Nishāda or Chandāl father and a Vaideha[1] mother. So that the local story may be a corruption of the Brāhmanical tradition. Another legend relates that in the beginning there were no bamboos, and the first Basor took the serpent which Siva wore round his neck and going to a hill planted it with its head in the ground. A bamboo at once sprang up on the spot, and from this the Basor made the first winnowing fan. And the snake-like root of the bamboo, which no doubt suggested the story to its composer, is now adduced in proof of it.

3. Subdivisions.

The Basors of the northern Districts are divided into a number of subcastes, the principal of which are: the Purānia or Juthia, who perhaps represent the oldest section, Purānia being from *purāna* old; they are called Juthia because they eat the leavings of others; the Barmaiya or Malaiya, apparently a territorial group; the Deshwāri or Bundelkhandi who reside in the *desh* or native place of Bundelkhand; the Gūdha or Gūrha, the name being derived by some from *gūda* a pigsty; the Dumār or Dom Basors; the Dhubela, perhaps from the Dhobi caste; and the Dharkār. Two or three of the above names appear to be those of other low castes from which the Basor caste may have been recruited, perhaps at times when a strong demand existed for bamboo-workers. The Buruds do not appear to be sufficiently numerous to have subcastes. But they include a few Telenga Buruds who are really Medaras, and the caste proper are therefore sometimes known as Marātha Buruds to distinguish them from these. The caste has numerous *bainks* or exogamous groups or septs, the names of which may chiefly be classified as territorial and totemistic. Among the former are Mahobia, from the town of Mahoba; Sirmaiya, from Sirmau; Orahia, from Orai, the battlefield of the Banāphar generals, Alha and Udal; Tikarahia from Tikāri, and so on. The totemistic septs include the Sānpero from *sānp* a snake, the Mangrelo from *mangra* a crocodile, the Morya from *mor* a peacock, the Titya from the *titehri* bird and the Sarkia from *sarki* or red ochre, all of which worship their respective totems. The Katarya or 'dagger' sept worship a real or painted dagger at their marriage, and the Kemia, a branch

[1] A Vaideha was the child of a Vaishya father and a Brāhman mother.

of the *kem* tree (*Stephegyne parvifolia*). The Bandrelo, from *bandar*, worship a painted monkey. One or two groups are named after castes, as Bamhnelo from Brāhman and Bargujaria from Bargūjar Rājpūt, thus indicating that members of these castes became Basors and founded families. One sept is called Marha from Marhai, the goddess of cholera, and the members worship a picture of the goddess drawn in black. The name of the Kulhāntia sept means somersault, and these turn a somersault before worshipping their gods. So strong is the totemistic idea that some of the territorial groups worship objects with similar names. Thus the Mahobia group, whose name is undoubtedly derived from the town of Mahoba, have adopted the mahua tree as their totem, and digging a small hole in the ground place in it a little water and the liquor made from mahua flowers, and worship it. This represents the process of distillation of country liquor. Similarly, the Orahia group, who derive their name from the town of Orai, now worship the *urai* or *khaskhas* grass, and the Tikarahia from Tikāri worship a *tikli* or glass spangle.

4. Marriage. The marriage of persons belonging to the same *bainh* or sept and also that of first cousins is forbidden. The age of marriage is settled by convenience, and no stigma attaches to its postponement beyond adolescence. Intrigues of unmarried girls with men of their own or any higher caste are usually overlooked. The ceremony follows the standard Hindi and Marāthi forms, and presents no special features. A bride-price called *chāri*, amounting to seven or eight rupees, is usually paid. In Betūl the practice of *lamjhana*, or serving the father-in-law for a term of years before marrying his daughter, is sometimes followed. Widow-marriage is permitted, and the widow is expected to wed her late husband's younger brother. The Basors are musicians by profession, but in Betūl the *narsingha*, a peculiar kind of crooked trumpet, is the only implement which may be played at the marriage of a widow. A woman marrying a second time forfeits all interest in the property of her late husband, unless she is without issue and there are no near relatives of her husband to take it. Divorce is effected by the breaking of the woman's bangles in public. If obtained by the wife,

Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

BASORS MAKING BASKETS OF BAMBOO.

she must repay to her first husband the expenditure incurred by him for her marriage when she takes a second. But the acceptance of this payment is considered derogatory and the husband refuses it unless he is poor.

3. Religion and social status.

The Basors worship the ordinary Hindu deities and also ghosts and spirits. Like the other low castes they entertain a special veneration for Devi. They profess to exorcise evil spirits and the evil eye, and to cure other disorders and diseases through the agency of their incantations and the goblins who do their bidding. They burn their dead when they can afford it and otherwise bury them, placing the corpse in the grave with its head to the north. The body of a woman is wrapped in a red shroud and that of a man in a white one. They observe mourning for a period of three to ten days, but in Jubbulpore it always ends with the fortnight in which the death takes place; so that a person dying on the 15th or 30th of the month is mourned only for one day. They eat almost every kind of food, including beef, pork, fowls, liquor and the leavings of others, but abjure crocodiles, monkeys, snakes and rats. Many of them have now given up eating cow's flesh in deference to Hindu feeling. They will take food from almost any caste except sweepers, and one or two others, as Joshi and Jasondhi, towards whom for some unexplained reason they entertain a special aversion. They will admit outsiders belonging to any caste from whom they can take food into the community. They are generally considered as impure, and live outside the village, and their touch conveys pollution, more especially in the Marātha Districts. The ordinary village menials, as the barber and washerman, will not work for them, and services of this nature are performed by men of their own community. As, however, their occupation is not in itself unclean, they rank above sweepers, Chamārs and Dhobis. Temporary exclusion from caste is imposed for the usual offences, and the almost invariable penalty for readmission is a feast to the caste-fellows. A person, male or female, who has been convicted of adultery must have the head shaved, and is then seated in the centre of the caste-fellows and pelted by them with the leavings of their food. Basor women are not permitted to wear nose-rings on pain of exclusion from caste.

6. Occupation.

The trade of the Basors is a very essential one to the agricultural community. They make numerous kinds of baskets, among which may be mentioned the *chunka*, a very small one, the *tokni*, a basket of middle size, and the *tokna*, a very large one. The *dauri* is a special basket with a lining of matting for washing rice in a stream. The *jhānpi* is a round basket with a cover for holding clothes; the *tipanna* a small one in which girls keep dolls; and the *bilahra* a still smaller one for holding betel-leaf. Other articles made from bamboo-bark are the *chalni* or sieve, the *khunkhuna* or rattle, the *bānsuri* or wooden flute, the *bijna* or fan, and the *sūpa* or winnowing-fan. All grain is cleaned with the help of the *sūpa* both on the threshing-floor and in the house before consumption, and a child is always laid in one as soon as it is born. In towns the Basors make the bamboo matting which is so much used. The only implement they employ is the *bānka*, a heavy curved knife, with which all the above articles are made. The *bānka* is duly worshipped at the Diwāli festival. The Basors are also the village musicians, and a band of three or four of them play at weddings and on other festive occasions. Some of them work as pig-breeders and others are village watchmen. The women often act as midwives. One subcaste, the Dumār, will do scavenger's work, but they never take employment as *saises*, because the touch of horse-dung is considered as a pollution, entailing temporary excommunication from caste.

1. General notice.

Bedar.[1]—A small caste of about 1500 persons, belonging to Akola, Khāndesh and Hyderābād. Their ancestors were Pindāris, apparently recruited from the different Marātha castes, and when the Pindāris were suppressed they obtained or were awarded land in the localities where they now reside, and took to cultivation. The more respectable Bedars say that their ancestors were Tirole Kunbis, but when Tipu Sultān invaded the Carnatic he took many of them prisoners and ordered them to become Muhammadans. In order to please him they took food with Muhammadans,

[1] Based on a paper by Rao Sahib Dhonduji, retired Inspector of Police, Akola, and information collected by Mr. Adurām Chaudhri of the Gazetteer office.

and on this account the Kunbis put them out of caste until they should purify themselves. But as there were a large number of them, they did not do this, and have remained a separate caste. The real derivation of the name is unknown, but the caste say that it is *be-dar* or 'without fear,' and was given to them on account of their bravery. They have now obtained a warrant from the descendant of Shankar Achārya, or the high priest of Sivite Hindus, permitting them to describe themselves as Pūt Kunbi or purified Kunbi.[1] The community is clearly of a most mixed nature, as there are also Dher or Mahār Bedars. They refuse to take food from other Mahārs and consider themselves defiled by their touch. The social position of the caste also presents some peculiar features. Several of them have taken service in the army and police, and have risen to the rank of native officer; and Rao Sāhib Dhonduji, a retired Inspector of Police, is a prominent member of the caste. The Rāja of Surpur, near Raichur, is also said to be a Bedar, while others are ministerial officials occupying a respectable position. Yet of the Bedars generally it is said that they cannot draw water freely from the public wells, and in Nāsik Bedar constables are not considered suitable for ordinary duty, as people object to their entering houses. The caste must therefore apparently have higher and lower groups, differing considerably in position.

2. Subdivisions and marriage customs.

They have three subdivisions, the Marātha, Telugu and Kande Bedars. The names of their exogamous sections are also Marāthi. Nevertheless they retain one or two northern customs, presumably acquired from association with the Pindāris. Their women do not tuck the body-cloth in behind the waist, but draw it over the right shoulder. They wear the *choli* or Hindustāni breast-cloth tied in front, and have a hooped silver ornament on the top of the head, which is known as *dhora*. They eat goats, fowls and the flesh of the wild pig, and drink liquor, and will take food from a Kunbi or a Phulmāli, and pay little heed to the rules of social impurity. But Hindustāni Brāhmans act as their priests.

Before a wedding they call a Brāhman and worship him as a god, the ceremony being known as Deo Brāhman. The

[1] Mr. Marten's *C.P. Census Report* (1911), p. 212.

Brāhman then cooks food in the house of his host. On the same occasion a person specially nominated by the Brāhman, and known as Deokia, fetches an earthen vessel from the potter, and this is worshipped with offerings of turmeric and rice, and a cotton thread is tied round it. Formerly it is said they worshipped the spent bullets picked up after a battle, and especially any which had been extracted from the body of a wounded person.

3. Funeral rites.

When a man is about to die they take him down from his cot and lay him on the ground with his head in the lap of a relative. The dead are buried, a person of importance being carried to the grave in a sitting posture, while others are laid out in the ordinary manner. A woman is buried in a green cloth and a breast-cloth. When the corpse has been prepared for the funeral they take some liquor, and after a few drops have been poured into the mouth of the corpse the assembled persons drink the rest. While following to the grave they beat drums and play on musical instruments and sing religious songs; and if a man dies during the night, since he is not buried till the morning, they sit in the house playing and singing for the remaining hours of darkness. The object of this custom must presumably be to keep away evil spirits. After the funeral each man places a leafy branch of some tree or shrub on the grave, and on the thirteenth day they put food before a cow and also throw some on to the roof of the house as a portion for the crows.

BELDĀR

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Beldār,[1] **Od, Sonkar, Rāj, Larhia, Kārigar, Matkūda, Chunkar, Munurwār, Thapatkari, Vaddar, Pāthrot, Takāri.**—The term Beldār is generically applied to a number of occupational groups of more or less diverse origin, who work as masons or navvies, build the earthen embankments of tanks or fields, carry lime and bricks and in former times refined salt. Beldār means one who carries a *bel*, a hoe or mattock. In 1911 a total of 25,000 Beldārs were returned from the Central Provinces, being most numerous in the Nimār, Wardha, Nāgpur, Chānda and Raipur districts. The Nunia, Murha and Sānsia (Uriya) castes, which have been treated in separate articles, are also frequently known as Beldār, and cannot be clearly distinguished from the main caste. If they are all classed together the total of the earth- and stone-working castes comes to 35,000 persons. 1. General notice.

It is probable that the bulk of the Beldārs and allied castes are derived from the non-Aryan tribes. The Murhas or navvies of the northern Districts appear to be an offshoot of the Bind tribe; the people known as Matkūda (earth-digger) are usually Gonds or Pardhāns; the Sānsias and Larhias or Uriyas of Chhattīsgarh and the Uriya country seem to have originated from the Kol, Bhuiya and Oraon

[1] This article is based on papers by Mr. A. K. Smith, C.S., Mr. Khande Rāo, Superintendent of Land Records, Raipur, and Munshi Kanhiya Lāl, of the Gazetteer office.

tribes, the Kols especially making excellent diggers and masons; the Oddes or Vaddars of Madras are a very low caste, and some of their customs point to a similar origin, though the Munurwār masons of Chānda appear to have belonged originally to the Kāpu caste of cultivators.

The term Rāj, which is also used for the Beldārs in the northern Districts, has the distinctive meaning of a mason, while Chūnkar signifies a lime-burner. The Sonkars were formerly occupied in Saugor in carrying lime, bricks and earth on donkeys, but they have now abandoned this calling in Chhattīsgarh and taken to growing vegetables, and have been given a short separate notice. In Hoshangābād some Muhammadan Beldārs are now also found.

