That condition of mind which leads to the taking of one's own life from motives of revenge is perhaps a fruit of ignorance and solitude. The mind becomes distorted, and the sufferer attributes the unhappiness really caused by accident or his own faults or defects to the persecution of a malignant fate or the ill-will of his neighbours and associates. And long brooding over his wrongs eventuates in his taking the extreme step. The crime known as running amok appears to be the outcome of a similar state of mind. Here too the criminal considers his wrongs or misery as the result of injury or unjust treatment from his fellow-men, and, careless of his own life, determines to be revenged on them. Such hatred of one's kind is cured by education, leading to a truer appreciation of the circumstances and environment which determine the course of life, and by the more cheerful temper engendered by social intercourse. And these crimes of vengeance tend to die out with the advance of civilisation.

14. *Dharna.*

Analogous to the custom of *trāga* was that of *Dharna*, which was frequently and generally resorted to for the redress of wrongs and offences at a time when the law made little provision for either. The ordinary method of *Dharna* was to sit starving oneself in front of the door of the person from whom redress was sought until he gave it from fear of causing the death of the suppliant and being haunted by his ghost. It was, naturally, useless unless the person seeking redress was prepared to go to extremes, and has some analogy to the modern hunger-strike with the object of getting out of jail. Another common device was to thrust a spear-blade through both cheeks, and in this state to dance before the person against whom *Dharna* was practised. The pain had to be borne without a sign of suffering, which, if displayed, would destroy its efficacy. Or a creditor would proceed to the door of his debtor and demand payment, and if not appeased would stand up in his presence with an enormous weight upon his head, which he had brought with him for the purpose, swearing never to alter his position until satisfaction was given, and denouncing at the same time the most horrible execrations on his debtor, should he suffer him to expire in that situation. This seldom failed to produce the desired effect, but should he actually die

while in *Dharna*, the debtor's house was razed to the earth and he and his family sold for the satisfaction of the creditor's heirs. Another and more desperate form of *Dharna*, only occasionally resorted to, was to erect a large pile of wood before the house of the debtor, and after the customary application for payment had been refused the creditor tied on the top of the pile a cow or a calf, or very frequently an old woman, generally his mother or other relation, swearing at the same time to set fire to it if satisfaction was not instantly given. All the time the old woman denounced the bitterest curses, threatening to persecute the wretched debtor both here and hereafter.[1]

The word *dharna* means 'to place or lay on,' and hence 'a pledge.' Mr. Hīra Lāl suggests that the standing with a weight on the head may have been the original form of the penance, from which the other and severer methods were subsequently derived. Another custom known as *dharna* is that of a suppliant placing a stone on the shrine of a god or tomb of a saint. He makes his request and, laying the stone on the shrine, says, "Here I place this stone until you fulfil my prayer; if I do not remove it, the shame is on you." If the prayer is afterwards fulfilled, he takes away the stone and offers a cocoanut. It seems clear that the underlying idea of this custom is the same as that of standing with a stone on the head as described above, but it is difficult to say which was the earlier or original form.

15. Casting out spirits.

As a general rule, if the guilt of having caused a suicide was at a man's door, he should expiate it by going to the Ganges to bathe. When a man was haunted by the ghost of any one whom he had wronged, whether such a person had committed suicide or simply died of grief at being unable to obtain redress, it was said of him *Brahm laga*, or that Brahma had possessed him. The spirit of a Brāhman boy, who has died unmarried, is also accustomed to haunt any person who walks over his grave in an impure condition or otherwise defiles it, and when a man is haunted in such a manner it is called *Brahm laga*. Then an exorcist is called,

[1] The above account of *Dharna* is taken from Colonel Tone's *Letter on the Marāthas* (India Office Tracts).

who sprinkles water over the possessed man, and this burns the Brahm Deo or spirit inside him as if it were burning oil. The spirit cries out, and the exorcist orders him to leave the man. Then the spirit states how he has been injured by the man, and refuses to leave him. The exorcist asks him what he requires on condition of leaving the man, and he asks for some good food or something else, and is given it. The exorcist takes a nail and goes to a *pīpal* tree and orders the Brahm Deo to go into the tree. Brahm Deo obeys, and the exorcist drives the nail into the tree and the spirit remains imprisoned there until somebody takes the nail out, when he will come out again and haunt him. The Hindus think that the god Brahma lives in the roots of the *pīpal* tree, Siva in its branches, and Vishnu in the *choti* or scalp-knot, that is the topmost foliage.

16. Sulking. Going bankrupt.

Another and mild form of *Dharna* is that known as *Khātpāti*. When a woman is angry with her husband on account of his having refused her some request, she will put her bed in a corner of the room and go and lie on it, turning her face to the wall, and remain so, not answering when spoken to nor taking food. The term Khātpāti signifies keeping to one side of the bed, and there she will remain until her husband accedes to her request, unless indeed he should decide to beat her instead. This is merely an exaggerated form of the familiar display of temper known as sulking. It is interesting to note the use of the phrase turning one's face to the wall, with something of the meaning attached to it in the Bible.

A custom similar to that of *Dharna* was called *Diwāla nikālna* or going bankrupt. When a merchant had had heavy losses and could not meet his liabilities, he would place the lock of his door outside, reversing it, and sit in the veranda with a piece of sackcloth over him. Or he wrapped round him the floor-carpet of his room. When he had displayed these signs of ruin and self-abasement his creditors would not sue him, but he would never be able to borrow money again.

17. Bhāt songs.

In conclusion a few specimens of Bhāt songs may be given. The following is an account of the last king of Nāgpur, Raghuji III., commonly known as Bāji Rao:

They made a picture of Bāji Rao ;
Bāji Rao was the finest king to see ;
The Brāhmans told lies about him,
They sent a letter from Nāgpur to Calcutta,
They made Bāji Rao go on a pilgrimage.
Brothers ! the great Sirdārs who were with him,
They brought a troop of five hundred horse !
The Tuesday fair in Benāres was held with fireworks,
They made the Ganges pink with rose-petals.
Bāji Rao's gifts were splendid,
His turban and coat were of brocaded silk,
A pair of diamonds and emeralds
He gave to the Brāhmans of Benāres.
Oh brothers ! the Rāja sat in a covered howdah bound on an elephant !
Many fans waved over his head ;
How charitable a king he was !

In the above song a note of regret is manifest for the parade and display of the old court of Nāgpur, English rule being less picturesque. The next is a song about the English :

The English have taken the throne of Nāgpur,
The fear of the English is great.
In a moment's time they conquer countries.
The guns boomed, the English came strong and warlike,
They give wealth to all.
They ram the ramrods in the guns.
They conquered also Tippoo's dominions,
The English are ruling in the fort of Gāwilgarh.

