has made, or fruits, roots, honey, horns of animals, or other jungle products which he has collected, for sale, and with the sum obtained (a few pice or annas at the most) he proceeds to make his weekly purchases, changing his pice into cowrie shells, of which he receives eighty for each one. He buys tobacco, salt, chillies and other sundries, besides as much of kodon, kutki, or perhaps rice, as he can afford, always leaving a trifle to be expended at the liquor shop before departing for home. The various purchases are tied up in the corners of the bit of rag twisted round his head. Unlike pieces of cloth known to civilisation, which usually have four corners, the Baiga's headgear appears to be nothing but corners, and when the shopping is done the strip of rag may have a dozen minute bundles tied up in it.

In Baihar of Bālāghāt buying and selling are conducted on perhaps the most minute scale known, and if a Baiga has one or two pice[1] to lay out he will spend no inconsiderable time over it. Grain is sold in small measures holding about four ounces called *baraiyas*, but each of these has a layer of mud at the bottom of varying degrees of thickness, so as to reduce its capacity. Before a purchase can be made it must be settled by whose *baraiya* the grain is to be measured, and

[1] Farthings.

the seller and purchaser each refuse the other's as being unfair to himself, until at length after discussion some neutral person's *baraiya* is selected as a compromise. Their food consists largely of forest fruits and roots with a scanty allowance of rice or the light millets, and they can go without nourishment for periods which appear extraordinary to civilised man. They eat the flesh of almost all animals, though the more civilised abjure beef and monkeys. They will take food from a Gond but not from a Brāhman. The Baiga dearly loves the common country liquor made from the mahua flower, and this is consumed as largely as funds will permit of at weddings, funerals and other social gatherings, and also if obtainable at other times. They have a tribal *panchāyat* or committee which imposes penalties for social offences, one punishment being the abstention from meat for a fixed period. A girl going wrong with a man of the caste is punished by a fine, but cases of unchastity among unmarried Baiga girls are rare. Among their pastimes dancing is one of the chief, and in their favourite dance, known as *karma*, the men and women form long lines opposite to each other with the musicians between them. One of the instruments, a drum called *māndar*, gives out a deep bass note which can be heard for miles. The two lines advance and retire, everybody singing at the same time, and when the dancers get fully into the time and swing, the pace increases, the drums beat furiously, the voices of the singers rise higher and higher, and by the light of the bonfires which are kept burning the whole scene is wild in the extreme.

9. Occupation.

The Baigas formerly practised only shifting cultivation, burning down patches of jungle and sowing seed on the ground fertilised by the ashes after the breaking of the rains. Now that this method has been prohibited in Government forest, attempts have been made to train them to regular cultivation, but with indifferent success in Bālāghāt. An idea of the difficulties to be encountered may be obtained from the fact that in some villages the Baiga cultivators, if left unwatched, would dig up the grain which they had themselves sown as seed in their fields and eat it; while the plough-cattle which were given to them invariably developed diseases in spite of all precautions, as a result of

which they found their way sooner or later to the Baiga's cooking-pot. But they are gradually adopting settled habits, and in Mandla, where a considerable block of forest was allotted to them in which they might continue their destructive practice of shifting sowings, it is reported that the majority have now become regular cultivators. One explanation of their refusal to till the ground is that they consider it a sin to lacerate the breast of their mother earth with a ploughshare. They also say that God made the jungle to produce everything necessary for the sustenance of men and made the Baigas kings of the forest, giving them wisdom to discover the things provided for them. To Gonds and others who had not this knowledge, the inferior occupation of tilling the land was left. The men never become farmservants, but during the cultivating season they work for hire at uprooting the rice seedlings for transplantation; they do no other agricultural labour for others. Women do the actual transplantation of rice and work as harvesters. The men make bamboo mats and baskets, which they sell in the village weekly markets. They also collect and sell honey and other forest products, and are most expert at all work that can be done with an axe, making excellent woodcutters. But they show no aptitude in acquiring the use of any other implement, and dislike steady continuous labour, preferring to do a few days' work and then rest in their homes for a like period before beginning again. Their skill and dexterity in the use of the axe in hunting is extraordinary. Small deer, hares and peacocks are often knocked over by throwing it at them, and panthers and other large animals are occasionally killed with a single blow. If one of two Baigas is carried off by a tiger, the survivor will almost always make a determined and often successful attempt to rescue him with nothing more formidable than an axe or a stick. They are expert trackers, and are also clever at setting traps and snares, while, like Korkus, they catch fish by damming streams in the hot weather and throwing into the pool thus formed some leaf or root which stupefies them. Even in a famine year, Mr. Low says, a Baiga can collect a large basketful of roots in a single day; and if the bamboo seeds he is amply provided for. Nowadays Baiga cultivators may occasionally be met

with who have taken to regular cultivation and become quite prosperous, owning a number of cattle.