2. Beldārs of the northern Districts.

The Beldārs of Saugor say that their ancestors were engaged in refining salt from earth. A divine saint named Nona Rīshi (*non*, salt) came down on earth, and while cooking his food mixed some saline soil with it. The bread tasted much better in consequence, and he made the earth into a ball or *goli* and taught his followers to extract the salt from it, whence their descendants are known as Goli Beldārs. The customs of these Beldārs are of the ordinary low-caste type. The wedding procession is accompanied by drums, fireworks and, if means permit, a nautch-girl. If a man puts away his wife without adequate cause the caste *panchāyat* may compel him to support her so long as she remains of good conduct. The party seeking a divorce, whether husband or wife, has to pay Rs. 7 to the caste committee and the other partner Rs. 3, irrespective of where the blame rests, and each remains out of caste until he or she pays.

These Beldārs will not take food from any caste but their own, and will not take water from a Brāhman, though they will accept it from Kurmis, Gūjars and similar castes. Sir H. Risley notes that their women always remove earth in baskets on the head. "The Beldārs regard this mode of carrying earth as distinctive of themselves, and will on no account transport it in baskets slung from the shoulders. They work very hard when paid by the piece, and are notorious for their skill in manipulating the pillars (*sākhi*, witness) left to mark work done, so as to exaggerate the

measurement. On one occasion while working for me on a large lake at Govindpur, in the north of the Mānbhum District, a number of Beldārs transplanted an entire pillar during the night and claimed payment for several thousand feet of imaginary earthwork. The fraud was most skilfully carried out, and was only detected by accident."[1] The Beldārs are often dishonest in their dealings, and will take large advances for a tank or embankment, and then abscond with the money without doing the work. During the open season parties of the caste travel about in camp looking for work, their furniture being loaded on donkeys. They carry grain in earthen pots encased in bags of netting, neatly and closely woven, and grind their wheat daily in a small mill set on a goat-skin. Butter is made in one of their pots with a churning-stick, consisting of a cogged wheel fixed on to the end of a wooden rod.

3. Odias of Chhattīsgarh.

The Beldārs of Chhattīsgarh are divided into the Odia or Uriya, Larhia, Kūchbandhia, Matkūda and Kārīgar groups. Uriya and Larhia are local names, applied to residents of the Uriya country and Chhattīsgarh respectively. Odia is the name of a low Madras caste of masons, but whether it is a corruption of Uriya is not clear. Kārīgar means a workman, and Kūchbandhia is the name of a separate caste, who make loom-combs for weavers. The Odias pretend to be fallen Rājpūts. They say that when Indra stole the sacrificial horse of Rāja Sāgar and kept it in the underworld, the Rāja's thousand sons dug great holes through the earth to get it. Finally they arrived at the underworld and were all reduced to ashes by the Rīshi Kapil Muni, who dwelt there. Their ghosts besought him for life, and he said that their descendants should always continue to dig holes in the earth, which would be used as tanks; and that whenever a tank was dug by them, and its marriage celebrated with a sacrifice, the savour of the sacrifice would descend to the ghosts and would afford them sustenance. The Odias say that they are the descendants of the Rāja's sons, and unless a tank is dug and its marriage celebrated by them it remains impure. These Odias have their tutelary deity in Rewah State, and at his shrine is

[1] *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Beldār.

a flag which none but an Odia of genuine descent from Rāja Sāgar's sons can touch without some injury befalling him. If any Beldār therefore claims to belong to their caste they call on him to touch the flag, and if he does so with impunity they acknowledge him as a brother.

4. Other Chhattīsgarhi Beldārs.

The other groups of Chhattīsgarhi Beldārs are of lower status, and clearly derived from the non-Aryan tribes. They eat pigs, and at intervals of two or three years they celebrate the worship of Gosain Deo with a sacrifice of pigs, the deity being apparently a deified ascetic or mendicant. On this occasion the Dhīmars, Gonds, and all other castes which eat pig's flesh join in the sacrifice, and consume the meat together after the fashion of the rice at Jagannāth's temple, which all castes may eat together without becoming impure. These Beldārs use asses for the transport of their bricks and stones, and on the Diwāli day they place a lamp before the ass and pay reverence to it. They say that at their marriages a bride-price of Rs. 100 or Rs. 200 must always be paid, but they are allowed to give one or two donkeys and value them at Rs. 50 apiece. They make grindstones (*chakki*), combs for straightening the threads on the loom, and frames for stretching the threads. These frames are called *dongi*, and are made either wholly or partly from the horns of animals, a fact which no doubt renders them impure.

5. Munurwār and Telenga.

In Chānda the principal castes of stone-workers are the Telengas (Telugus), who are also known as Thāpatkari (tapper or chiseller), Telenga Kunbi and Munurwār. They occupy a higher position than the ordinary Beldār, and Kunbis will take water from them and sometimes food. They say that they came into Chānda from the Telugu country along the Godāvari and Prānhita rivers to build the great wall of Chānda and the palaces and tombs of the Gond kings. There is no reason to doubt that the Munurwārs are a branch of the Kāpu cultivating caste of the Telugu country. Mr. A. K. Smith states that they refuse to eat the flesh of an animal which has been skinned by a Mahār, a Chamār, or a Gond; the Kunbis and Marāthas also consider flesh touched by a Mahār or Chamār to be impure, but do not object to a Gond. Like the Berār

Kunbis, the Telengas prefer that an animal should be killed by the rite of *halāl* as practised by Muhammadan butchers. The reason no doubt is that the *halāl* is a method of sacrificial slaughter, and the killing of the animal is legitimised even though by the ritual of a foreign religion. The Thāpatkaris appear to be a separate group, and their original profession was to collect and retail jungle fruits and roots having medicinal properties. Though the majority have become stone- and earth-workers some of them still do this.

6. Vaddar.

The Vaddars or Wadewārs are a branch of the Odde caste of Madras. They are almost an impure caste, and a section of them are professional criminals. Their women wear glass bangles only on the left arm, those on the right arm being made of brass or other metal. This rule has no doubt been introduced because glass bangles would get broken when they were supporting loads on the head. The men often wear an iron bangle on the left wrist, which they say keeps off the lightning. Mr. Thurston states that "Women who have had seven husbands are much respected among the Oddes, and their blessing on a bridal pair is greatly prized. They work in gangs on contract, and every one, except very old and very young, shares in the labour. The women carry the earth in baskets, while the men use the pick and spade. The babies are usually tied up in cloths, which are suspended, hammock-fashion, from the boughs of trees. A woman found guilty of immorality is said to have to carry a basketful of earth from house to house before she is readmitted to the caste. The stone-cutting Vaddars are the principal criminals, and by going about under the pretence of mending grindstones they obtain much useful information as to the houses to be looted or parties of travellers to be attacked. In committing a highway robbery or dacoity they are always armed with stout sticks."[1]

7. Pāthrot.

In Berār besides the regular Beldārs two castes of stone-workers are found, the Pathrāwats or Pāthrots (stone-breakers) and the Takāris, who should perhaps be classed as separate castes. Both make and sharpen millstones and grindstones, and they are probably only occupational groups of recent formation. The Takāris are connected with the Pārdhi caste

[1] *The Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, art. Odde.

of professional hunters and fowlers and may be a branch of them. The social customs of the Pāthrots resemble those of the Kunbis. "They will take cooked food from a Sutār or a Kumbhār. Imprisonment, the killing of a cow or criminal intimacy of a man with a woman of another caste is punished by temporary outcasting, readmission involving a fine of Rs. 4 or Rs. 5. Their chief deity is the Devi of Tuljāpur and their chief festival Dasahra; the implements of the caste are worshipped twice a year, on Gudhi Pādwa and Diwāli. Women are tattooed with a crescent between the eyebrows and dots on the right side of the nose, the right cheek, and the chin, and a basil plant or peacock is drawn on their wrists."[1]

8. Takāri.

"The Takāris take their name from the verb *tākne*, to reset or rechisel. They mend the handmills (*chakkis*) used for grinding corn, an occupation which is sometimes shared with them by the Langoti Pārdhis. The Takāri's avocation of chiselling grindstones gives him excellent opportunities for examining the interior economy of houses, and the position of boxes and cupboards, and for gauging the wealth of the inmates. They are the most inveterate house-breakers and dangerous criminals. A form of crime favoured by the Takāri, in common with many other criminal classes, is that of decoying into a secluded spot outside the village the would-be receiver of stolen property and robbing him of his cash—a trick which carries a wholesome lesson with it."[2] The chisel with which they chip the grindstones furnishes, as stated by Mr. D. A. Smyth, D.S.P., an excellent implement for breaking a hole through the mud wall of a house.

Beria, Bedia.

[*Bibliography*: Sir H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*; Rājendra Lāl Mitra in *Memoirs, Anthropological Society of London*, iii. p. 122; Mr. Crooke's *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*; Mr. Kennedy's *Criminal Classes of the Bombay Presidency*; Major Gunthorpe's *Criminal Tribes*; Mr. Gayer's *Lectures on some Criminal Tribes of the Central Provinces*; Colonel Sleeman's *Report on the Badhak or Bāgri Dacoits*.]

1. Historical notice.

A caste of gipsies and thieves who are closely connected with the Sānsias. In 1891 they numbered 906

[1] *Akola District Gazetteer* (Mr. C. Brown), pp. 132, 133.

[2] *Amraoti District Gazetteer* (Messrs. Nelson and Fitzgerald), p. 146.

persons in the Central Provinces, distributed over the northern Districts; in 1901 they were not separately classified but were identified with the Nats. "They say that some generations ago two brothers resided in the Bhartpur territory, of whom one was named Sains Mūl and the other Mullanur. The descendants of Sains Mūl are the Sānsias and those of Mullanur the Berias or Kolhātis, who are vagrants and robbers by hereditary profession, living in tents or huts of matting, like Nats or other vagrant tribes, and having their women in common without any marriage ceremonies or ties whatsoever. Among themselves or their relatives the Sānsias or descendants of Sains Mūl, they are called Dholi or Kolhāti. The descendants of the brothers eat, drink and smoke together, and join in robberies, but never intermarry." So Colonel Sleeman wrote in 1849, and other authorities agree on the close connection or identity of the Berias and Sānsias of Central India. The Kolhātis belong mainly to the Deccan and are apparently a branch of the Berias, named after the *Kolhān* or long pole with which they perform acrobatic feats. The Berias of Central India differ in many respects from those of Bengal. Here Sir H. Risley considers Beria to be 'the generic name of a number of vagrant, gipsy-like groups'; and a full description of them has been given by Bābu Rājendra Lāl Mitra, who considers them to resemble the gipsies of Europe. "They are noted for a light, elastic, wiry make, very uncommon in the people of this country. In agility and hardness they stand unrivalled. The men are of a brownish colour, like the bulk of Bengalis, but never black. The women are of lighter complexion and generally well-formed; some of them have considerable claims to beauty, and for a race so rude and primitive in their habits as the Berias, there is a sharpness in the features of their women which we see in no other aboriginal race in India. Like the gipsies of Europe they are noted for the symmetry of their limbs; but their offensive habits, dirty clothing and filthy professions give them a repulsive appearance, which is heightened by the reputation they have of kidnapping children and frequenting burial-grounds and places of cremation. . . . Familiar with the use of bows and arrows and great adepts in

laying snares and traps, they are seldom without large supplies of game and flesh of wild animals of all kinds. They keep the dried bodies of a variety of birds for medical purposes; mongoose, squirrels and flying-foxes they eat with avidity as articles of luxury. Spirituous liquors and intoxicating drugs are indulged in to a large extent, and chiefs of clans assume the title of Bhangi or drinkers of hemp (*bhāng*) as a mark of honour. . . . In lying, thieving and knavery the Beria is not a whit inferior to his brother gipsy of Europe. The Beria woman deals in charms for exorcising the devil and palmistry is her special vocation. She also carries with her a bundle of herbs and other real or pretended charms against sickness of body or mind; and she is much sought after by village maidens for the sake of the philtre with which she restores to them their estranged lovers; while she foretells the date when absent friends will return and the sex of unborn children. They practise cupping with buffalo horns, pretend to extract worms from decayed teeth and are commonly employed as tattooers. At home the Beria woman makes mats of palm-leaves, while her lord alone cooks. . . . Beria women are even more circumspect than European gipsies. If a wife does not return before the jackal's cry is heard in the evening, she is subject to severe punishment. It is said that a *faux pas* among her own kindred is not considered reprehensible; but it is certain that no Berini has ever been known to be at fault with any one not of her own caste." This last statement is not a little astonishing, inasmuch as in Central India and in Bundelkhand Berni is an equivalent term for a prostitute. A similar diversity of conjugal morality has been noticed between the Bāgris of northern India and the Vāghris of Gujarāt.[1]

2. Criminal tendencies in the Central Provinces.

In other respects also the Berias of Bengal appear to be more respectable than the remainder of the caste, obtaining their livelihood by means which, if disreputable, are not actually dishonest; while in Central India the women Berias are prostitutes and the men house-breakers and thieves. These latter are so closely connected with the Sānsias that the account of that caste is also applicable to the Berias.

[1] See article on Badhak.

In Jubbulpore, Mr. Gayer states, the caste are expert housebreakers, bold and daring, and sometimes armed with swords and matchlocks. They sew up stolen property in their bedquilts and secrete it in the hollow legs of their sleeping-cots, and the women habitually conceal jewels and even coins in the natural passages of the body, in which they make special *saos* or receptacles by practice. The Beria women go about begging, and often break open the doors of unoccupied houses in the daytime and steal anything they can find.[1] Both Sānsia and Beria women wear a *laong* or clove in the left nostril.