The following is another song about the English, not quite so complimentary :

The English became our kings and have made current the *kaldār* (milled) rupee.
The menials are favoured and the Bhāts have lost their profession,
The mango has lost its taste, the milk has lost its sweetness,
The rose has lost its scent.
Bāji Rao of Nāgpur he also is gone,
No longer are the drums beaten at the palace gate.
Poona customs have come in.
Brāhmans knowing the eighteen Purāns have become Christians ;
The son thinks himself better than his father,
The daughter-in-law no longer respects her mother-in-law,
The wife fights with her husband.
The English have made the railways and telegraphs ;
The people wondered at the silver rupees and all the country prospered.

The following is a song about the Nerbudda at Mandla, Rewa being another name for the river:

The stream of the world springs out breaking apart the hills;
The Rewa cuts her path through the soil, the air is darkened with her spray.
All the length of her banks are the seats of saints; hermits and pilgrims worship her.
On seeing the holy river a man's sins fall away as wood is cut by a saw;
By bathing in her he plucks the fruit of holiness.
When boats are caught in her flood, the people pray: 'We are sinners, O Rewa, bring us safely to the bank!'
When the Nerbudda is in flood, Mandla is an island and the people think their end has come:
The rain pours down on all sides, earth and sky become dark as smoke, and men call on Rāma.
The bard says: 'Let it rain as it may, some one will save us as Krishna saved the people of Brindāwan!'

This is a description of a beautiful woman:

A beautiful woman is loved by her neighbours,
But she will let none come to her and answers them not.
They say: 'Since God has made you so beautiful, open your litter and let yourself be seen!'
He who sees her is struck as by lightning, she shoots her lover with the darts of her eyes, invisible herself.
She will not go to her husband's house till he has her brought by the Government.
When she goes her father's village is left empty.
She is so delicate she faints at the sight of a flower,
Her body cannot bear the weight of her cloth,
The garland of jasmine-flowers is a burden on her neck,
The red powder on her feet is too heavy for them.

It is interesting to note that weakness and delicacy in a woman are emphasised as an attraction, as in English literature of the eighteenth century.

The last is a gentle intimation that poets, like other people, have to live:

It is useless to adorn oneself with sandalwood on an empty belly,
Nobody's body gets fat from the scent of flowers;
The singing of songs excites the mind,
But if the body is not fed all these are vain and hollow.

All Bhāts recite their verses in a high-pitched sing-song tone, which renders it very difficult for their hearers to grasp

the sense unless they know it already. The Vedas and all other sacred verses are spoken in this manner, perhaps as a mark of respect and to distinguish them from ordinary speech. The method has some resemblance to intoning. Women use the same tone when mourning for the dead.

BHATRA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Bhatra.[1]—A primitive tribe of the Bastar State and the south of Raipur District, akin to the Gonds. They numbered 33,000 persons in 1891, and in subsequent enumerations have been amalgamated with the Gonds. Nothing is known of their origin except a legend that they came with the Rājas of Bastar from Warangal twenty-three generations ago. The word Bhatra is said to mean a servant, and the tribe are employed as village watchmen and household and domestic servants. They have three divisions, the Pīt, Amnāit and Sān Bhatras, who rank one below the other, the Pīt being the highest and the Sān the lowest. The Pīt Bhatras base their superiority on the fact that they decline to make grass mats, which the Amnāit Bhatras will do, while the Sān Bhatras are considered to be practically identical with the Muria Gonds. Members of the three groups will eat with each other before marriage, but afterwards they will take only food cooked without water from a person belonging to another group. They have the usual set of exogamous septs named after plants and animals. Formerly, it is said, they were tattooed with representations

1. General notice and structure of the caste.

[1] This article is compiled from papers drawn up by Rai Bahādur Panda Baijnāth, Superintendent, Bastar State; Mr. Ravi Shankar, Settlement Officer, Bastar; and Mr. Gopāl Krishna, Assistant Superintendent, Bastar.

of the totem plant and animal, and the septs named after the tiger and snake ate the flesh of these animals at a sacrificial meal. These customs have fallen into abeyance, but still if they kill their totem animal they will make apologies to it, and break their cooking-pots, and bury or burn the body. A man of substance will distribute alms in the name of the deceased animal. In some localities members of the Kāchhun or tortoise sept will not eat a pumpkin which drops from a tree because it is considered to resemble a tortoise. But if they can break it immediately on touching the ground they may partake of the fruit, the assumption being apparently that it has not had time to become like a tortoise.

2. Admission of outsiders.

Outsiders are not as a rule admitted. But a woman of equal or higher caste who enters the house of a Bhatra will be recognised as his wife, and a man of the Panāra, or gardener caste, can also become a member of the community if he lives with a Bhatra woman and eats from her hand.

3. Arrangement of marriages.

In Raipur a girl should be married before puberty, and if no husband is immediately available, they tie a few flowers into her cloth and consider this as a marriage. If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant she is debarred from going through the wedding ceremony, and will simply go and live with her lover or any other man. Matches are usually arranged by the parents, but if a daughter is not pleased with the prospective bridegroom, who may sometimes be a well-to-do man much older than herself, she occasionally runs away and goes through the ceremony on her own account with the man of her choice.

If no one has asked her parents for her hand she may similarly select a husband for herself and make her wishes known, but in that case she is temporarily put out of caste until the chosen bridegroom signifies his acquiescence by giving the marriage feast. What happens if he definitely fails to respond is not stated, but presumably the young woman tries elsewhere until she finds herself accepted.

4. The Counter of Posts.

The date and hour of the wedding are fixed by an official known as the Meda Gantia, or Counter of Posts. He is a sort of illiterate village astrologer, who can foretell the character of the rainfall, and gives auspicious dates for

sowing and harvest. He goes through some training, and as a test of his capacity is required by his teacher to tell at a glance the number of posts in an enclosure which he has not seen before. Having done this correctly he qualifies as a Meda Gantia. Apparently the Bhatras, being unable at one time to count themselves, acquired an exaggerated reverence for the faculty of counting, and thought that if a man could only count far enough he could reckon into the future; or it might be thought that as he could count and name future days, he thus obtained power over them, and could tell what would happen on them just as one can obtain power over a man and work him injury by knowing his real name.