10. Language.

As already stated, the Baigas have completely forgotten their own language, and in the Satpūra hills they speak a broken form of Hindi, though they have a certain number of words and expressions peculiar to the caste.

BAIRĀGI

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. *Definition of name and statistics.*
2. *The four Sampradāyas or main orders.*
3. *The Rāmānujis.*
4. *The Rāmānandis.*
5. *The Nimānandis.*
6. *The Mādhavachāryas.*
7. *The Vallabhachāryas.*
8. *Minor sects.*
9. *The seven Akhāras.*
10. *The Dwāras.*
11. *Initiation, appearance and customs.*
12. *Recruitment of the order and its character.*
13. *Social position and customs.*
14. *Bairāgi monasteries.*
15. *Married Bairāgis.*

Bairāgi,[1] **Sādhu.**—The general term for members of the Vishnuite religious orders, who formerly as a rule lived by mendicancy. The Bairāgis have now, however, become a caste. In 1911 they numbered 38,000 persons in the Provinces, being distributed over all Districts and States. The name Bairāgi is supposed to come from the Sanskrit Vairāgya and to signify one who is free from human passions. Bairāga is also the term for the crutched stick which such mendicants frequently carry about with them and lean upon, either sitting or standing, and which in case of need would serve them as a weapon. Platts considers[2] that the name of the order comes from the Sanskrit abstract term, and the crutch therefore apparently obtained its name from being used by members of the order. Properly, a religious mendicant of any Vishnuite sect should be called a Bairāgi. But the term is not generally applied to the more distinctive sects as the Kabīrpanthi, Swāmi-Nārāyan, Satnāmi and others, some of which are almost separated from Hinduism,

1. Definition of name and statistics.

[1] This article contains material from Sir E. Maclagan's *Punjab Census Report* (1891), and Dr. J. N. Bhattacharya's *Hindu Castes and Sects* (Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta).

[2] *Dictionary*, s.v.

nor to the Sikh religious orders, nor the Chaitanya sect of Bengal. A proper Bairāgi is one whose principal deity is either Vishnu or either of his great incarnations, Rāma and Krishna.

2. The four Sampradāyas or main orders.

It is generally held that there are four Sampradāyas or main sects of Bairāgis. These are—

(*a*) The Rāmānujis, the followers of the first prominent Vishnuite reformer Rāmānuj in southern India, with whom are classed the Rāmānandis or adherents of his great disciple Rāmānand in northern India. Both these are also called Sri Vaishnava, that is, the principal or original Vaishnava sect.

(*b*) The Nimānandi, Nimāt or Nimbaditya sect, followers of a saint called Nimānand.