3. Social customs.

As already stated, the women are professional prostitutes, but these do not marry, and on arrival at maturity they choose the life which they prefer. Mr. Crooke states,[2] however, that regular marriages seldom occur among them, because nearly all the girls are reserved for prostitution, and the men keep concubines drawn from any fairly respectable caste. So far is this the rule that in some localities if a man marries a girl of the tribe he is put out of caste or obliged to pay a fine to the tribal council. This last rule does not seem to obtain in the Central Provinces, but marriages are uncommon. In a colony of Berias in Jubbulpore[3] numbering sixty families it was stated that only eight weddings could be remembered as having occurred in the last fifty years. The boys therefore have to obtain wives as best they can; sometimes orphan girls from other castes are taken into the community, or any outsider is picked up. For a bride from the caste itself a sum of Rs. 100 is usually demanded, and the same has to be paid by a Beria man who takes a wife from the Nat or Kanjar castes, as is sometimes done. When a match is proposed they ask the expectant bridegroom how many thefts he has committed without detection; and if his performances have been inadequate they refuse to give him the girl on the ground that he will be unable to support a wife. At the betrothal the boy's parents go to the girl's house, taking with them a potful of liquor round which a silver ring is placed and a

[1] Kennedy, p. 247.
[2] Crooke, art. Beria.
[3] The following particulars are taken from a note by Mr. K. N. Dāte, Deputy Superintendent, Reformatory School, Jubbulpore.

pig. The ring is given to the girl and the head of the pig to her father, while the liquor and the body of the pig provide a feast for the caste. They consult Brāhmans at their birth and marriage ceremonies. Their principal deities appear to be their ancestors, whom they worship on the same day of the month and year as that on which their death took place. They make an offering of a pig to the goddess Dadaju or Devi before starting on their annual predatory excursions. Some rice is thrown into the animal's ear before it is killed, and the direction in which it turns its head is selected as the one divinely indicated for their route. Prostitution is naturally not regarded as any disgrace, and the women who have selected this profession mix on perfectly equal terms with those who are married. They occupy, in fact, a more independent position, as they dispose absolutely of their own earnings and property, and on their death it devolves on their daughters or other female relatives, males having no claim to it, in some localities at least. Among the children of married couples daughters inherit equally with sons. A prostitute is regarded as the head of the family so far as her children are concerned. Outsiders are freely admitted into the caste on giving a feast to the community. In Saugor the women of the caste, known as Berni, are the village dancing-girls, and are employed to give performances in the cold weather, especially at the Holi festival, where they dance the whole night through, fortified by continuous potations of liquor. This dance is called *rai*, and is accompanied by most obscene songs and gestures.

BHAINA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Bhaina.[1]—A primitive tribe peculiar to the Central Provinces and found principally in the Bilāspur District and the adjoining area, that is, in the wild tract of forest country between the Satpūra range and the south of the Chota Nāgpur plateau. In 1911 about 17,000 members of the tribe were returned. The tribe is of mixed descent and appears to have been derived principally from the Baigas and Kawars, having probably served as a city of refuge to persons expelled from these and other tribes and the lower castes for irregular sexual relations. Their connection with the Baigas is shown by the fact that in Mandla the Baigas have two subdivisions, which are known as Rai or Rāj-Bhaina, and Kath, or catechu-making Bhaina. The name therefore would appear to have originated with the Baiga tribe. A Bhaina is also not infrequently found to be employed in the office of village priest and magician, which goes by the name of Baiga in Bilāspur. And a Bhaina has the same reputation as a Baiga for sorcery, it being said of him— 1. The tribe derived from the Baigas.

Mainhār ki mānjh
Bhaina ki pāng

[1] This article is based principally on a paper by Panna Lāl, Revenue Inspector, Bilāspur, and also on papers by Mr. Syed Sher Ali, Nāib-Tahsīldār, Mr. Hira Lāl and Mr. Adurām Chaudhri of the Gazetteer office.

or 'The magic of a Bhaina is as deadly as the powdered *mainhār* fruit,' this fruit having the property of stupefying fish when thrown into the water, so that they can easily be caught. This reputation simply arises from the fact that in his capacity of village priest the Bhaina performs the various magical devices which lay the ghosts of the dead, protect the village against tigers, ensure the prosperity of the crops and so on. But it is always the older residents of any locality who are employed by later comers in this office, because they are considered to have a more intimate acquaintance with the local deities. And consequently we are entitled to assume that the Bhainas are older residents of the country where they are found than their neighbours, the Gonds and Kawars. There is other evidence to the same effect; for instance, the oldest forts in Bilāspur are attributed to the Bhainas, and a chief of this tribe is remembered as having ruled in Bilaigarh; they are also said to have been dominant in Pendra, where they are still most numerous, though the estate is now held by a Kawar; and it is related that the Bhainas were expelled from Phuljhar in Raipur by the Gonds. Phuljhar is believed to be a Gond State of long standing, and the Rāja of Raigarh and others claim to be descended from its ruling family. A manuscript history of the Phuljhar chiefs records that that country was held by a Bhaina king when the Gonds invaded it, coming from Chānda. The Bhaina with his soldiers took refuge in a hollow underground chamber with two exits. But the secret of this was betrayed to the Gonds by an old Gond woman, and they filled up the openings of the chamber with grass and burnt the Bhainas to death. On this account the tribe will not enter Phuljhar territory to this day, and say that it is death to a Bhaina to do so. The Binjhwārs are also said to have been dominant in the hills to the east of Raipur District, and they too are a civilised branch of the Baigas. And in all this area the village priest is commonly known as Baiga, the deduction from which is, as already stated, that the Baigas were the oldest residents.[1] It seems a legitimate conclusion, therefore, that prior to the immigration of the

[1] For the meaning of the term Baiga and its application to the tribe, see also article on Bhuiya.

Gonds and Kawars, the ancient Baiga tribe was spread over the whole hill country east and north of the Mahānadī basin.

2. Closely connected with the Kawars.

The Bhainas are also closely connected with the Kawars, who still own many large estates in the hills north of Bilāspur. It is said that formerly the Bhainas and Kawars both ate in common and intermarried, but at present, though the Bhainas still eat rice boiled in water from the Kawars, the latter do not reciprocate. But still, when a Kawar is celebrating a birth, marriage or death in his family, or when he takes in hand to make a tank, he will first give food to a Bhaina before his own caste-men eat. And it may safely be assumed that this is a recognition of the Bhaina's position as having once been lord of the land. A Kawar may still be admitted into the Bhaina community, and it is said that the reason of the rupture of the former equal relations between the two tribes was the disgust felt by the Kawars for the rude and uncouth behaviour of the Bhainas. For on one occasion a Kawar went to ask for a Bhaina girl in marriage, and, as the men of the family were away, the women undertook to entertain him. And as the Bhainas had no axes, the daughter proceeded to crack the sticks on her head for kindling a fire, and for grass she pulled out a wisp of thatch from the roof and broke it over her thigh, being unable to chop it. This so offended the delicate susceptibilities of the Kawar that he went away without waiting for his meal, and from that time the Kawars ceased to marry with the Bhainas. It seems possible that the story points to the period when the primitive Bhainas and Baigas did not know the use of iron and to the introduction of this metal by the later-coming Kawars and Gonds. It is further related that when a Kawar is going to make a ceremonial visit he likes always to take with him two or three Bhainas, who are considered as his retainers, though not being so in fact. This enhances his importance, and it is also said that the stupidity of the Bhainas acts as a foil, through which the superior intelligence of the Kawar is made more apparent. All these details point to the same conclusion that the primitive Bhainas first held the country and were supplanted by the more civilised Kawars, and bears

out the theory that the settlement of the Munda tribes was prior to those of the Dravidian family.

3. Internal structure : Totemism.

The tribe has two subdivisions of a territorial nature, Laria or Chhattīsgarhi, and Uriya. The Uriya Bhainas will accept food cooked without water from the Sawaras or Saonrs, and these also from them ; so that they have probably intermarried. Two other subdivisions recorded are the Jhalyāra and Ghantyāra or Ghatyāra ; the former being so called because they live in *jhālas* or leaf huts in the forest, and the latter, it is said, because they tie a *ghanta* or bell to their doors. This, however, seems very improbable. Another theory is that the word is derived from *ghāt*, a slope or descent, and refers to a method which the tribe have of tattooing themselves with a pattern of lines known as *ghāt*. Or it is said to mean a low or despised section. The Jhalyāra and Ghatyāra divisions comprise the less civilised portion of the tribe, who still live in the forests; and they are looked down on by the Uriya and Laria sections, who belong to the open country. The exogamous divisions of the tribe show clearly enough that the Bhainas, like other subject races, have quite failed to preserve any purity of blood. Among the names of their *gots* or septs are Dhobia (a washerman), Ahera (cowherd), Gond, Mallin (gardener), Panika (from a Panka or Ganda) and others. The members of such septs pay respect to any man belonging to the caste after which they are named and avoid picking a quarrel with him. They also worship the family gods of this caste. The tribe have also a number of totem septs, named after animals or plants. Such are Nāg the cobra, Bāgh the tiger, Chitwa the leopard, Gidha the vulture, Besra the hawk, Bendra the monkey, Kok or Lodha the wild dog, Bataria the quail, Durgachhia the black ant, and so on. Members of a sept will not injure the animal after which it is named, and if they see the corpse of the animal or hear of its death, they throw away an earthen cooking-pot and bathe and shave themselves as for one of the family. Members of the Baghchhāl or tiger sept will, however, join in a beat for tiger though they are reluctant to do so. At weddings the Bhainas have a ceremony known as the *gotra* worship. The bride's father

makes an image in clay of the bird or animal of the groom's sept and places it beside the marriage-post. The bridegroom worships the image, lighting a sacrificial fire before it, and offers to it the vermilion which he afterwards smears upon the forehead of the bride. At the bridegroom's house a similar image is made of the bride's totem, and on returning there after the wedding she worships this. Women are often tattooed with representations of their totem animal, and men swear by it as their most sacred oath. A similar respect is paid to the inanimate objects after which certain septs are named. Thus members of the Gawad or cowdung sept will not burn cowdung cakes for fuel; and those of the Mircha sept do not use chillies. One sept is named after the sun, and when an eclipse occurs these perform the same formal rites of mourning as the others do on the death of their totem animal. Some of the groups have two divisions, male and female, which practically rank as separate septs. Instances of these are the Nāgbans Andura and the Nāgbans Mai or male and female cobra septs; the Karsayāl Singhāra and Karsayāl Mundi or stag and doe deer septs; and the Baghchhāl Andura and Baghchhāl Mai or tiger and tigress septs. These may simply be instances of subdivisions arising owing to the boundaries of the sept having become too large for convenience.

4. Marriage.

The tribe consider that a boy should be married when he has learnt to drive the plough, and a girl when she is able to manage her household affairs. When a father can afford a bride for his son, he and his relatives go to the girl's village, taking with them ten or fifteen cakes of bread and a bottle of liquor. He stays with some relative and sends to ask the girl's father if he will give his daughter to the inquirer's son. If the former agrees, the bread and liquor are sent over to him, and he drinks three cups of the spirit as a pledge of the betrothal, the remainder being distributed to the company. This is known as *Tatia kholna* or 'the opening of the door,' and is followed some days afterwards by a similar ceremonial which constitutes the regular betrothal. On this occasion the father agrees to marry his daughter within a year and demands the bride-price, which consists of rice, cloth, a goat and other articles,

the total value being about five rupees. A date is next fixed for the wedding, the day selected being usually a Monday or Friday, but no date or month is forbidden. The number of days to the wedding are then counted, and two knotted strings are given to each party, with a knot for each day up to that on which the anointings with oil and turmeric will commence at the bridegroom's and bride's houses. Every day one knot is untied at each house up to that on which the ceremonies begin, and thus the correct date for them is known. The invitations to the wedding are given by distributing rice coloured yellow with turmeric to all members of the caste in the locality, with the intimation that the wedding procession will start on a certain day and that they will be pleased to attend. During the four days that they are being anointed the bride and bridegroom dance at their respective houses to the accompaniment of drums and other instruments. For the wedding ceremony a number of Hindu rites have been adopted. The eldest sister of the bridegroom or bride is known as the *sawāsin* and her husband as the *sawāsa*, and these persons seem to act as the representatives of the bridal couple throughout the marriage and to receive all presents on their behalf. The custom is almost universal among the Hindus, and it is possible that they are intended to act as substitutes and to receive any strokes of evil fortune which may befall the bridal pair at a season at which they are peculiarly liable to it. The couple go round the sacred post, and afterwards the bridegroom daubs the bride's forehead with red lead seven times and covers her head with her cloth to show that she has become a married woman. After the wedding the bridegroom's parents say to him, "Now your parents have done everything they could for you, and you must manage your own house." The expenditure on an average wedding is about fifteen or twenty rupees. A widow is usually taken in marriage by her late husband's younger brother or Dewar, or by one of his relatives. If she marries an outsider, the Dewar realises twelve rupees from him in compensation for her loss. But if there is no Dewar this sum is not payable to her first husband's elder brother or her own father, because they could not have married her

and hence are not held to be injured by a stranger doing so. If a woman is divorced and another man wishes to marry her, he must make a similar payment of twelve rupees to the first husband, together with a goat and liquor for the penal feast. The Bhainas bury or burn the dead according as their means permit.