5. Marriage customs.

At a wedding the couple walk seven times round the sacred post, which must be of wood of the mahua[1] tree, and on its conclusion the post is taken to a river or stream and consigned to the water. The Bhatras, like the Gonds, no doubt revere this tree because their intoxicating liquor is made from its flowers. The couple wear marriage crowns made from the leaves of the date palm and exchange these. A little turmeric and flour are mixed with water in a plate, and the bride, taking the bridegroom's right hand, dips it into the coloured paste and strikes it against the wall. The action is repeated five times, and then the bridegroom does the same with the bride's hand. By this rite the couple pledge each other for their mutual behaviour during married life. From the custom of making an impression of the hand on a wall in token of a vow may have arisen that of clasping hands as a symbol of a bargain assented to, and hence of shaking hands, by persons who meet, as a pledge of amity and the absence of hostile intentions. Usually the hand is covered with red ochre, which is probably a substitute for blood; and the impression of the hand is made on the wall of a temple in token of a vow. This may be a survival of the covenant made by the parties dipping their hands in the blood of the sacrifice and laying them on the god. A pit about a foot deep is dug close to the marriage-shed, and filled with mud or wet earth. The bride conceals a nut in the mud and the bridegroom has to find it, and

[1] *Bassia latifolia.*

the hiding and finding are repeated by both parties. This rite may have the signification of looking for children. The remainder of the day is spent in eating, drinking and dancing. On the way home after the wedding the bridegroom has to shoot a deer, the animal being represented by a branch of a tree thrown across the path by one of the party. But if a real deer happens by any chance to come by he has to shoot this. The bride goes up to the real or sham deer and pulls out the arrow, and presents her husband with water and a tooth-stick, after which he takes her in his arms and they dance home together. On arrival at the house the bridegroom's maternal uncle or his son lies down before the door covering himself with a blanket. He is asked what he wants, and says he will have the daughter of the bridegroom to wife. The bridegroom promises to give a daughter if he has one, and if he has a son to give him for a friend. The tribe considers that a man has a right to marry the daughter of his maternal uncle, and formerly if the girl was refused by her parents he abducted her and married her forcibly. The bride remains at her husband's house for a few days and then goes home, and before she finally takes up her abode with him the *gauna* or going-away ceremony must be performed. The hands of the bride and bridegroom are tied together, and an arrow is held upright on them and some oil poured over it. The foreheads of the couple are marked with turmeric and rice, this rite being known as *tīka* or anointing, and presents are given to the bride's family.

6. Propitiation of ghosts.

The dead are buried, the corpse being laid on its back with the head to the north. Some rice, cowrie-shells, a winnowing-fan and other articles are placed on the grave. The tribe probably considers the winnowing-fan to have some magical property, as it also forms one of the presents given to the bride at the betrothal. If a man is killed by a tiger his spirit must be propitiated. The priest ties strips of tiger-skin to his arms, and the feathers of the peacock and blue jay to his waist, and jumps about pretending to be a tiger. A package of a hundred seers (200 lbs.) of rice is made up, and he sits on this and finally takes it away with him. If the dead man had any ornaments they must all be given, however valuable, lest his spirit should hanker after

them and return to look for them in the shape of the tiger. The large quantity of rice given to the priest is also probably intended as a provision of the best food for the dead man's spirit, lest it be hungry and come in the shape of the tiger to satisfy its appetite upon the surviving relatives. The laying of the ghosts of persons killed by tigers is thus a very profitable business for the priests.

7. Religion. Ceremonies at hunting.

The tribe worship the god of hunting, who is known as Māti Deo and resides in a separate tree in each village. At the Bījphūtni (threshing) or harvest festival in the month of Chait (March) they have a ceremonial hunting party. All the people of the village collect, each man having a bow and arrow slung to his back and a hatchet on his shoulder. They spread out a long net in the forest and beat the animals into this, usually catching a deer, wild pig or hare, and quails and other birds. They return and cook the game before the shrine of the god and offer to him a fowl and a pig. A pit is dug and water poured into it, and a person from each house must stand in the mud. A little seed taken from each house is also soaked in the mud, and after the feast is over this is taken and returned to the householder with words of abuse, a small present of two or three pice being received from him. The seed is no doubt thus consecrated for the next sowing. The tribe also have joint ceremonial fishing excursions. Their ideas of a future life are very vague, and they have no belief in a place of reward or punishment after death. They propitiate the spirits of their ancestors on the 15th of Asārh (June) with offerings of a little rice and incense.

8. Superstitious remedies.

To cure the evil eye they place a little gunpowder in water and apply it to the sufferer's eyes, the idea perhaps being that the fiery glance from the evil eye which struck him is quenched like the gunpowder. To bring on rain they perform a frog marriage, tying two frogs to a pestle and pouring oil and turmeric over them as in a real marriage. The children carry them round begging from door to door and finally deposit them in water. They say that when rain falls and the sun shines together the jackals are being married. Formerly a woman suspected of being a witch was tied up in a bag and thrown into a river or tank

at various places set apart for the purpose. If she sank she was held to be innocent, and if she floated, guilty. In the latter case she had to defile herself by taking the bone of a cow and the tail of a pig in her mouth, and it was supposed that this drove out the magic-working spirit. In the case of illness of their children or cattle, or the failure of crops, they consult the Pujāri or priest and make an offering. He applies some flowers or grains of rice to the forehead of the deity, and when one of these falls down he diagnoses from it the nature of the illness, and gives it to the sufferer to wear as a charm.

9. Occupation. The tribe are cultivators and farmservants, and practise shifting cultivation. They work as village watchmen and also as the Mājhi or village headman and the Pujāri or village priest. These officials are paid by contributions of grain from the cultivators. And as already seen, the Bhatras are employed as household servants and will clean cooking-vessels. Since they act as village priests, it may perhaps be concluded that the Bhatras like the Parjas are older residents of Bastar than the bulk of the Gonds, and they have become the household servants of the Hindu immigrants, which the Gonds would probably disdain to do. Some of them wear the sacred thread, but in former times the Bastar Rāja would invest any man with this for a fee of four or five rupees, and the Bhatras therefore purchased the social distinction. They find it inconvenient, however, and lay it aside when proceeding to their work or going out to hunt. If a man breaks his thread he must wait till a Brāhman comes round, when he can purchase another.