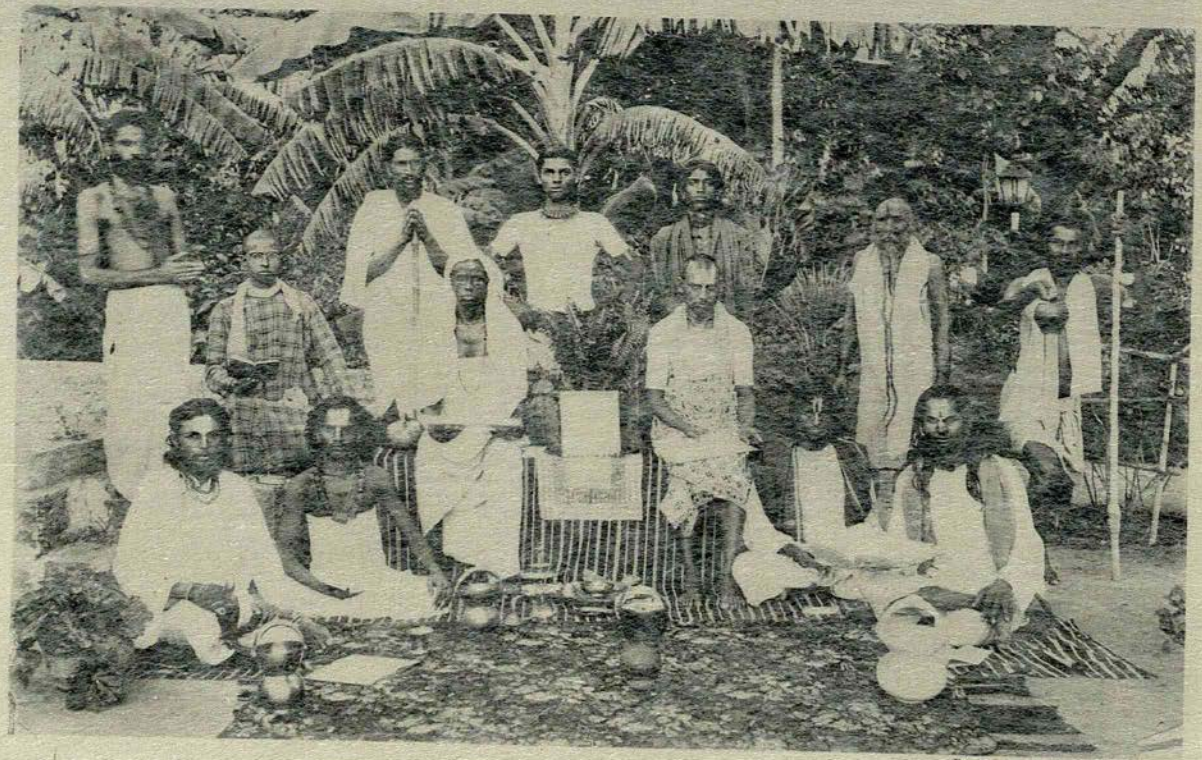
(*c*) The Vishnu-Swāmi or Vallabhachārya sect, worshippers of Krishna and Rādha.

(*d*) The Mādhavachārya sect of southern India.

It will be desirable to give a few particulars of each of these, mainly taken from Wilson's *Hindu Sects* and Dr. Bhattachārya's *Hindu Castes and Sects*.

3. The Rāmānujis.

Rāmānuj was the first great Vishnuite prophet, and lived in southern India in the eleventh or twelfth century on an island in the Kāveri river near Trichinopoly. He preached the worship of a supreme spirit, Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi, and taught that men also had souls or spirits, and that matter was lifeless. He was a strong opponent of the cult of Siva, then predominant in southern India, and of phallic worship. He, however, admitted only the higher castes into his order, and cannot therefore be considered as the founder of the liberalising principle of Vishnuism. The superiors of the Rāmānuja sect are called Achārya, and rank highest among the priests of the Vishnuite orders. The most striking feature in the practice of the Rāmānujis is the separate preparation and scrupulous privacy of their meals. They must not eat in cotton garments, but must bathe, and then put on wool or silk. The teachers allow their select pupils to assist them, but in general all the Rāmānujis cook for themselves, and should the meal during this process, or while they are eating, attract even the look of a stranger, the operation is instantly stopped and the viands buried in the



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HINDU MENDICANTS WITH SECT MARKS.

ground. The Rāmānujis address each other with the salutation Dasoham, or 'I am your slave,' accompanied with the Pranām or slight inclination of the head and the application of joined hands to the forehead. To the Achāryas or superiors the other members of the sect perform the Ashtanga or prostration of the body with eight parts touching the ground. The *tilak* or sect-mark of the Rāmānujis consists of two perpendicular white lines from the roots of the hair to the top of the eyebrows, with a connecting white line at the base, and a third central line either of red or yellow. The Rāmānujis do not recognise the worship of Rādha, the consort of Krishna. The mendicant orders of the Sātanis and Dasaris of southern India are branches of this sect.

4. The Rāmānandis.

Rāmānand, the great prophet of Vishnuism in northern India, and the real founder of the liberal doctrines of the cult, lived at Benāres at the end of the fourteenth century, and is supposed to have been a follower of Rāmānuj. He introduced, however, a great extension of his predecessor's gospel in making his sect, nominally at least, open to all castes. He thus initiated the struggle against the social tyranny and exclusiveness of the caste system, which was carried to greater lengths by his disciples and successors, Kabīr, Nānak, Dādu, Rai Dās and others. These afterwards proclaimed the worship of one unseen god who could not be represented by idols, and the religious equality of all men, their tenets no doubt being considerably influenced by their observance of Islām, which had now become a principal religion of India. Rāmānand himself did not go so far, and remained a good Hindu, inculcating the special worship of Rāma and his consort Sīta. The Rāmānandis consider the Rāmāyana as their most sacred book, and make pilgrimages to Ajodhia and Rāmnath.[1] Their sect-mark consists of two white lines down the forehead with a red one between, but they are continued on to the nose, ending in a loop, instead of terminating at the line of the eyebrows, like that of the Rāmānujis. The Rāmānandis say that the mark on the nose represents the Singāsun or lion's throne, while the two white lines up the forehead are Rāma and Lakhshman, and