5. Religious superstitions.

Their principal deity in Bilāspur is Nakti Devi[1] or the 'Noseless Goddess.' For her ritual rice is placed on a square of the floor washed with cowdung, and *ghī* or preserved butter is poured on it and burnt. A hen is made to eat the rice, and then its head is cut off and laid on the square. The liver is burnt on the fire as an offering to the deity and the head and body of the animal are then eaten. After the death of a man a cock is offered to Nakti Devi and a hen after that of a woman. The fowl is made to pick rice first in the yard of the house, then on the threshold, and lastly inside the house. Thākur Deo is the deity of cultivation and is worshipped on the day before the autumn crops are sown. On this day all the men in the village go to his shrine taking a measure of rice and a ploughshare. At the same time the Baiga or village priest goes and bathes in the tank and is afterwards carried to the assembly on a man's shoulders. Here he makes an offering and repeats a charm, and then kneeling down strikes the earth seven times with the ploughshare, and sows five handfuls of rice, sprinkling water over the seed. After him the villagers walk seven times round the altar of the god in pairs, one man turning up the earth with the ploughshare and the other sowing and watering the seed. While this is going on the Baiga sits with his face covered with a piece of cloth, and at the end the villagers salute the Baiga and go home. When a man wishes to do an injury to another he makes an image of him with clay and daubs it with vermilion and worships it with an offering of a goat or a fowl and liquor. Then he prays the image that his enemy may die. Another way of injuring an enemy is to take rice coloured with turmeric, and after

[1] It is or was, of course, a common practice for a husband to cut off his wife's nose if he suspected her of being unfaithful to him. But whether the application of the epithet to the goddess should be taken to imply anything against her moral character is not known.

muttering charms throw it in the direction in which the enemy lives.

6. Admission of outsiders and caste offences.

Outsiders are not usually admitted, but if a Bhaina forms a connection with a woman of another tribe, they will admit the children of such a union, though not the woman herself. For they say: 'The seed is ours and what matters the field on which it was sown.' But a man of the Kawar tribe having intimacy with a Bhaina woman may be taken into the community. He must wait for three or four months after the matter becomes known and will beg for admission and offer to give the penalty feast. A day is fixed for this and invitations are sent to members of the caste. On the appointed day the women of the tribe cook rice, pulse, goat's flesh and urad cakes fried in oil, and in the evening the people assemble and drink liquor and then go to take their food. The candidate for admission serves water to the men and his prospective wife to the women, both being then permitted to take food with the tribe. Next morning the people come again and the woman is dressed in a white cloth with bangles. The couple stand together supported by their brother-in-law and sister-in-law respectively, and turmeric dissolved in water is poured over their heads. They are now considered to be married and go round together and give the salutation or Johār to the people, touching the feet of those who are entitled to this mark of respect, and kissing the others. Among the offences for which a man is temporarily put out of caste is getting the ear torn either accidentally or otherwise, being beaten by a man of very low caste, growing san-hemp (*Crotalaria juncea*), rearing tasar silk-worms or getting maggots in a wound. This last is almost as serious an offence as killing a cow, and, in both cases, before an offender can be reinstated he must kill a fowl and swallow a drop or two of its blood with turmeric. Women commonly get the lobe of the ear torn through the heavy ear-rings which they wear; and in a squabble another woman will often seize the ear-ring maliciously in order to tear the ear. A woman injured in this way is put out of caste for a year in Jānjgir. To grow turmeric or garlic is also an offence against caste, but a man is permitted to do this for his own use and not for sale. A man who gets leprosy is

said to be permanently expelled from caste. The purification of delinquents is conducted by members of the Sonwāni (gold-water) and Patel (headman) septs, whose business it is to give the offender water to drink in which gold has been dipped and to take over the burden of his sins by first eating food with him. But others say that the Hāthi or elephant sept is the highest, and to its members are delegated these duties. And in Jānjgir again the president of the committee gives the gold-water, and is hence known as Sonwān; and this office must always be held by a man of the Bandar or monkey sept.

7. Soc custom

The Bhainas are a comparatively civilised tribe and have largely adopted Hindu usages. They employ Brāhmans to fix auspicious days for their ceremonies, though not to officiate at them. They live principally in the open country and are engaged in agriculture, though very few of them hold land and the bulk are farm-labourers. They now disclaim any connection with the primitive Baigas, who still prefer the forests. But their caste mark, a symbol which may be affixed to documents in place of a signature or used for a brand on cattle, is a bow, and this shows that they retain the recollection of hunting as their traditional occupation. Like the Baigas, the tribe have forgotten their native dialect and now speak bad Hindi. They will eat pork and rats, and almost anything else they can get, eschewing only beef. But in their intercourse with other castes they are absurdly strict, and will take boiled rice only from a Kawar, or from a Brāhman if it is cooked in a brass and not in an earthen vessel, and this only from a male and not from a female Brāhman; while they will accept baked *chapātis* and other food from a Gond and a Rāwat. But in Sambalpur they will take this from a Savar and not from a Gond. They rank below the Gonds, Kawars and Savars or Saonrs. Women are tattooed with a representation of their sept totem; and on the knees and ankles they have some figures of lines which are known as *ghāts*. These they say will enable them to climb the mountains leading to heaven in the other world, while those who have not such marks will be pierced with spears on their way up the ascent. It has already been suggested that these marks may have given rise to the name of the Ghatyāra division of the tribe.

1. Occupation.

Bhāmta or Bhāmtya.[1]—A caste numbering 4000 persons in the Central Provinces, nearly all of whom reside in the Wardha, Nāgpur and Chānda Districts of the Nāgpur Division. The Bhāmtas are also found in Bombay, Berār and Hyderābād. In Bombay they are known by the names of Uchla or 'Lifter' and Ganthachor or 'Bundle-thief.'[2] The Bhāmtas were and still are notorious thieves, but many of the caste are now engaged in the cultivation of hemp, from which they make ropes, mats and gunny-bags. Formerly it was said in Wardha that a Bhāmta girl would not marry unless her suitor had been arrested not less than fourteen times by the police, when she considered that he had qualified as a man. The following description of their methods does not necessarily apply to the whole caste, though the bulk of them are believed to have criminal tendencies. But some colonies of Bhāmtas who have taken to the manufacture of sacking and gunny-bags from hemp-fibre may perhaps be excepted. They steal only during the daytime, and divide that part of the Province which they frequent into regular beats or ranges. They adopt many disguises. Even in their own cottages one dresses as a Mārwāri Bania, another as a Gujarāt Jain, a third as a Brāhman and a fourth as a Rājpūt. They keep to some particular disguise for years and often travel hundreds of miles, entering and stealing from the houses of the classes of persons whose dress they adopt, or taking service with a merchant or trader, and having gained their employer's confidence, seizing an opportunity to abscond with some valuable property. Sometimes two or three Bhāmtas visit a large fair, and one of them dressed as a Brāhman mingles with the crowd of bathers and worshippers. The false Brāhman notices some ornament deposited by a bather, and while himself entering the water and repeating sacred verses, watches his opportunity and spreads out his cloth near the ornament, which he then catches with his toes, and dragging it with him to a distance as he walks away buries

[1] This article is mainly compiled from a paper by Pyāre Lāl Misra, Ethnographic Clerk.

[2] *Bombay Gazetteer* (Campbell), xviii. p. 464.

it in the sand. The accomplices meanwhile loiter near, and when the owner discovers his loss the Brāhman sympathises with him and points out the accomplices as likely thieves, thus diverting suspicion from himself. The victim follows the accomplices, who make off, and the real thief meanwhile digs the ornament out of the sand and escapes at his leisure. Women often tie their ornaments in bundles at such bathing-fairs, and in that case two Bhāmtas will go up to her, one on each side, and while one distracts her attention the other makes off with the bundle and buries it in the sand. A Bhāmta rarely retains the stolen property on his person while there is a chance of his being searched, and is therefore not detected. They show considerable loyalty to one another, and never steal from or give information against a member of the caste. If stolen property is found in a Bhāmta's house, and it has merely been deposited there for security, the real thief comes forward. An escaped prisoner does not come back to his friends lest he should get them into trouble. A Bhāmta is never guilty of house-breaking or gang-robbery, and if he takes part in this offence he is put out of caste. He does not steal from the body of a person asleep. He is, however, expert at the theft of ornaments from the person. He never steals from a house in his own village, and the villagers frequently share directly or indirectly in his gains. The Bhāmtas are now expert railway thieves.[1] Two of them will get into a carriage, and, engaging the other passengers in conversation, find out where they are going, so as to know the time available for action. When it gets dark and the travellers go to sleep, one of the Bhāmtas lies down on the floor and covers himself with a large cloth. He begins feeling some bag under the seat, and if he cannot open it with his hands, takes from his mouth the small curved knife which all Bhāmtas carry concealed between their gum and upper lip, and with this he rips up the seams of the bag and takes out what he finds; or they exchange bags, according to a favourite device of English railway thieves, and then quickly either leave the train or get into another carriage.

[1] The following particulars are taken from Colonel Portman's *Report on the Bhāmtas of the Deccan* (Bombay, 1887).

If attention is aroused they throw the stolen property out of the window, marking the place and afterwards going back to recover it. Another device is to split open and pick the pockets of people in a crowd. Besides the knife they often have a needle and thread and an iron nut-cutter.

2. Sub-divisions and marriage customs.

Members of other castes, as Chhatri, Kanjar, Rāwat and others, who have taken to stealing, are frequently known as Bhāmtas, but unless they have been specially initiated do not belong to the caste. The Bhāmtas proper have two main divisions, the Chhatri Bhāmtas, who are usually immigrants from Gujarāt, and those of the Marātha country, who are often known as Bhāmtis. The former have a dialect which is a mixture of Hindi, Marāthi and Gujarāti, while the latter speak the local form of Marāthi. The sections of the Chhatri Bhāmtas are named after Rājpūt septs, as Badgūjar, Chauhān, Gahlot, Bhatti, Kachhwāha and others. They may be partly of Rājpūt descent, as they have regular and pleasing features and a fair complexion, and are well built and sturdy. The sections of the Bhāmtis are called by Marātha surnames, as Gudekar, Kaothi, Bailkhade, Sātbhaia and others. The Chhatri Bhāmtas have northern customs, and the Bhāmtis those of the Marātha country. Marriage between persons of the same *gotra* or surname is prohibited. The Chhatris avoid marriage between relations having a common greatgrandparent, but among the Bhāmtis the custom of Mehunchār is prevalent, by which the brother's daughter is married to the sister's son. Girls are usually married at ten and eleven years of age or later. The betrothal and marriage customs of the two subcastes differ, the Chhatris following the ceremonial of the northern Districts and the Bhāmtis that of the Marātha country. The Chhatris do not pay a bride-price, but the Bhāmtis usually do. Widow-marriage is allowed, and while the Chhatris expect the widow to marry her deceased husband's brother, the Bhāmtis do not permit this. Among both subdivisions a price is paid for the widow to her parents. Divorce is only permitted for immoral conduct on the part of the wife. A divorced woman may remarry after giving a feast to the caste *panchāyat* or committee, and obtaining their consent.

3. Religion and social customs.

The goddess Devi is the tutelary deity of the caste, as of all those who ply a disreputable profession. Animals are sacrificed to her or let loose to wander in her name. The offerings are appropriated by the village washerman. In Bombay the rendezvous of the Bhāmtis is the temple of Devi at Konali, in Akalkot State, near Sholapur, and here the gangs frequently assemble before and after their raids to ask the goddess that luck may attend them and to thank her for success obtained.[1] They worship their rope-making implements on the Dasahra day. They both bury and burn the dead. Ghosts and spirits are worshipped. If a man takes a second wife after the death of his first, the new wife wears a *putli* or image of the first wife on a piece of silver on her neck, and offers it the *hom* sacrifice by placing some *ghī* on the fire before taking a meal. In cases of doubt and difficulty she often consults the *putli* by speaking to it, while any chance stir of the image due to the movement of her body is interpreted as approval or disapproval. In the Central Provinces the Bhāmtis say that they do not admit outsiders into the caste, but this is almost certainly untrue. In Bombay they are said to admit all Hindus[2] except the very lowest castes, and also Muhammadans. The candidate must pass through the two ceremonies of admission into the caste and adoption into a particular family. For the first he pays an admission fee, is bathed and dressed in new clothes, and one of the elders drops turmeric and sugar into his mouth. A feast follows, during which some elders of the caste eat out of the same plate with him. This completes the admission ceremony, but in order to marry in the caste a candidate must also be adopted into a particular family. The Bhāmta who has agreed to adopt him invites the caste people to his house, and there takes the candidate on his knee while the guests drop turmeric and sugar into his mouth. The Bhāmtas eat fish and fowl but not pork or beef, and drink liquor. This last practice is, however, frequently made a caste offence by the Bhāmtis. They take cooked food from Brāhmans and Kunbis and water from Gonds. The keeping of concubines is also an offence entailing temporary excommuni-

[1] Portman, *loc. cit.*

[2] *Bombay Gazetteer* (Campbell), xviii. p. 465.

cation. The morality of the caste is somewhat low and their women are addicted to prostitution. The occupation of the Bhāmta is also looked down on, and it is said, *Bhāmta ka kām sub se nikām*, or 'The Bhāmta's work is the worst of all.' This may apply either to his habits of stealing or to the fact that he supplies a bier made of twine and bamboo sticks at a death. In Bombay the showy dress of the Bhāmta is proverbial. Women are tattooed before marriage on the forehead and lower lip, and on other parts of the body for purposes of adornment. The men have the head shaved for three inches above the top of the forehead in front and an inch higher behind, and they wear the scalp-lock much thicker than Brāhmans do. They usually have red head-cloths.