10. Names. Among a list of personal names given by Mr. Baijnāth the following are of some interest: Pillu, one of short stature; Matola, one who learnt to walk late; Phagu, born in Phāgun (February); Ghinu, dirty-looking; Dasru, born on the Dasahra festival; Ludki, one with a fleshy ear; Dalu, big-bellied; Mudi, a ring, this name having been given to a child which cried much after birth, but when its nose was pierced and a ring put in it stopped crying; Chhi, given to a child which sneezed immediately after birth; Nunha, a posthumous child; and Bhuklu, a child which began to play almost as soon as born. The above instances

indicate that it is a favourite plan to select the name from any characteristic displayed by the child soon after birth, or from any circumstance or incident connected with its birth. Among names of women are: Cherangi, thin; Fundi, one with swollen cheeks; Kandri, one given to crying; Mahīna (month), a child born a month late; Batai, one with large eyes; Gaida, fat; Pakli, of fair colour; Boda, one with crooked legs; Jhunki, one with small eyes; Rupi, a girl who was given a nose-ring of silver as her brothers had died; Paro, born on a field-embankment; Dango, tall. A woman must not call by their names her father-in-law, mother-in-law, her husband's brothers and elder sisters and the sons and daughters of her husband's brothers and sisters.

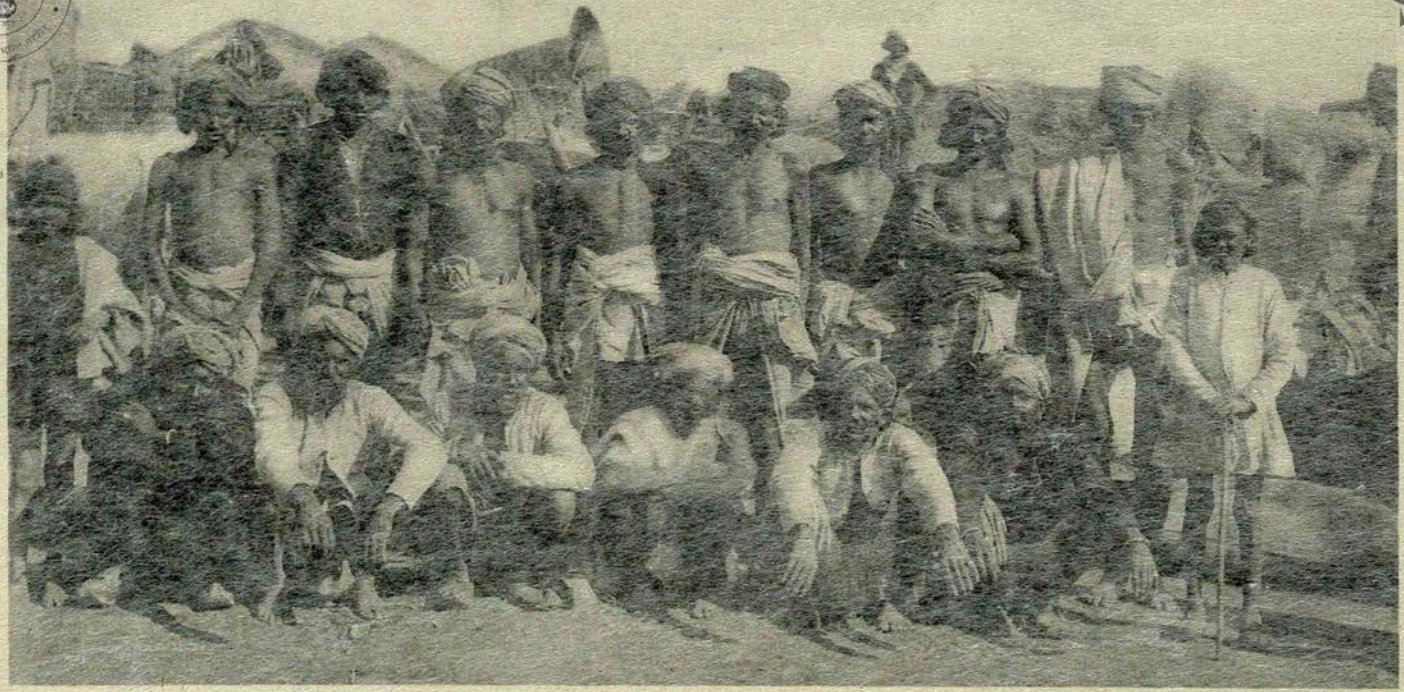
BHĪL

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. General notice. The Bhīls a Kolarian tribe.

Bhīl[1]—An indigenous or non-Aryan tribe which has been much in contact with the Hindus and is consequently well known. The home of the Bhīls is the country comprised in the hill ranges of Khāndesh, Central India and Rājputāna, west from the Satpūras to the sea in Gujarāt. The total number of Bhīls in India exceeds a million and a half, of which the great bulk belong to Bombay, Rājputāna and Central India. The Central Provinces have only about 28,000, practically all of whom reside in the Nimār district, on the hills forming the western end of the Satpūra range and adjoining the Rājpipla hills of Khāndesh. As the southern slopes of these hills lie in Berār, a few Bhīls are also found there. The name Bhīl seems to occur for the first time about A.D. 600. It is supposed to be derived from the Dravidian word for a bow, which is the characteristic weapon of the tribe. It has been suggested that the Bhīls

[1] The principal authorities on the Bhīls are: *An Account of the Mewār Bhīls*, by Major P. H. Hendley, *J.A.S.B.* vol. xliv., 1875, pp. 347-385; the *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. ix., *Hindus of Gujarāt*; and notices in Colonel Tod's *Rājasthān*, Mr. A. L. Forbes's *Rāsmāla*, and *The Khāndesh Bhīl Corps*, by Mr. A. H. A. Simcox, C.S.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

GROUP OF BHĪLS.

are the Pygmies referred to by Ktesias (400 B.C.) and the Phyllitae of Ptolemy (A.D. 150). The Bhīls are recognised as the oldest inhabitants of southern Rājputāna and parts of Gujarāt, and are usually spoken of in conjunction with the Kolis, who inhabit the adjoining tracts of Gujarāt. The most probable hypothesis of the origin of the Kolis is that they are a western branch of the Kol or Munda tribe who have spread from Chota Nāgpur, through Mandla and Jubbulpore, Central India and Rājputāna to Gujarāt and the sea. If this is correct the Kolis would be a Kolarian tribe. The Bhīls have lost their own language, so that it cannot be ascertained whether it was Kolarian or Dravidian. But there is nothing against its being Kolarian in Sir G. Grierson's opinion; and in view of the length of residence of the tribe, the fact that they have abandoned their own language and their association with the Kolis, this view may be taken as generally probable. The Dravidian tribes have not penetrated so far west as Central India and Gujarāt in appreciable numbers.