[1] Sir E. Maclagan's *Punjab Census Report* (1891), p. 122.

the centre red one is Sīta. Some of their devotees wear ochre-coloured clothes like the Sivite mendicants.

5. The Nimānandis.

The second of the four orders is that of the Nīmānandis, called after a saint Nīmānand. He lived near Mathura Brindāban, and on one occasion was engaged in religious controversy with a Jain ascetic till sunset. He then offered his visitor some refreshment, but the Jain could not eat anything after sunset, so Nīmānand stopped the sun from setting, and ordered him to wait above a *nīm* tree till the meal was cooked and eaten under the tree, and this direction the sun duly obeyed. Hence Nīmānand, whose original name was Bhāskarachārya, was called by his new name after the tree, and was afterwards held to have been an incarnation of Vishnu or the Sun.

The doctrines of the sect, Mr. Growse states,[1] are of a very enlightened character." Thus their tenet of salvation by faith is thought by many scholars to have been directly derived from the Gospels; while another article in their creed is the continuance of conscious individual existence in a future world, when the highest reward of the good will not be extinction, but the enjoyment of the visible presence of the divinity whom they have served while on earth. The Nīmānandis worship Krishna, and were the first sect, Dr. Bhattachārya states,[2] to associate with him as a divine consort Rādha, the chief partner of his illicit loves.

Their headquarters are at Muttra, and their chief festival is the Janam-Ashtami[3] or Krishna's birthday. Their sect-mark consists of two white lines down the forehead with a black patch in the centre, which is called Shiāmbindini. Shiām means black, and is a name of Krishna. They also sometimes have a circular line across the nose, which represents the moon.

6. The Mādhavachāryas.

The third great order is that of the Mādhavas, named after a saint called Mādhavachārya in southern India. He attempted to reconcile the warring Sivites and Vishnuites by combining the worship of Krishna with that of Siva

[1] *Memoir of Mathura.*

[2] *Hindu Castes and Sects*, p. 449.

[3] Lit. the birth on the eighth day, as Krishna was born on the 8th of dark Bhādon.

and Pārvati. The doctrine of the sect is that the human soul is different from the divine soul, and its members are therefore called dualists. They admit a distinction between the divine soul and the universe, and between the human soul and the material world. They deny also the possibility of Nirvāna or the absorption and extinction of the human soul in the divine essence. They destroy their thread at initiation, and also wear red clothes like the Sivite devotees, and like them also they carry a staff and water-pot. The *tilak* of the Mādhavachāryas is said to consist of two white lines down the forehead and continued on to the nose where they meet, with a black vertical line between them.

7. The Vallabhachāryas.

The fourth main order is the Vishnu-Swāmi, which is much better known as the Vallabhachārya sect, called after its founder Vallabha, who was born in A.D. 1479. The god Krishna appeared to him and ordered him to marry and set up a shrine to the god at Gokul near Mathura (Muttra). The sect worship Krishna in his character of Bāla Gopāla or the cowherd boy. Their temples are numerous all over India, and especially at Mathura and Brindāban, where Krishna was brought up as a cowherd. The temples at Benāres, Jagannāth and Dwārka are rich and important, but the most celebrated shrine is at Sri Nāthadwāra in Mewār. The image is said to have transported itself thither from Mathura, when Aurāngzeb ordered its temple at Mathura to be destroyed. Krishna is here represented as a little boy in the act of supporting the mountain Govardhan on his finger to shelter the people from the storms of rain sent by Indra. The image is splendidly dressed and richly decorated with ornaments to the value of several thousand pounds. The images of Krishna in the temples are commonly known as Thākurji, and are either of stone or brass. At all Vallabhachārya temples there are eight daily services: the Mangala or morning *levée*, a little after sunrise, when the god is taken from his couch and bathed; the Sringāra, when he is attired in his jewels and seated on his throne; the Gwāla, when he is supposed to be starting to graze his cattle in the woods of Braj; the Rāj Bhog or midday meal, which, after presentation, is consumed by the priests and votaries

who have assisted at the ceremonies; the Uttāpan, about three o'clock, when the god awakes from his siesta; the Bhog or evening collation; the Sandhiya or disrobing at sunset; and the Sayan or retiring to rest. The ritual is performed by the priests and the lay worshipper is only a spectator, who shows his reverence by the same forms as he would to a human superior.[1]