1. General notice.

Bharbhūnja.[1]—The occupational caste of grain-parchers. The name is derived from the Sanskrit *bhrāstra*, a frying-pan, and *bhārjaka*, one who fries. The Bharbhūnjas numbered 3000 persons in 1911, and belong mainly to the northern Districts, their headquarters being in Upper India. In Chhattīsgarh the place of the Bharbhūnjas is taken by the Dhūris. Sir H. Elliot[2] remarks that the caste are traditionally supposed to be descended from a Kahār father and a Sūdra mother, and they are probably connected with the Kahārs. In Saugor they say that their ancestors were Kānkubja Brāhmans who were ordered to parch rice at the wedding of the great Rāma, and in consequence of this one of their subcastes is known as Kānbajia. But Kānkubja is one of the commonest names of subcastes among the people of northern India, and merely indicates that the bearers belong to the tract round the old city of Kanauj; and there is no reason to suppose that it means anything more in the case of the Bharbhūnjas. Another group are called Kaitha, and they say that their ancestors were Kāyasths, who adopted the profession of grain-parching. It is said that in Bhopāl proper Kāyasths will take food from Kaitha Bharbhūnjas and smoke from their huqqa; and it is noticeable that in

[1] This article contains some information from a paper by Mr. Gopal Parmanand, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Saugor.

[2] *Memoirs of the Races of the N.W.P.* vol. i. p. 35.

northern India Mr. Crooke gives [1] not only the Kaitha subcaste, but other groups called Saksena and Srivāstab, which are the names of well-known Kāyasth subdivisions. It is possible, therefore, that the Kaitha group may really be connected with the Kāyasths. Other subcastes are the Benglāh, who are probably immigrants from Bengal; and the Kāndu, who may also come from that direction, Kāndu being the name of the corresponding caste of grain-parchers in Bengal.

2. Social customs.

The social customs of the Bharbhūnjas resemble those of Hindustāni castes of fairly good position.[2] They employ Brāhmans for their ceremonies, and the family priest receives five rupees for officiating at a wedding, three rupees for a funeral, one rupee for a birth, and four annas on ordinary occasions. No price is paid for a bride, and at their marriages the greater part of the expense falls on the girl's father, who has to give three feasts as against two provided by the bridegroom's father. After the wedding the bridegroom's father puts on women's clothes given by the bride's father and dances before the family. Rose-coloured water and powder are sprinkled over the guests and the proceeding is known as *Phāg*, because it is considered to have the same significance as the Holi festival observed in Phāgun. This is usually done on the bank of a river or in some garden outside the village. At the *gauna* or going-away ceremony the bride and bridegroom take their seats on two wooden boards and then change places. Divorce and the remarriage of widows are permitted. The union of a widow with her deceased husband's younger brother is considered a suitable match, but is not compulsory. When a bachelor marries a widow, he first goes through the proper ceremony either with a stick or an ear-ring, and is then united to the widow by the simple ritual employed for widow remarriage. A girl who is seduced by a member of the caste may be married to him as if she were a widow, but if her lover is an outsider she is permanently expelled from the caste.

3. Occupation.

The Bharbhūnjas occupy a fairly high social position,

[1] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bhārbhūnja.

[2] See article on Kurmi. The remainder of this section is taken from Mr. Gopal Parmānand's notes.

analogous to that of the Barais, Kahārs and other serving castes, the explanation being that all Hindus require the grain parched by them; this, as it is not cooked with water, may be eaten abroad, on a journey or in the market-place. This is known as *pakki* food, and even Brāhmans will take it from their hands. But Mr. Crooke notes[1] that the work they do, and particularly the sweeping up of dry leaves for fuel, tends to lower them in the popular estimation, and it is a favourite curse to wish of an enemy that he may some day come to stoke the kiln of a grain-parcher. Of their occupation Sir H. Risley states that "Throughout the caste the actual work of parching grain is usually left to the women. The process is a simple one. A clay oven is built, somewhat in the shape of a bee-hive, with ten or twelve round holes at the top. A fire is lighted under it and broken earthen pots containing sand are put on the holes. The grain to be parched is thrown in with the sand and stirred with a flat piece of wood or a broom until it is ready. The sand and parched grain are then placed in a sieve, through which the former escapes. The wages of the parcher are a proportion of the grain, varying from one-eighth to one-fourth. In Bengal the caste was spoken of by early English travellers under the quaint name of the frymen."[2] In the Central Provinces also grain-parching is distinctly a woman's industry, only twenty-two per cent of those shown as working at it being men. There are two classes of tradesmen, those who simply keep ovens and parch grain which is brought to them, and those who keep the grain and sell it ready parched. The rates for parching are a pice a seer or an eighth part of the grain. Gram and rice, husked or unhusked, are the grains usually parched. When parched, gram is called *phutāna* (broken) and rice *lāhi*. The Bharbhūnjas also prepare *sathu*, a flour made by grinding parched gram or wheat, which is a favourite food for a light morning meal, or for travellers. It can be taken without preparation, being simply mixed with water and a little salt or sugar. The following story is told about *sathu* to emphasise its convenience in this respect. Once two travellers were about to take some food before

[1] *Ibidem.*

[2] *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Kāndu.

starting in the morning, of whom one had *sathu* and the other *dhān* (unhusked rice). The one with the *dhān* knew that it would take him a long time to pound, and then cook and eat it, so he said to the other, "My poor friend, I perceive that you only have *sathu*, which will delay you because you must find water, and then mix it, and find salt, and put it in, before your *sathu* can be ready, while rice—pound, eat and go. But if you like, as you are in a greater hurry than I am, I will change my rice for your *sathu*." The other traveller unsuspectingly consented, thinking he was getting the best of the bargain, and while he was still looking for a mortar in which to pound his rice, the first traveller had mixed and eaten the *sathu* and proceeded on his journey. In the vernacular the point is brought out by the onomatopoeic character of the lines, which cannot be rendered in English. The caste are now also engaged in selling tobacco and sweetmeats and the manufacture of fireworks. They stoke their ovens with any refuse they can collect from the roads, and hence comes the saying, '*Bhār men dālna*,' 'To throw into the oven,' meaning to throw away something or to make ducks and drakes with it; while *Bhār-jhokna* signifies to light or heat the oven, and, figuratively, to take up a mean occupation (Platts). Another proverb quoted by Mr. Crooke is, '*Bharbhūnja ka larki kesar ka tīka*,' or 'The Bharbhūnja's slut with saffron on her forehead,' meaning one dressed in borrowed plumes. Another saying is, '*To tum kya abhi tak bhār bhunjte rahe*,' or 'Have you been stoking the oven all this time?'—meaning to imply that the person addressed has been wasting his time, because the profits from grain-parching are so small. The oven of the Psalmist into which the grass was cast no doubt closely resembled that of the Bharbhūnjas.

BHARIA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. Origin and tribal legend.

Bharia, Bharia-Bhumia.[1] — A Dravidian tribe numbering about 50,000 persons and residing principally in the Jubbulpore District, which contains a half of the total number. The others are found in Chhindwāra and Bilāspur. The proper name of the tribe is Bharia, but they are often called Bharia-Bhumia, because many of them hold the office of Bhumia or priest of the village gods and of the lower castes in Jubbulpore, and the Bharias prefer the designation of Bhumia as being the more respectable. The term Bhumia or 'Lord of the soil' is an alternative for Bhuiya, the name of another Dravidian tribe, and no doubt came to be applied to the office of village priest because it was held by members of this tribe; the term Baiga has a similar signification in Mandla and Bālāghāt, and is applied to the village priest though he may not belong to the Baiga tribe at all. The Bharias have forgotten their original affinities, and several stories of the origin of the tribe are based on far-fetched derivations of the name. One of these is to the effect that Arjun, when matters were going badly with the Pāndavas in their battle against the Kauravas, took up a handful of *bharru* grass and, pressing it, produced a host of men who fought in the battle and became the ancestors of

[1] This article is compiled from notes taken by Mr. Hīra Lāl, Assistant Gazetteer Superintendent in Jubbulpore, and from a paper by Rām Lāl Sharma, schoolmaster, Bilāspur.

the Bharias. And there are others of the same historical value. But there is no reason to doubt that Bharia is the contemptuous form of Bhar, as Telia for Teli, Jugia for Jogi, Kuria for Kori, and that the Bharias belong to the great Bhar tribe who were once dominant in the eastern part of the United Provinces, but are now at the bottom of the social scale, and relegated by their conquerors to the degrading office of swineherds. The Rājjhars, who appear to have formed a separate caste as the landowning subdivision of the Bhars, like the Rāj-Gonds among Gonds, are said to be the descendants of a Rāja and a Bharia woman. The Rājjhars form a separate caste in the Central Provinces, and the Bharias acknowledge some connection with them, but refuse to take water from their hands, as they consider them to be of impure blood. The Bharias also give Mahoba or Bāndhogarh as their former home, and these places are in the country of the Bhars. According to tradition Rāja Karna Deva, a former king of Dāhal, the classical name of the Jubbulpore country, was a Bhar, and it may be that the immigration of the Bharias into Jubbulpore dates from his period, which is taken as 1040 to 1080 A.D. While then it may be considered as fairly certain that the Bharias are merely the Bhar tribe with a variant of the name, it is clear from the titles of their family groups, which will shortly be given, that they are an extremely mixed class and consist largely of the descendants of members of other castes, who, having lost their own social position, have taken refuge among the Bharias at the bottom of the social scale. Mr. Crooke says of the Bhars :[1] "The most probable supposition is that the Bhars were a Dravidian race closely allied to the Kols, Cheros and Seoris, who at an early date succumbed to the invading Aryans. This is borne out by their appearance and physique, which closely resemble that of the undoubted non-Aryan aborigines of the Vindhyan-Kaimūr plateau." In the Central Provinces the Bharias have been so closely associated with the Gonds that they have been commonly considered to belong to that tribe. Thus Mr. Drysdale says of them :[2] 'The Bharias were the wildest of the wild Gonds

[1] *Tribes and Castes of the N. W. P.*, art. Bhar.
[2] *C. P. Census Report*, 1881, p. 188.

and were inveterate *dhayā*[1] cutters.' Although, however, they have to some extent intermarried with the Gonds, the Bharias were originally quite a distinct tribe, and would belong to the Kolarian or Munda group but that they have entirely forgotten their own language and speak only Hindi, though with a peculiar intonation especially noticeable in the case of their women.

2. Tribal sub-divisions.

The structure of the tribe is a very loose one, and though the Bharias say that they are divided into subcastes, there are none in reality. Members of all castes except the very lowest may become Bharias, and one Bharia will recognise another as a fellow-tribesman if he can show relationship to any person admitted to occupy that position. But a division is in process of formation in Bilāspur based on the practice of eating beef, from which some abstain, and in consequence look down on the others who are addicted to it, and call them Dhur Bharias, the term *dhur* meaning cattle. The abstainers from beef now refuse to marry with the others. The tribe is divided into a number of exogamous groups, and the names of these indicate the very heterogeneous elements of which it consists. Out of fifty-one groups reported not less than fifteen or sixteen have names derived from other castes or clans, showing almost certainly that such groups were formed by a mixed marriage or the admission of a family of outsiders. Such names are: Agaria, from the Agarias or iron-workers: this clan worships Loha-Sur, the god of the Agarias; Ahirwār, or the descendants of an Ahīr: this clan worships the Ahīr gods; Bamhania, born of a Brāhman ancestor; Binjhwār or Binjha, perhaps from the tribe of that name; Chandel, from a Rājpūt clan; Dagdoha, a synonym of Basor: persons of this sept hang a piece of bamboo and a curved knife to the waist of the bride at their marriages; Dhurua, born of a Dhurua Gond; Kuānpa, born of an Ahīr subcaste of that name; Kurka, of Korku parentage; Marāvi, the name of a Gond clan; Rāthor from a Rājpūt clan; Samarba from a Chamār; and Yarkara, the name of a Gond clan. These names sufficiently indicate the diverse elements of which the tribe is made up. Other

[1] *Dhayā* means the system of shifting cultivation, which until prohibited was so injurious to the forests.

group names with meanings are: Gambhele, or those who seclude their women in a separate house during the menstrual period; Kaitha, from the *kaith* tree (*Feronia elephantum*); Karondiha, from the *karonda* plant (*Carissa Carandas*); Magarha, from *magar* a crocodile: members of this group worship an image of a crocodile made with flour and fried in oil; Sonwāni, from *sona* gold: members of this group perform the ceremony of readmission of persons temporarily put out of caste by sprinkling on them a little water in which gold has been dipped. Any person who does not know his clan name calls himself a Chandel, and this group, though bearing the name of a distinguished Rājpūt clan, is looked upon as the lowest. But although the rule of exogamy in marriage is recognised, it is by no means strictly adhered to, and many cases are known in which unions have taken place between members of the same clan. So long as people can recollect a relationship between themselves, they do not permit their families to intermarry. But the memory of the Bharia does not extend beyond the third generation.