2. Rājpūts deriving their title to the land from the Bhīls.

The Rājpūts still recognise the Bhīls as the former residents and occupiers of the land by the fact that some Rājpūt chiefs must be marked on the brow with a Bhīl's blood on accession to the *Gaddi* or regal cushion. Tod relates how Goha,[1] the eponymous ancestor of the Sesodia Rājpūts, took the state of Idar in Gujarāt from a Bhīl: "At this period Idar was governed by a chief of the savage race of Bhīls. The young Goha frequented the forests in company with the Bhīls, whose habits better assimilated with his daring nature than those of the Brāhmans. He became a favourite with these *vena-putras* or sons of the forest, who resigned to him Idar with its woods and mountains. The Bhīls having determined in sport to elect a king, their choice fell on Goha; and one of the young savages, cutting his finger, applied the blood as the badge (*tīka*) of sovereignty to his forehead. What was done in sport was confirmed by the old forest chief. The sequel fixes on Goha the stain of ingratitude, for he slew his

[1] The old name of the Sesodia clan, Gahlot, is held to be derived from this Goha. See the article Rājpūt Sesodia for a notice of the real origin of the clan.

benefactor, and no motive is assigned in the legend for the deed."[1]

The legend is of course a euphemism for the fact that the Rājpūts conquered and dispossessed the Bhīls of Idar. But it is interesting as an indication that they did not consider themselves to derive a proper title to the land merely from the conquest, but wished also to show that it passed to them by the designation and free consent of the Bhīls. The explanation is perhaps that they considered the gods of the Bhīls to be the tutelary guardians and owners of the land, whom they must conciliate before they could hope to enjoy it in quiet and prosperity. This token of the devolution of the land from its previous holders, the Bhīls, was till recently repeated on the occasion of each succession of a Sesodia chief. "The Bhīl landholders of Oguna and Undri still claim the privilege of performing the *tīka* for the Sesodias. The Oguna Bhīl makes the mark of sovereignty on the chief's forehead with blood drawn from his own thumb, and then takes the chief by the arm and seats him on the throne, while the Undri Bhīl holds the salver of spices and sacred grains of rice used in making the badge."[2] The story that Goha killed the old Bhīl chief, his benefactor, who had adopted him as heir and successor, which fits in very badly with the rest of the legend, is probably based on another superstition. Sir J. G. Frazer has shown in *The Golden Bough* that in ancient times it was a common superstition that any one who killed the king had a right to succeed him. The belief was that the king was the god of the country, on whose health, strength and efficiency its prosperity depended. When the king grew old and weak it was time for a successor, and he who could kill the king proved in this manner that the divine power and strength inherent in the late king had descended to him, and he was therefore the fit person to be king.[3] An almost similar story is told of the way in which the Kachhwāha Rājpūts took the territory of Amber State from the Mīna tribe. The infant Rājpūt prince had been deprived of Narwar by

[1] *Rājasthān*, i. p. 184.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 186.
[3] Reference may be made to *The Golden Bough* for the full explanation and illustration of this superstition.

his uncle, and his mother wandered forth carrying him in a basket, till she came to the capital of the Mīnas, where she first obtained employment in the chief's kitchen. But owing to her good cooking she attracted his wife's notice and ultimately disclosed her identity and told her story. The Mīna chief then adopted her as his sister and the boy as his nephew. This boy, Dhola Rai, on growing up obtained a few Rājpūt adherents and slaughtered all the Mīnas while they were bathing at the feast of Diwāli, after which he usurped their country.[1] The repetition both of the adoption and the ungrateful murder shows the importance attached by the Rājpūts to both beliefs as necessary to the validity of their succession and occupation of the land.

The position of the Bhīls as the earliest residents of the country was also recognised by their employment in the capacity of village watchmen. One of the duties of this official is to know the village boundaries and keep watch and ward over them, and it was supposed that the oldest class of residents would know them best. The Bhīls worked in the office of Mānkar, the superior village watchman, in Nimār and also in Berār. Grant Duff states[2] that the Rāmosi or Bhīl was employed as village guard by the Marāthas, and the Rāmosis were a professional caste of village policemen, probably derived from the Bhīls or from the Bhīls and Kolis.

3. Historical notice.

The Rājpūts seem at first to have treated the Bhīls leniently. Intermarriage was frequent, especially in the families of Bhīl chieftains, and a new caste called Bhilāla[3] has arisen, which is composed of the descendants of mixed Rājpūt and Bhīl marriages. Chiefs and landholders in the Bhīl country now belong to this caste, and it is possible that some pure Bhīl families may have been admitted to it. The Bhilālas rank above the Bhīls, on a level with the cultivating castes. Instances occasionally occurred in which the children of a Rājpūt by a Bhīl wife became Rājpūts. When Colonel Tod wrote, Rājpūts would still take food with Ujla Bhīls or those of pure aboriginal descent, and all castes would take water from them.[4] But

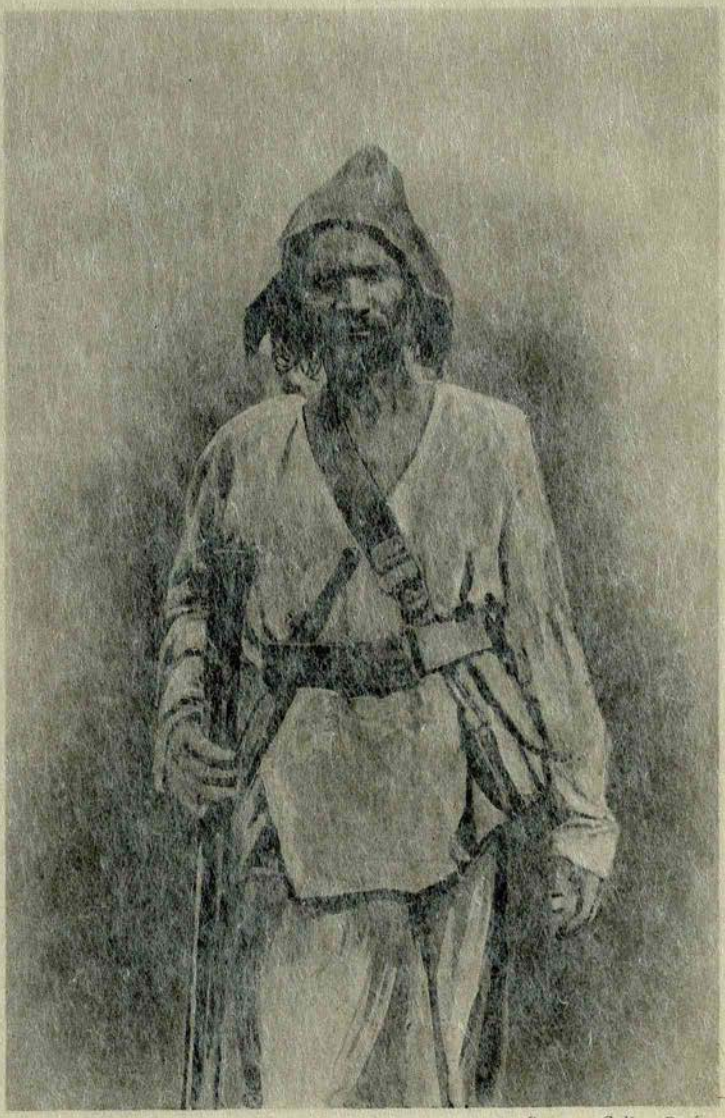
[1] *Rājasthān*, ii. pp. 320, 321.
[2] *History of the Marāthas*, i. p. 28.
[3] See article.
[4] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 466.