The priests of the sect are called Gokalastha Gosain or Mahārāja. They are considered to be incarnations of the god, and divine honours are paid to them. They always marry, and avow that union with the god is best obtained by indulgence in all bodily enjoyments. This doctrine has led to great licentiousness in some groups of the sect, especially on the part of the priests or Mahārājas. Women were taught to believe that the service of and contact with the priest were the most real form of worshipping the god, and that intercourse with him was equivalent to being united with the god. Dr. Bhattachārya quotes[2] the following tariff for the privilege of obtaining different degrees of contact with the body of the Mahārāja or priest:

For homage by sight . . .	Rs. 5.
For homage by touch . . .	Rs. 20.
For the honour of washing the Mahārāja's foot	Rs. 35.
For swinging him	Rs. 40.
For rubbing sweet unguents on his body	Rs. 42.
For being allowed to sit with him on the same couch . . .	Rs. 60.
For the privilege of dancing with him	Rs. 100 to 200.
For drinking the water in which he has bathed	Rs. 17.
For being closeted with him in the same room	Rs. 50 to 500.

The public disapprobation caused by these practices

[1] Mr. Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Vallabhachārya.
[2] *Hindu Castes and Sects*, p. 457.

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ANCHORITE SITTING ON IRON NAILS.

and their bad effect on the morality of women culminated in the great Mahārāj libel suit in the Bombay High Court in 1862. Since then the objectionable features of the cult have to a large extent disappeared, while it has produced some priests of exceptional liberality and enlightenment. The *tilak* of the Vallabhachāryas is said to consist of two white lines down the forehead, forming a half-circle at its base and a white dot between them. They will not admit the lower castes into the order, but only those from whom a Brāhman can take water.

8. Minor sects.

Besides the main sects as described above, Vaishnavism has produced many minor sects, consisting of the followers of some saint of special fame, and mendicants belonging to these are included in the body of Bairāgis. One or two legends concerning such saints may be given. A common order is that of the Bendiwāle, or those who wear a dot. Their founder began putting a red dot on his forehead between the two white lines in place of the long red line of the Rāmānandis. His associates asked him why he had dared to alter his *tilak* or sect-mark. He said that the goddess Jānki had given him the dot, and as a test he went and bathed in the Sarju river, and rubbed his forehead with water, and all the sect-mark was rubbed out except the dot. So the others recognised the special intervention of the goddess, and he founded a sect. Another sect is called the Chaturbhuji or four-armed, Chaturbhuj being an epithet of Vishnu. He was taking part in a feast when his loin-cloth came undone behind, and the others said to him that as this had happened, he had become impure at the feast. He replied, 'Let him to whom the *dhoti* belongs tie it up,' and immediately four arms sprang from his body, and while two continued to take food, the other two tied up his loin-cloth behind. Thus it was recognised that the Chaturbhuji Vishnu had appeared in him, and he was venerated.