3. Marriage.

Marriages are adult, and the proposal comes from the boy's father, who has it conveyed to the girl's father through some friend in his village. If a betrothal is arranged the bride's father invites the father and friends of the bridegroom to dinner; on this occasion the boy's father brings some necklaces of lac beads and spangles and presents them to the bride's female relatives, who then come out and tie the necklaces round his neck and those of his friends, place the spangles on their foreheads, and then, catching hold of their cheeks, press and twist them violently. Some turmeric powder is also thrown on their faces. This is the binding portion of the betrothal ceremony. The date of marriage is fixed by a Brāhman, this being the only purpose for which he is employed, and a bride-price varying from six to twelve rupees is paid. On this occasion the women draw caricatures with turmeric or charcoal on the loin-cloth of the boy's father, which they manage to purloin. The marriage ceremony follows generally the Hindu form. The bridegroom puts on women's ornaments and carries with him an iron nut-cracker or dagger to keep off evil spirits. After

the wedding, the *midua*, a sort of burlesque dance, is held. The girl's mother gets the dress of the boy's father and puts it on, together with a false beard and moustaches, and dances, holding a wooden ladle in one hand and a packet of ashes in the other. Every time she approaches the bridegroom's father on her rounds she spills some of the ashes over him, and occasionally gives him a crack on the head with her ladle, these actions being accompanied by bursts of laughter from the party and frenzied playing by the musicians. When the party reach the bridegroom's house on their return, his mother and the other women come out and burn a little mustard and human hair in a lamp, the unpleasant smell emitted by these articles being considered potent to drive away evil spirits. Every time the bride leaves her father's house she must weep, and must cry separately with each one of her caste-sisters when taking leave of them. When she returns home she must begin weeping loudly on the boundary of the village, and continue doing so until she has embraced each of her relatives and friends, a performance which in a village containing a large number of Bharias may take from three to six hours. These tears are, however, considered to be a manifestation of joy, and the girl who cannot produce enough of them is often ridiculed. A prospective son-in-law who serves for his wife is known as Gharjiān. The work given him is always very heavy, and the Bharias have a saying which compares his treatment with that awarded to an ox obtained on hire. If a girl is seduced by a man of the tribe, she may be married to him by the ceremony prescribed for the remarriage of a widow, which consists merely in the placing of bangles on the wrists and a present of a new cloth, together with a feast to the caste-fellows. Similarly if she is seduced by a man of another caste who would be allowed to become a Bharia, she can be married as a widow to any man of the tribe. A widow is expected to marry her late husband's younger brother, but no compulsion is exercised. If a bachelor espouses a widow, he first goes through the ceremony of marriage with a ring to which a twig of the date-palm is tied, by carrying the ring seven times round the marriage post. This is necessary to save him from the sin of dying

unmarried, as the union with a widow is not reckoned as a true marriage. In Jubbulpore divorce is said to be allowed only for conjugal misbehaviour, and a Bharia will pass over three transgressions on his wife's part before finally turning her out of his house. A woman who wishes to leave her husband simply runs away from him and lives with somebody else. In this case the third party must pay a goat to the husband by way of compensation and give a feast to the caste-fellows.

4. Childbirth.

The carelessness of the Bharias in the matter of childbirth is notorious, and it is said that mothers commonly went on working up to the moment of childbirth and were delivered of children in the fields. Now, however, the woman lies up for three days, and some ceremonies of purification are performed. In Chhattīsgarh infants are branded on the day of their birth, under the impression that this will cause them to digest the food they have taken in the womb. The child is named six months after birth by the father's sister, and its lips are then touched with cooked food for the first time.

5. Funeral ceremonies.

The tribe both burn and bury the dead, and observe mourning for an adult for ten days, during which time they daily put out a leaf-cup containing food for the use of the deceased. In the third year after the death, the *mangan* or caste beggar visits the relatives of the deceased, and receives what they call one limb (*ang*), or half his belongings; the *ang* consists of a loin-cloth, a brass vessel and dish, an axe, a scythe and a wrist-ring.

6. Religion and magic.

The Bharias call themselves Hindus and worship the village deities of the locality, and on the day of Diwāli offer a black chicken to their family god, who may be Bura Deo, Dūlha Deo or Karua, the cobra. For this snake they profess great reverence, and say that he was actually born in a Bharia family. As he could not work in the fields he was usually employed on errands. One day he was sent to the house, and surprised one of his younger brother's wives, who had not heard him coming, without her veil. She reproached him, and he retired in dudgeon to the oven, where he was presently burnt to death by another woman, who kindled a fire under it not knowing that he was there. So he has

been deified and is worshipped by the tribe. The Bharias also venerate Bāgheshwar, the tiger god, and believe that no tiger will eat a Bharia. On the Diwāli day they invite the tiger to drink some gruel which they place ready for him behind their houses, at the same time warning the other villagers not to stir out of doors. In the morning they display the empty vessels as a proof that the tiger has visited them. They practise various magical devices, believing that they can kill a man by discharging at him a *mūth* or handful of charmed objects such as lemons, vermilion and seeds of urad. This ball will travel through the air and, descending on the house of the person at whom it is aimed, will kill him outright unless he can avert its power by stronger magic, and perhaps even cause it to recoil in the same manner on the head of the sender. They exorcise the Sudhiniyas or the drinkers of human blood. A person troubled by one of these is seated near the Bharia, who places two pots with their mouths joined over a fire. He recites incantations and the pots begin to boil, emitting blood. This result is obtained by placing a herb in the pot whose juice stains the water red. The blood-sucker is thus successfully exorcised. To drive away the evil eye they burn a mixture of chillies, salt, human hair and the husks of kodon, which emits a very evil smell. Such devices are practised by members of the tribe who hold the office of Bhumia or village priest. The Bharias are well-known thieves, and they say that the dark spots on the moon are caused by a banyan tree, which God planted with the object of diminishing her light and giving thieves a chance to ply their trade. If a Bhumia wishes to detect a thief, he sits clasping hands with a friend, while a pitcher is supported on their hands. An oblation is offered to the deity to guide the ordeal correctly, and the names of suspected persons are recited one by one, the name at which the pitcher topples over being that of the thief. But before employing this method of detection the Bhumia proclaims his intention of doing so on a certain date, and in the meantime places a heap of ashes in some lonely place and invites the thief to deposit the stolen article in the ashes to save himself from exposure. By common custom each person in the village is required to visit

the heap and mingle a handful of ashes with it, and not infrequently the thief, frightened at the Bhumia's powers of detection, takes the stolen article and buries it in the ash-heap where it is duly found, the necessity for resorting to the further method of divination being thus obviated. Occasionally the Bharia in his character of a Hindu will make a vow to pay for a recitation of the Satya Nārāyan Katha or some other holy work. But he understands nothing of it, and if the Brāhman employed takes a longer time than he had bargained for over the recitation he becomes extremely bored and irritated.

7. Social life and customs.

The scantiness of the Bharia's dress is proverbial, and the saying is '*Bharia bhwāka, pwānda langwāta*,' or 'The Bharia is verily a devil, who only covers his loins with a strip of cloth.' But lately he has assumed more clothing. Formerly an iron ring carried on the wrist to exorcise the evil spirits was his only ornament. Women wear usually only one coarse cloth dyed red, spangles on the forehead and ears, bead necklaces, and cheap metal bracelets and anklets. Some now have Hindu ornaments, but in common with other low castes they do not usually wear a nose-ring, out of respect to the higher castes. Women, though they work in the fields, do not commonly wear shoes; and if these are necessary to protect the feet from thorns, they take them off and carry them in the presence of an elder or a man of higher caste. They are tattooed with various devices, as a cock, a crown, a native chair, a pitcher stand, a sieve and a figure called *dhandha*, which consists of six dots joined by lines, and appears to be a representation of a man, one dot standing for the head, one for the body, two for the arms and two for the legs. This device is also used by other castes, and they evince reluctance if asked to explain its meaning, so that it may be intended as a representation of the girl's future husband. The Bharia is considered very ugly, and a saying about him is: 'The Bharia came down from the hills and got burnt by a cinder, so that his face is black.' He does not bathe for months together, and lives in a dirty hovel, infested by the fowls which he loves to rear. His food consists of coarse grain, often with boiled leaves as a vegetable, and he consumes much whey, mixing it with his scanty portion of

grain. Members of all except the lowest castes are admitted to the Bharia community on presentation of a *pagri* and some money to the headman, together with a feast to the caste-fellows. The Bharias do not eat monkeys, beef or the leavings of others, but they freely consume fowls and pork. They are not considered as impure, but rank above those castes only whose touch conveys pollution. For the slaughter of a cow the Bilāspur Bharias inflict the severe punishment of nine daily feasts to the caste, or one for each limb of the cow, the limbs being held to consist of the legs, ears, horns and tail. They have an aversion for the horse and will not remove its dung. To account for this they tell a story to the effect that in the beginning God gave them a horse to ride and fight upon. But they did not know how to mount the horse because it was so high. The wisest man among them then proposed to cut notches in the side of the animal by which they could climb up, and they did this. But God, when he saw it, was very angry with them, and ordered that they should never be soldiers, but should be given a winnowing-fan and broom to sweep the grain out of the grass and make their livelihood in that way.

8. Occupation.

The Bharias are usually farmservants and field-labourers, and their services in these capacities are in much request. They are hardy and industrious, and so simple that it is an easy matter for their masters to involve them in perpetual debt, and thus to keep them bound to service from generation to generation. They have no understanding of accounts, and the saying, 'Pay for the marriage of a Bharia and he is your bond-slave for ever,' sufficiently explains the methods adopted by their employers and creditors.

BHĀT

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Bhāt, Rao, Jasondhi.—The caste of bards and genealogists. In 1911 the Bhāts numbered 29,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār, being distributed over all Districts and States, with a slight preponderance in large towns such as Nāgpur, Jubbulpore and Amraoti. The name Bhāt is derived from the Sanskrit Bhatta, a lord. The origin of the Bhāts has been discussed in detail by Sir H. Risley. Some, no doubt, are derived from the Brāhman caste as stated by Mr. Nesfield: "They are an offshoot from those secularised Brāhmans who frequented the courts of princes and the camps of warriors, recited their praises in public, and kept records of their genealogies. Such, without much variation, is the function of the Bhāt at the present day. The Mahābhārata speaks of a band of bards and eulogists marching in front of Yudishthira as he made his progress from the field of Kurukshetra towards Hastinapur. But these very men are spoken of in the same poem as Brāhmans. Naturally as time went on these courtier priests became hereditary bards, receded from the parent stem and founded a new caste." "The best modern opinion," Sir H. 1. Origin of the Bhāts.

Risley states,[1] "seems disposed to find the germ of the Brāhman caste in the bards, ministers and family priests, who were attached to the king's household in Vedic times. The characteristic profession of the Bhāts has an ancient and distinguished history. The literature of both Greece and India owes the preservation of its oldest treasures to the singers who recited poems in the households of the chiefs, and doubtless helped in some measure to shape the masterpieces which they handed down. Their place was one of marked distinction. In the days when writing was unknown, the man who could remember many verses was held in high honour by the tribal chief, who depended upon the memory of the bard for his personal amusement, for the record of his own and his ancestors' prowess, and for the maintenance of the genealogy which established the purity of his descent. The bard, like the herald, was not lightly to be slain, and even Odysseus in the heat of his vengeance spares the ἀοιδός Phemius, 'who sang among the wooers of necessity.'"[2]

2. Bhāts and Chārans.

There is no reason to doubt that the Birm or Baram Bhāts are an offshoot of Brāhmans, their name being merely a corruption of the term Brāhman. But the caste is a very mixed one, and another large section, the Chārans, are almost certainly derived from Rājpūts. Malcolm states that according to the fable of their origin, Mahādeo first created Bhāts to attend his lion and bull; but these could not prevent the former from killing the latter, which was a source of infinite vexation and trouble, as it compelled Mahādeo to create new ones. He therefore formed the Chāran, equally devout with the Bhāt, but of bolder spirit, and gave him in charge these favourite animals. From that time no bull was ever destroyed by the lion.[3] This fable perhaps indicates that while the peaceful Bhāts were Brāhmans, the more warlike Chārans were Rājpūts. It is also said that some Rājpūts disguised themselves as bards to escape the vengeance of Parasurāma.[4] The Māru Chārans intermarry with Rājpūts, and their name appears to be derived from Māru, the term for the Rājputāna desert, which is also found in Mārwār.

[1] *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Brāhman.
[2] Art. Bhāt.
[3] Malcolm, *Central India*, ii. p. 132.
[4] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 406.