as Hinduism came to be more orthodox in Rājputāna, the Bhīls sank to the position of outcastes. Their custom of eating beef had always caused them to be much despised. A tradition is related that one day the god Mahādeo or Siva, sick and unhappy, was reclining in a shady forest when a beautiful woman appeared, the first sight of whom effected a cure of all his complaints. An intercourse between the god and the strange female was established, the result of which was many children; one of whom, from infancy distinguished alike by his ugliness and vice, slew the favourite bull of Mahādeo, for which crime he was expelled to the woods and mountains, and his descendants have ever since been stigmatised by the names of Bhīl and Nishāda.[1] Nishāda is a term of contempt applied to the lowest outcastes. Major Hendley, writing in 1875, states: "Some time since a Thākur (chief) cut off the legs of two Bhīls, eaters of the sacred cow, and plunged the stumps into boiling oil."[2] When the Marāthas began to occupy Central India they treated the Bhīls with great cruelty. A Bhīl caught in a disturbed part of the country was without inquiry flogged and hanged. Hundreds were thrown over high cliffs, and large bodies of them, assembled under promise of pardon, were beheaded or blown from guns. Their women were mutilated or smothered by smoke, and their children smashed to death against the stones.[3] This treatment may to some extent have been deserved owing to the predatory habits and cruelty of the Bhīls, but its result was to make them utter savages with their hand against every man, as they believed that every one's was against them. From their strongholds in the hills they laid waste the plain country, holding villages and towns to ransom and driving off cattle; nor did any travellers pass with impunity through the hills except in convoys too large to be attacked. In Khāndesh, during the disturbed period of the wars of Sindhia and Holkar, about A.D. 1800, the Bhīls betook themselves to highway robbery and lived in bands either in mountains or in villages immediately beneath them. The revenue contractors were

[1] Malcolm, *Memoir of Central India*, i. p. 518.

[2] *An Account of the Bhīls, J.A.S.B.* (1875), p. 369.

[3] *Hyderābād Census Report* (1891), p. 218.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

TANTIA BHĪL, A FAMOUS DACOIT.

unable or unwilling to spend money in the maintenance of soldiers to protect the country, and the Bhīls in a very short time became so bold as to appear in bands of hundreds and attack towns, carrying off either cattle or hostages, for whom they demanded handsome ransoms.[1] In Gujarāt another writer described the Bhīls and Kolis as hereditary and professional plunderers —'Soldiers of the night,' as they themselves said they were.[2] Malcolm said of them, after peace had been restored to Central India:[3] "Measures are in progress that will, it is expected, soon complete the reformation of a class of men who, believing themselves doomed to be thieves and plunderers, have been confirmed in their destiny by the oppression and cruelty of neighbouring governments, increased by an avowed contempt for them as outcasts. The feeling this system of degradation has produced must be changed; and no effort has been left untried to restore this race of men to a better sense of their condition than that which they at present entertain. The common answer of a Bhīl when charged with theft or robbery is, 'I am not to blame; I am the thief of Mahādeo'; in other words, 'My destiny as a thief has been fixed by God.'" The Bhīl chiefs, who were known as Bhumia, exercised the most absolute power, and their orders to commit the most atrocious crimes were obeyed by their ignorant but attached subjects without a conception on the part of the latter that they had an option when he whom they termed their Dhunni (Lord) issued the mandates.[4] Firearms and swords were only used by the chiefs and headmen of the tribe, and their national weapon was the bamboo bow having the bowstring made from a thin strip of its elastic bark. The quiver was a piece of strong bamboo matting, and would contain sixty barbed arrows a yard long, and tipped with an iron spike either flattened and sharpened like a knife or rounded like a nail; other arrows, used for knocking over birds, had knob-like heads. Thus armed, the Bhīls would lie in wait in some deep ravine by the roadside, and an infernal yell announced their attack to the unwary traveller.[5] Major Hendley states

[1] *The Khāndesh Bhīl Corps*, by Mr A. H. A. Simcox.

[2] Forbes, *Rēsmāla*, i. p. 104.

[3] *Memoir of Central India*, i. pp. 525, 526.

[4] *Ibidem*, i. p. 550.

[5] *Hobson-Jobson*, art. Bhīl.

that according to tradition in the Mahābhārata the god Krishna was killed by a Bhīl's arrow, when he was fighting against them in Gujarāt with the Yādavas; and on this account it was ordained that the Bhīl should never again be able to draw the bow with the forefinger of the right hand. "Times have changed since then, but I noticed in examining their hands that few could move the forefinger without the second finger; indeed the fingers appeared useless as independent members of the hands. In connection with this may be mentioned their apparent inability to distinguish colours or count numbers, due alone to their want of words to express themselves."[1]

4. General Outram and the Khāndesh Bhīl Corps.

The reclamation and pacification of the Bhīls is inseparably associated with the name of Lieutenant, afterwards Sir James, Outram. The Khāndesh Bhīl Corps was first raised by him in 1825, when Bhīl robber bands were being hunted down by small parties of troops, and those who were willing to surrender were granted a free pardon for past offences, and given grants of land for cultivation and advances for the purchase of seed and bullocks. When the first attempts to raise the corps were made, the Bhīls believed that the object was to link them in line like galley-slaves with a view to extirpate the race, that blood was in high demand as a medicine in the country of their foreign masters, and so on. Indulging the wild men with feasts and entertainments, and delighting them with his matchless urbanity, Captain Outram at length contrived to draw over to the cause nine recruits, one of whom was a notorious plunderer who had a short time before successfully robbed the officer commanding a detachment sent against him. This infant corps soon became strongly attached to the person of their new chief and entirely devoted to his wishes; their goodwill had been won by his kind and conciliatory manners, while their admiration and respect had been thoroughly roused and excited by his prowess and valour in the chase. On one occasion, it is recorded, word was brought to Outram of the presence of a panther in some prickly-pear shrubs on the side of a hill near his station. He went to shoot it with a friend, Outram being on foot and his friend on horseback searching