9. The seven Akhāras.

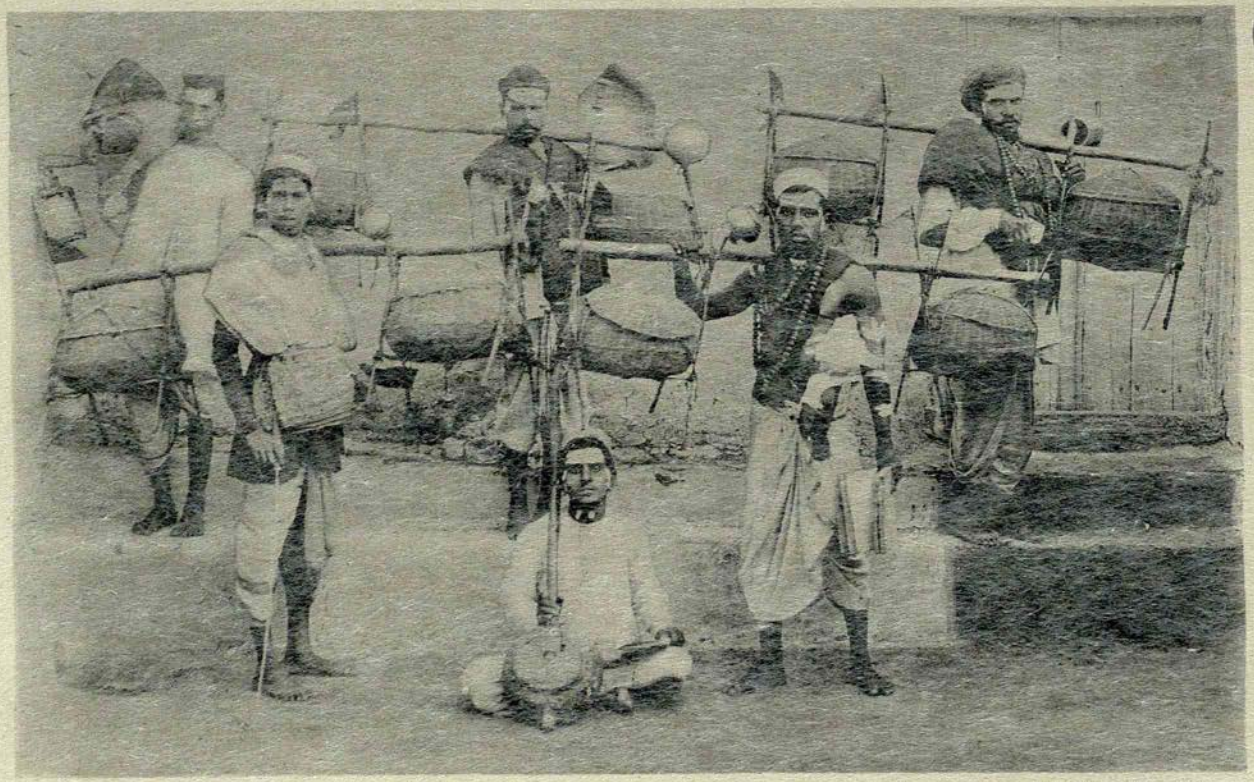
Among the Bairāgis, besides the four Sampradāyas or main orders, there are seven Akhāras. These are military divisions or schools for training, and were instituted when the Bairāgis had to fight with the Gosains. Any member of one of the four Sampradāyas can belong to any one of the seven Akhāras, and a man can change his Akhāra as

often as he likes, but not his Sampradāya. The Akhāras, with the exception of the Lasgaris, who change the red centre line of the Rāmānandis into a white line, have no special sect-marks. They are distinguished by their flags or standards, which are elaborately decorated with gold thread embroidered on silk or sometimes with jewels, and cost two or three hundred rupees to prepare. These standards were carried by the Nāga or naked members of the Akhāra, who went in front and fought. Once in twelve years a great meeting of all the seven Akhāras is held at Allahābād, Nāsik, Ujjain or Hardwār, where they bathe and wash the image of the god in the water of the holy rivers. The quarrels between the Bairāgis and Gosains usually occurred at the sacred rivers, and the point of contention was which sect should bathe first. The following is a list of the seven Akhāras: Digambari, Khāki, Munjia, Kathia, Nirmohi, Nirbāni or Niranjani and Lasgari.

The name of the Digamber or Meghdamber signifies sky-clad or cloud-clad, that is naked. They do penance in the rainy season by sitting naked in the rain for two or three hours a day with an earthen pot on the head and the hands inserted in two others so that they cannot rub the skin. In the dry season they wear only a little cloth round the waist and ashes over the rest of the body. The ashes are produced from burnt cowdung picked up off the ground, and not mixed with straw like that which is prepared for fuel.

The Khāki Bairāgis also rub ashes on the body. During the four hot months they make five fires in a circle, and kneel between them with the head and legs and arms stretched towards the fires. The fires are kindled at noon with little heaps of cowdung cakes, and the penitent stays between them till they go out. They also have a block of wood with a hole through it, into which they insert the organ of generation and suspend it by chains in front and behind. They rub ashes on the body, from which they probably get their name of Khāki or dust-colour.

The Munjia Akhāra have a belt made of *munj* grass round the waist, and a little apron also of grass, which is hung from it, and passed through the legs. Formerly they



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PILGRIMS CARRYING WATER OF THE RIVER NERBUDDA.