Malcolm states[1] that when the Rājpūts migrated from the banks of the Ganges to Rājputāna, their Brāhman priests did not accompany them in any numbers, and hence the Chārans arose and supplied their place. They had to understand the rites of worship, particularly of Siva and Pārvati, the favourite deities of the Rājpūts, and were taught to read and write. One class became merchants and travelled with large convoys of goods, and the others were the bards and genealogists of the Rājpūts. Their songs were in the rudest metre, and their language was the local dialect, understood by all. All this evidence shows that the Chārans were a class of Rājpūt bards.

3. Lower-class Bhāts.

But besides the Birm or Brāhman Bhāts and the Rājpūt Chārans there is another large body of the caste of mixed origin, who serve as bards of the lower castes and are probably composed to a great extent of members of these castes. These are known as the Brid-dhari or begging Bhāts. They beg from such castes as Lodhis, Telis, Kurmis, Ahīrs and so on, each caste having a separate section of Bhāts to serve it; the Bhāts of each caste take food from the members of the caste, but they also eat and intermarry with each other. Again, there are Bairāgi Bhāts who beg from Bairāgis, and keep the genealogies of the temple-priests and their successors. Yet another class are the Dasaundhis or Jasondhis, who sing songs in honour of Devi, play on musical instruments and practise astrology. These rank below the cultivating castes and sometimes admit members of such castes who have taken religious vows.

4. Social status of the caste.

The Brāhman or Birm-Bhāts form a separate subcaste, and the Rājpūts are sometimes called Rājbhāt. These wear the sacred thread, which the Brid-Bhāts and Jasondhis do not. The social status of the Bhāts appears to vary greatly. Sir H. Risley states that they rank immediately below Kāyasths, and Brāhmans will take water from their hands. The Chārans are treated by the Rājpūts with the greatest respect;[2] the highest ruler rises when one of this class enters or leaves an assembly, and the Chāran is invited to eat first at a Rājpūt feast. He smokes from the same huqqa as Rājpūts, and only caste-fellows can do this, as the smoke

[1] Malcolm, ii. p. 135.

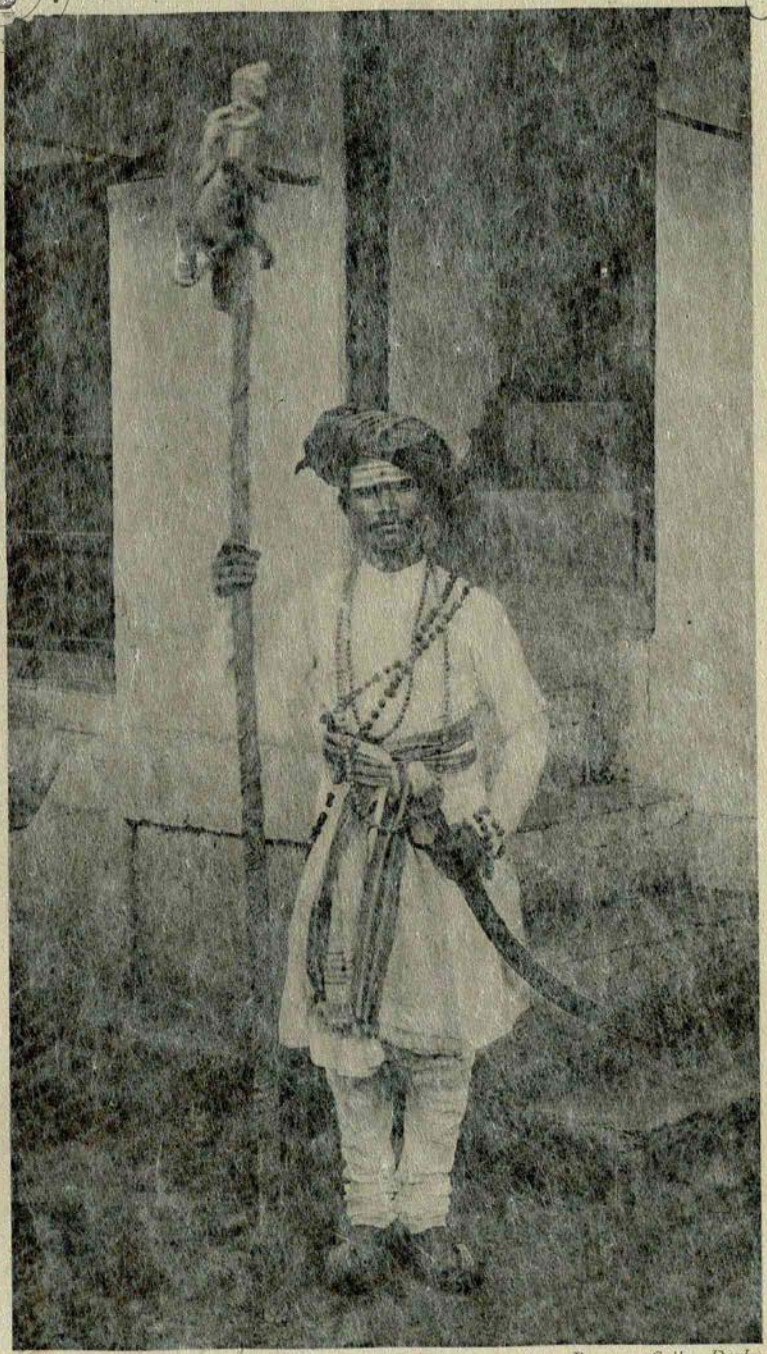
[2] *Rājasthān*, ii. pp. 133, 134.

passes through water on its way to the mouth. In past times the Chāran acted as a herald, and his person was inviolable. He was addressed as Mahārāj,[1] and could sit on the Singhāsan or Lion's Hide, the ancient term for a Rājpūt throne, as well as on the hides of the tiger, panther and black antelope. The Rājpūts held him in equal estimation with the Brāhman or perhaps even greater.[2] This was because they looked to him to enshrine their heroic deeds in his songs and hand them down to posterity. His sarcastic references to a defeat in battle or any act displaying a want of courage inflamed their passions as nothing else could do. On the other hand, the Brid-Bhāts, who serve the lower castes, occupy an inferior position. This is because they beg at weddings and other feasts, and accept cooked food from members of the caste who are their clients. Such an act constitutes an admission of inferior status, and as the Bhāts eat together their position becomes equivalent to that of the lowest group among them. Thus if other Bhāts eat with the Bhāts of Telis or Kalārs, who have taken cooked food from their clients, they are all in the position of having taken food from Telis and Kalārs, a thing which only the lowest castes will do. If the Bhāt of any caste, such as the Kurmis, keeps a girl of that caste, she can be admitted into the community, which is therefore of a very mixed character. Such a caste as the Kurmis will not even take water from the hands of the Bhāts who serve them. This rule applies also where a special section of the caste itself act as bards and minstrels. Thus the Pardhāns are the bards of the Gonds, but rank below ordinary Gonds, who give them food and will not take it from them. And the Sānsias, the bards of the Jāts, and the Mīrāsis, who are employed in this capacity by the lower castes generally, occupy a very inferior position, and are sometimes considered as impure.

5. Social customs.

The customs of the Bhāts resemble those of other castes of corresponding status. The higher Bhāts forbid the re-marriage of widows, and expel a girl who becomes pregnant before marriage. They carry a dagger, the special emblem of the Chārans, in order to be distinguished from low-class

[1] Great King, the ordinary method of address to Brāhmans.
[2] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 175.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

BHĀT WITH HIS *PUTLA* OR DOLL.

Bhāts. The Bhāts generally display the *chaur* or yak-tail whisk and the *chhadi* or silver-plated rod on ceremonial occasions, and they worship these emblems of their calling on the principal festivals. The former is waved over the bridegroom at a wedding, and the latter is borne before him. The Brāhman Bhāts abstain from flesh of any kind and liquor, and other Bhāts usually have the same rules about food as the caste whom they serve. Brāhman Bhāts and Chārans alone wear the sacred thread. The high status sometimes assigned to this division of the caste is shown in the saying:

Age Brāhman pīchhe Bhāt
tāke pīchhe aur jāt,

or, 'First comes the Brāhman, then the Bhāt, and after them the other castes.'

6. The Bhāt's business.

The business of a Bhāt in former times is thus described by Forbes:[1] "When the rainy season closes and travelling becomes practicable, the bard sets off on his yearly tour from his residence in the Bhātwāra or bard's quarter of some city or town. One by one he visits each of the Rājpūt chiefs who are his patrons, and from whom he has received portions of land or annual grants of money, timing his arrival, if possible, to suit occasions of marriage or other domestic festivals. After he has received the usual courtesies he produces the Wai, a book written in his own crabbed hieroglyphics or in those of his father, which contains the descent of the house from its founder, interspersed with many a verse or ballad, the dark sayings contained in which are chanted forth in musical cadence to a delighted audience, and are then orally interpreted by the bard with many an illustrative anecdote or tale. The Wai, however, is not merely a source for the gratification of family pride or even of love of song; it is also a record by which questions of relationship are determined when a marriage is in prospect, and disputes relating to the division of ancestral property are decided, intricate as these last necessarily are from the practice of polygamy and the rule that all the sons of a family are entitled to a share. It is the duty of the bard at each periodical visit to register the births, marriages and deaths

[1] *Rāsmāla*, ii. pp. 261, 262.

which have taken place in the family since his last circuit, as well as to chronicle all the other events worthy of remark which have occurred to affect the fortunes of his patron; nor have we ever heard even a doubt suggested regarding the accurate, much less the honest fulfilment of this duty by the bard. The manners of the bardic tribe are very similar to those of their Rājpūt clients; their dress is nearly the same, but the bard seldom appears without the *katār* or dagger, a representation of which is scrawled beside his signature, and often rudely engraved upon his monumental stone, in evidence of his death in the sacred duty of *trāga* (suicide)."[1]

7. Their extortionate practices.

The Bhāt thus fulfilled a most useful function as registrar of births and marriages. But his merits were soon eclipsed by the evils produced by his custom of extolling liberal patrons and satirising those who gave inadequately. The desire of the Rājpūts to be handed down to fame in the Bhāt's songs was such that no extravagance was spared to satisfy him. Chand, the great Rājpūt bard, sang of the marriage of Prithwi Rāj, king of Delhi, that the bride's father emptied his coffers in gifts, but he filled them with the praises of mankind. A lakh of rupees[2] was given to the chief bard, and this became a precedent for similar occasions. "Until vanity suffers itself to be controlled," Colonel Tod wrote,[3] "and the aristocratic Rājpūts submit to republican simplicity, the evils arising from nuptial profusion will not cease. Unfortunately those who should check it find their interest in stimulating it, namely, the whole crowd of *māngtas* or beggars, bards, minstrels, jugglers, Brāhmans, who assemble on these occasions, and pour forth their epithalamiums in praise of the virtue of liberality. The bards are the grand recorders of fame, and the volume of precedent is always

[1] See later in this article.

[2] This present of a lakh of rupees is known as Lākh Pasāru, and it is not usually given in cash but in kind. It is made up of grain, land, carriages, jewellery, horses, camels and elephants, and varies in value from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 70,000. A living bard, Mahamahopadhyaya Murar Dās, has received three Lakh Pasārus from the Rājas of Jodhpur and has refused one from the Rāna of Udaipur in view of the fact that he was made *ayachaka* by the Jodhpur Rāja. *Ayachaka* means literally 'not a beggar,' and when a bard has once been made *ayachaka* he cannot accept gifts from any person other than his own patron. An *ayachaka* was formerly known as *polpat*, as it became his bounden duty to sing the praises of his patron constantly from the gate (*pol*) of the donor's fort or castle. (Mr. Hīra Lāl.)