[1] *An Account of the Bhīls*, p. 369.

through the bushes. When close on the animal, Outram's friend fired and missed, on which the panther sprang forward roaring and seized Outram, and they rolled down the hill together. Being released from the claws of the furious beast for a moment, Outram with great presence of mind drew a pistol which he had with him, and shot the panther dead. The Bhīls, on seeing that he had been injured, were one and all loud in their grief and expressions of regret, when Outram quieted them with the remark, 'What do I care for the clawing of a cat?' and this saying long remained a proverb among the Bhīls.[1] By his kindness and sympathy, listening freely to all that each single man in the corps had to say to him, Outram at length won their confidence, convinced them of his good faith and dissipated their fears of treachery. Soon the ranks of the corps became full, and for every vacant place there were numbers of applicants. The Bhīls freely hunted down and captured their friends and relations who continued to create disturbances, and brought them in for punishment. Outram managed to check their propensity for liquor by paying them every day just sufficient for their food, and giving them the balance of their pay at the end of the month, when some might have a drinking bout, but many preferred to spend the money on ornaments and articles of finery. With the assistance of the corps the marauding tendencies of the hill Bhīls were suppressed and tranquillity restored to Khāndesh, which rapidly became one of the most fertile parts of India. During the Mutiny the Bhīl corps remained loyal, and did good service in checking the local outbursts which occurred in Khāndesh. A second battalion was raised at this time, but was disbanded three years afterwards. After this the corps had little or nothing to do, and as the absence of fighting and the higher wages which could be obtained by ordinary labour ceased to render it attractive to the Bhīls, it was finally converted into police in 1891.[2]

5. Subdivisions.

The Bhīls of the Central Provinces have now only two subdivisions, the Muhammadan Bhīls, who were forcibly converted to Islām during the time of Aurāngzeb, and the remainder, who though retaining many animistic beliefs and

[1] *The Khāndesh Bhīl Corps*, p. 71. [2] *Ibidem*, p. 275.

superstitions, have practically become Hindus. The Muhammadan Bhīls only number about 3000 out of 28,000. They are known as Tadvi, a name which was formerly applied to a Bhīl headman, and is said to be derived from *tād*, meaning a separate branch or section. These Bhīls marry among themselves and not with any other Muhammadans. They retain many Hindu and animistic usages, and are scarcely Muhammadan in more than name. Both classes are divided into groups or septs, generally named after plants or animals to which they still show reverence. Thus the Jāmania sept, named after the *jāman* tree,[1] will not cut or burn any part of this tree, and at their weddings the dresses of the bride and bridegroom are taken and rubbed against the tree before being worn. Similarly the Rohini sept worship the *rohan*[2] tree, the Avalia sept the *aonla*[3] tree, the Meheda sept the *bahera*[4] tree, and so on. The Mori sept worship the peacock. They go into the jungle and look for the tracks of a peacock, and spreading a piece of red cloth before the footprint, lay their offerings of grain upon it. Members of this sept may not be tattooed, because they think the splashes of colour on the peacock's feathers are tattoo-marks. Their women must veil themselves if they see a peacock, and they think that if any member of the sept irreverently treads on a peacock's footprints he will fall ill. The Ghodmārya (Horse-killer) sept may not tame a horse nor ride one. The Masrya sept will not kill or eat fish. The Sanyān or cat sept have a tradition that one of their ancestors was once chasing a cat, which ran for protection under a cover which had been put over the stone figure of their goddess. The goddess turned the cat into stone and sat on it, and since then members of the sept will not touch a cat except to save it from harm, and they will not eat anything which has been touched by a cat. The Ghattaya sept worship the grinding mill at their weddings and also on festival days. The Solia sept, whose name is apparently derived from the sun, are split up into four subsepts: the Ada Solia, who hold their weddings at sunrise; the Japa Solia, who hold them at sunset; the Taria Solia,

[1] *Eugenia jambolana.*
[2] *Soymida febrifuga.*
[3] *Phyllanthus emblica.*
[4] *Terminalia belerica.*

who hold them when stars have become visible after sunset; and the Tar Solia, who believe their name is connected with cotton thread and wrap several skeins of raw thread round the bride and bridegroom at the wedding ceremony. The Moharia sept worship the local goddess at the village of Moharia in Indore State, who is known as the Moharia Māta; at their weddings they apply turmeric and oil to the fingers of the goddess before rubbing them on the bride and bridegroom. The Maoli sept worship a goddess of that name in Barwāni town. Her shrine is considered to be in the shape of a kind of grain-basket known as *kilia*, and members of the sept may never make or use baskets of this shape, nor may they be tattooed with representations of it. Women of the sept are not allowed to visit the shrine of the goddess, but may worship her at home. Several septs have the names of Rājpūt clans, as Sesodia, Panwār, Mori, and appear to have originated in mixed unions between Rājpūts and Bhīls.

6. Exogamy and marriage customs.

A man must not marry in his own sept nor in the families of his mothers and grandmothers. The union of first cousins is thus prohibited, nor can girls be exchanged in marriage between two families. A wife's sister may also not be married during the wife's lifetime. The Muhammadan Bhīls permit a man to marry his maternal uncle's daughter, and though he cannot marry his wife's sister he may keep her as a concubine. Marriages may be infant or adult, but the former practice is becoming prevalent and girls are often wedded before they are eleven. Matches are arranged by the parents of the parties in consultation with the caste *panchāyat*; but in Bombay girls may select their own husbands, and they have also a recognised custom of elopement at the Tosina fair in the month of the Mahi Kāntha. If a Bhīl can persuade a girl to cross the river there with him he may claim her as his wife; but if they are caught before getting across he is liable to be punished by the bride's father.[1] The betrothal and wedding ceremonies now follow the ordinary ritual of the middle and lower castes in the Marātha country.[2] The bride must be

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Hindus of Gujarāt*, p. 309.