[3] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 548.

resorted to by citing the liberality of former chiefs; while the dread of their satire[1] shuts the eyes of the chief to consequences, and they are only anxious to maintain the reputation of their ancestors, though fraught with future ruin." Owing to this insensate liberality in the desire to satisfy the bards and win their praises, a Rājpūt chief who had to marry a daughter was often practically ruined; and the desire to avoid such obligations led to the general practice of female infanticide, formerly so prevalent in Rājputāna. The importance of the bards increased their voracity; Mr. Nesfield describes them as "Rapacious and conceited mendicants, too proud to work but not too proud to beg." The Dholis[2] or minstrels were one of the seven great evils which the famous king Sidhrāj expelled from Anhilwāda Pātan in Gujarāt; the Dākans or witches were another.[3] Malcolm states that "They give praise and fame in their songs to those who are liberal to them, while they visit those who neglect or injure them with satires in which the victims are usually reproached with illegitimate birth and meanness of character. Sometimes the Bhāt, if very seriously offended, fixes an effigy of the person he desires to degrade on a long pole and appends to it a slipper as a mark of disgrace. In such cases the song of the Bhāt records the infamy of the object of his revenge. This image usually travels the country till the party or his friends purchase the cessation of the curses and ridicule thus entailed. It is not deemed in these countries within the power of the prince, much less any other person, to stop a Bhāt or even punish him for such a proceeding. In 1812 Sevak Rām Seth, a banker of Holkar's court, offended one of these Bhāts, pushing him rudely out of the shop where the man had come to ask alms. The man made a figure[4] of him to which he attached a slipper and carried it to court, and everywhere sang the infamy of the Seth. The latter, though a man of wealth and influence, could not prevent him, but obstinately refused to purchase his forbearance. His friends after some months subscribed Rs. 80 and the Bhāt discontinued his execrations, but said it was

[1] *Viserva*, lit. poison.
[2] From *dhol*, a drum.
[3] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 184.
[4] Lit. *putli* or doll.

too late, as his curses had taken effect; and the superstitious Hindus ascribe the ruin of the banker, which took place some years afterwards, to this unfortunate event." The loquacity and importunity of the Bhāts are shown in the saying, 'Four Bhāts make a crowd'; and their insincerity in the proverb quoted by Mr. Crooke, "The bard, the innkeeper and the harlot have no heart; they are polite when customers arrive, but neglect those leaving (after they have paid)"[1] The Bhāt women are as bold, voluble and ready in retort as the men. When a Bhāt woman passes a male caste-fellow on the road, it is the latter who raises a piece of cloth to his face till the woman is out of sight.[2]

8. The Jasondhis.

Some of the lower classes of Bhāts have become religious mendicants and musicians, and perform ceremonial functions. Thus the Jasondhis, who are considered a class of Bhāts, take their name from the *jas* or hymns sung in praise of Devi. They are divided into various sections, as the Nakīb or flag-bearers in a procession, the Nāzir or ushers who introduced visitors to the Rāja, the Nagāria or players on kettle-drums, the Karaola who pour sesamum oil on their clothes and beg, and the Panda, who serve as priests of Devi, and beg carrying an image of the goddess in their hands. There is also a section of Muhammadan Bhāts who serve as bards and genealogists for Muhammadan castes. Some Bhāts, having the rare and needful qualification of literacy so that they can read the old Sanskrit medical works, have, like a number of Brāhmans, taken to the practice of medicine and are known as Kavirāj.

9. The Chārans as carriers.

As already stated, the persons of the Chārans in the capacity of bard and herald were sacred, and they travelled from court to court without fear of molestation from robbers or enemies. It seems likely that the Chārans may have united the breeding of cattle to their calling of bard; but in any case the advantage derived from their sanctity was so important that they gradually became the chief carriers and traders of Rājputāna and the adjoining tracts. They further, in virtue of their holy character, enjoyed a partial exemption from the perpetual and harassing imposts levied

[1] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bhāt.
[2] *Ibidem*. Veiling the face is a sign of modesty.

by every petty State on produce entering its territory; and the combination of advantages thus obtained was such as to give them almost a monopoly in trade. They carried merchandise on large droves of bullocks all over Rājputāna and the adjoining countries; and in course of time the carriers restricted themselves to their new profession, splitting off from the Chārans and forming the caste of Banjāras.

10. Suicide and the fear of ghosts.

But the mere reverence for their calling would not have sufficed for a permanent safeguard to the Chārans from destitute and unscrupulous robbers. They preserved it by the customs of *Chandi* or *Trāga* and *Dharna*. These consisted in their readiness to mutilate, starve or kill themselves rather than give up property entrusted to their care; and it was a general belief that their ghosts would then haunt the persons whose ill deeds had forced them to take their own lives. It seems likely that this belief in the power of a suicide or murdered man to avenge himself by haunting any persons who had injured him or been responsible for his death may have had a somewhat wide prevalence and been partly accountable for the reprobation attaching in early times to the murderer and the act of self-slaughter. The haunted murderer would be impure and would bring ill-fortune on all who had to do with him, while the injury which a suicide would inflict on his relatives in haunting them would cause this act to be regarded as a sin against one's family and tribe. Even the ordinary fear of the ghosts of people who die in the natural course, and especially of those who are killed by accident, is so strong that a large part of the funeral rites is devoted to placating and laying the ghost of the dead man; and in India the period of observance of mourning for the dead is perhaps in reality that time during which the spirit of the dead man is supposed to haunt his old abode and render the survivors of his family impure. It was this fear of ghosts on which the Chārans relied, nor did they hesitate a moment to sacrifice their lives in defence of any obligation they had undertaken or of property committed to their care. When plunderers carried off any cattle belonging to the Chārans, the whole community would proceed to the spot where the robbers resided; and in failure of having their property

restored would cut off the heads of several of their old men and women. Frequent instances occurred of a man dressing himself in cotton-quilted cloths steeped in oil which he set on fire at the bottom, and thus danced against the person against whom *trāga* was performed until the miserable creature dropped down and was burnt to ashes. On one occasion a Cutch chieftain, attempting to escape with his wife and child from a village, was overtaken by his enemy when about to leap a precipice; immediately turning he cut off his wife's head with his scimitar and, flourishing his reeking blade in the face of his pursuer, denounced against him the curse of the *trāga* which he had so fearfully performed.[1] In this case it was supposed that the wife's ghost would haunt the enemy who had driven the husband to kill her.

11. Instances of haunting and laying ghosts.

The following account in the *Rāsmāla*[2] is an instance of suicide and of the actual haunting by the ghost: A Chāran asserted a claim against the chief of Siela in Kāthiāwār, which the latter refused to liquidate. The bard thereupon, taking forty of his caste with him, went to Siela with the intention of sitting *Dharna* at the chief's door and preventing any one from coming out or going in until the claim should be discharged. However, as they approached the town, the chief, becoming aware of their intention, caused the gates to be closed. The bards remained outside and for three days abstained from food; on the fourth day they proceeded to perform *trāga* as follows: some hacked their own arms; others decapitated three old women of the party and hung their heads up at the gate as a garland; certain of the women cut off their own breasts. The bards also pierced the throats of four of their old men with spikes, and they took two young girls by the heels, and dashed out their brains against the town gate. The Chāran to whom the money was due dressed himself in clothes wadded with cotton which he steeped in oil and then set on fire. He thus burned himself to death. But as he died he cried out, "I am now dying; but I will become a headless ghost (*Kuvīs*) in the palace, and will take the chief's life and cut off his posterity." After this sacrifice the rest of the bards returned home.

[1] Postans, *Cutch*, p. 172.

[2] Vol. ii. pp. 392-394.

On the third day after the Chāran's death his Bhūt (ghost) threw the Rāni downstairs so that she was very much injured. Many other persons also beheld the headless phantom in the palace. At last he entered the chief's head and set him trembling. At night he would throw stones at the palace, and he killed a female servant outright. At length, in consequence of the various acts of oppression which he committed, none dared to approach the chief's mansion even in broad daylight. In order to exorcise the Bhūt, Jogis, Fakīrs and Brāhmans were sent for from many different places; but whoever attempted the cure was immediately assailed by the Bhūt in the chief's body, and that so furiously that the exorcist's courage failed him. The Bhūt would also cause the chief to tear the flesh off his own arms with his teeth. Besides this, four or five persons died of injuries received from the Bhūt; but nobody had the power to expel him. At length a foreign Jyotishi (astrologer) came who had a great reputation for charms and magic, and the chief sent for him and paid him honour. First he tied all round the house threads which he had charged with a charm; then he sprinkled charmed milk and water all round; then he drove a charmed iron nail into the ground at each corner of the mansion, and two at the door. He purified the house and continued his charms and incantations for forty-one days, every day making sacrifices at the cemetery to the Bhūt's spirit. The Joshi lived in a room securely fastened up; but people say that while he was muttering his charms stones would fall and strike the windows. Finally the Joshi brought the chief, who had been living in a separate room, and tried to exorcise the spirit. The patient began to be very violent, but the Joshi and his people spared no pains in thrashing him until they had rendered him quite docile. A sacrificial fire-pit was made and a lemon placed between it and the chief. The Joshi commanded the Bhūt to enter the lime. The possessed, however, said, 'Who are you; if one of your Deos (gods) were to come, I would not quit this person.' Thus they went on from morning till noon. At last they came outside, and, burning various kinds of incense and sprinkling many charms, the Bhūt was got out into the lemon. When the lemon began

to jump about, the whole of the spectators praised the Joshi, crying out: 'The Bhūt has gone into the lemon! The Bhūt has gone into the lemon!' The possessed person himself, when he saw the lemon hopping about, was perfectly satisfied that the Bhūt had left his body and gone out into the lemon. The Joshi then drove the lemon outside the city, followed by drummers and trumpeters; if the lemon left the road, he would touch it with his stick and put it into the right way again. On the track they sprinkled mustard and salt and finally buried the lemon in a pit seven cubits deep, throwing into the hole above it mustard and salt, and over these dust and stones, and filling in the space between the stones with lead. At each corner, too, the Joshi drove in an iron nail, two feet long, which he had previously charmed. The lemon buried, the people returned home, and not one of them ever saw the Bhūt thereafter. According to the recorder of the tale, the cure was effected by putting quicksilver into the lemon. When a man is attacked with fever or becomes speechless or appears to have lockjaw, his friends conclude from these indications that he is possessed by a Bhūt.

In another case some Bhāts had been put in charge, by the chief of a small State, of a village which was coveted by a neighbouring prince, the Rāna of Dānta. The latter sent for the Bhāts and asked them to guard one or two of his villages, and having obtained their absence by this pretext he raided their village, carrying off hostages and cattle. When the Bhāts got back they collected to the number of a hundred and began to perform *Dharna* against the Rāna. They set out from their village, and at every two miles as they advanced they burned a man, so that by the time they got to the Rāna's territory seven or eight men had been burnt. They were then pacified by his people and induced to go back. The Rāna offered them presents, but they refused to accept them, as they said the guilt of the death of their fellows who had been burned would thereby be removed from the Rāna. The Rāna lost all the seven sons born to him and died childless, and it was generally held to be on account of this sin.[1]

[1] *Rāsmāla*, ii. pp. 143, 144.

12. The Chārans as sureties.

Such was the certainty attaching to the Chāran's readiness to forfeit his life rather than prove false to a trust, and the fear entertained of the offence of causing him to do so and being haunted by his ghost, that his security was eagerly coveted in every kind of transaction. "No traveller could journey unattended by these guards, who for a small sum were satisfied to conduct him in safety.[1] The guards, called Valāvas, were never backward in inflicting the most grievous wounds and even causing the death of their old men and women if the robbers persisted in plundering those under their protection; but this seldom happened, as the wildest Koli, Kāthi or Rājpūt held the person of a Chāran sacred. Besides becoming safeguards to travellers and goods, they used to stand security to the amount of many lakhs of rupees. When rents and property were concerned, the Rājpūts preferred a Chāran's bond to that of the wealthiest banker. They also gave security for good behaviour, called *chālu zāmin*, and for personal attendance in court called *hāzar zāmin*. The ordinary *trāga* went no farther than a cut on the arm with the *katār* or crease; the forearms of those who were in the habit of becoming security had generally several cuts from the elbow downwards. The Chārans, both men and women, wounded themselves, committed suicide and murdered their relations with the most complete self-devotion. In 1812 the Marāthas brought a body of troops to impose a payment on the village of Pānchpipla.[2] The Chārans resisted the demand, but finding the Marāthas determined to carry their point, after a remonstrance against paying any kind of revenue as being contrary to their occupation and principles, they at last cut the throats of ten young children and threw them at the feet of the Marāthas, exclaiming, 'These are our riches and the only payment we can make.' The Chārans were immediately seized and confined in irons at Jambusar."

As was the case with the Bhāt and the Brāhman, the source of the Chāran's power lay in the widespread fear that a Chāran's blood brought ruin on him who caused the blood to be spilt. It was also sometimes considered that the

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Hindus of Gujarāt*, Mr. Bhimbhai Kirparām, pp. 217, 219.
[2] In Broach.

Chāran was possessed by his deity, and the caste were known as Deoputra or sons of God, the favourite dwelling of the guardian spirit.

13. Suicide as a means of revenge.

Such a belief enhanced the guilt attaching to the act of causing or being responsible for a Chāran's death. Suicide from motives of revenge has been practised in other countries. "Another common form of suicide which is admired as heroic in China is that committed for the purpose of taking revenge upon an enemy who is otherwise out of reach—according to Chinese ideas a most effective mode of revenge, not only because the law throws the responsibility of the deed on him who occasioned it, but also because the disembodied soul is supposed to be better able than the living man to persecute the enemy."[1] Similarly, among the Hos or Mundas the suicide of young married women is or was extremely common, and the usual motive was that the girl, being unhappy in her husband's house, jumped down a well or otherwise made away with herself in the belief that she would take revenge on his family by haunting them after her death. The treatment of the suicide's body was sometimes directed to prevent his spirit from causing trouble. "According to Jewish custom persons who had killed themselves were left unburied till sunset, perhaps for fear lest the spirit of the deceased otherwise might find its way back to the old home."[2] At Athens the right hand of a person who had taken his own life was struck off and buried apart from the rest of the body, evidently in order to make him harmless after death.[3] Similarly, in England suicides were buried with a spike through the chest to prevent their spirits from rising, and at cross-roads, so that the ghost might not be able to find its way home. This fear appears to have partly underlain the idea that suicide was a crime or an offence against society and the state, though, as shown by Dr. Westermarck, the reprobation attaching to it was far from universal; while in the cultured communities of ancient Greece and Rome, and among such military peoples as the Japanese suicide was considered at all times a legitimate and, on occasion, a highly meritorious and praiseworthy act.

[1] Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, ii. p. 242.
[2] Westermarck, *ibidem*, p. 246. [3] Westermarck, *ibidem*, p. 248.