[2] See article Kunbi.

younger than the bridegroom except in the case of a widow. A bride-price is paid which may vary from Rs. 9 to 20; in the case of Muhammadan Bhīls the bridegroom is said to give a dowry of Rs. 20 to 25. When the ovens are made with the sacred earth they roast some of the large millet juāri[1] for the family feast, calling this Juāri Māta or the grain goddess. Offerings of this are made to the family gods, and it is partaken of only by the members of the bride's and bridegroom's septs respectively at their houses. No outsider may even see this food being eaten. The leavings of food, with the leaf-plates on which it was eaten, are buried inside the house, as it is believed that if they should fall into the hands of any outsider the death or blindness of one of the family will ensue. When the bridegroom reaches the bride's house he strikes the marriage-shed with a dagger or other sharp instrument. A goat is killed and he steps in its blood as he enters the shed. A day for the wedding is selected by the priest, but it may also take place on any Sunday in the eight fine months. If the wedding takes place on the eleventh day of Kārtik, that is on the expiration of the four rainy months when marriages are forbidden, they make a little hut of eleven stalks of juāri with their cobs in the shape of a cone, and the bride and bridegroom walk round this. The services of a Brāhman are not required for such a wedding. Sometimes the bridegroom is simply seated in a grain basket and the bride in a winnowing-fan; then their hands are joined as the sun is half set, and the marriage is completed. The bridegroom takes the basket and fan home with him. On the return of the wedding couple, their *kankans* or wristbands are taken off at Hanumān's temple. The Muhammadan Bhīls perform the same ceremonies as the Hindus, but at the end they call in the Kāzi or registrar, who repeats the Muhammadan prayers and records the dowry agreed upon. The practice of the bridegroom serving for his wife is in force among both classes of Bhīls.

7. Widow-marriage, divorce and polygamy.

The remarriage of widows is permitted, but the widow may not marry any relative of her first husband. She returns to her father's house, and on her remarriage they

[1] *Sorghum vulgare.*

obtain a bride-price of Rs. 40 or 50, a quarter of which goes in a feast to the tribesmen. The wedding of a widow is held on the Amāwas or last day of the dark fortnight of the month, or on a Sunday. A wife may be divorced for adultery without consulting the *panchāyat*. It is said that a wife cannot otherwise be divorced on any account, nor can a woman divorce her husband, but she may desert him and go and live with a man. In this case all that is necessary is that the second husband should repay to the first as compensation the amount expended by the latter on his marriage with the woman. Polygamy is permitted, and a second wife is sometimes taken in order to obtain children, but this number is seldom if ever exceeded. It is stated that the Bhīl married women are generally chaste and faithful to their husbands, and any attempt to tamper with their virtue on the part of an outsider is strongly resented by the man.

8. Religion.

The Bhīls worship the ordinary Hindu deities and the village godlings of the locality. The favourite both with Hindu and Muhammadan Bhīls is Khande Rao or Khandoba, the war-god of the Marāthas, who is often represented by a sword. The Muhammadans and the Hindu Bhīls also to a less extent worship the Pīrs or spirits of Muhammadan saints at their tombs, of which there are a number in Nimār. Major Hendley states that in Mewār the seats or *sthāns* of the Bhīl gods are on the summits of high hills, and are represented by heaps of stones, solid or hollowed out in the centre, or mere platforms, in or near which are found numbers of clay or mud images of horses.[1] In some places clay lamps are burnt in front of the images of horses, from which it may be concluded that the horse itself is or was worshipped as a god. Colonel Tod states that the Bhīls will eat of nothing white in colour, as a white sheep or goat; and their grand adjuration is 'By the white ram.'[2] Sir A. Lyall[3] says that their principal oath is by the dog. The Bhīl sepoys told Major Hendley that they considered it of little use to go on worshipping their own gods, as the power of these had declined since the English became supreme. They thought the strong English gods were too much for

[1] *Loc. cit.* p. 347. [2] *Western India.*
[3] *Asiatic Studies*, 1st series, p. 174.

the weak deities of their country, hence they were desirous of embracing Brāhmanism, which would also raise them in the social scale and give them a better chance of promotion in regiments where there were Brāhman officers.

9. Witch-craft and amulets.

They wear charms and amulets to keep off evil spirits; the charms are generally pieces of blue string with seven knots in them, which their witch-finder or Badwa ties, reciting an incantation on each; the knots were sometimes covered with metal to keep them undefiled and the charms were tied on at the Holi, Dasahra or some other festival.[1] In Bombay the Bhīls still believe in witches as the agents of any misfortunes that may befall them. If a man was sick and thought some woman had bewitched him, the suspected woman was thrown into a stream or swung from a tree. If the branch broke and the woman fell and suffered serious injury, or if she could not swim across the stream and sank, she was considered to be innocent and efforts were made to save her. But if she escaped without injury she was held to be a witch, and it frequently happened that the woman would admit herself to be one either from fear of the infliction of a harder ordeal, or to keep up the belief in her powers as a witch, which often secured her a free supper of milk and chickens. She would then admit that she had really bewitched the sick man and undertake to cure him on some sacrifice being made. If he recovered, the animal named by the witch was sacrificed and its blood given her to drink while still warm; either from fear or in order to keep up the character she would drink it, and would be permitted to stay on in the village. If, on the other hand, the sick person died, the witch would often be driven into the forest to die of hunger or to be devoured by wild animals.[2] These practices have now disappeared in the Central Provinces, though occasionally murders of suspected witches may still occur. The Bhīls are firm believers in omens, the nature of which is much the same as among the Hindus. When a Bhīl is persistently unlucky in hunting, he sometimes says '*Nat laga*,' meaning that some bad spirit is causing his ill-success. Then he will

[1] *Asiatic Studies*, 1st series, p. 352.
[2] *Bombay Gazetteer*, *Hindus of Gujarāt*, p. 302.

make an image of a man in the sand or dust of the road, or sometimes two images of a man and woman, and throwing straw or grass over the images set it alight, and pound it down on them with a stick with abusive yells. This he calls killing his bad luck.[1] Major Hendley notes that the men danced before the different festivals and before battles. The men danced in a ring holding sticks and striking them against each other, much like the Baiga dance. Before battle they had a war-dance in which the performers were armed and imitated a combat. To be carried on the shoulders of one of the combatants was a great honour, perhaps because it symbolised being on horseback. The dance was probably in the nature of a magical rite, designed to obtain success in battle by going through an imitation of it beforehand. The priests are the chief physicians among the Bhīls, though most old men were supposed to know something about medicine.[2]

10. Funeral rites.

The dead are usually buried lying on the back, with the head pointing to the south. Cooked food is placed on the bier and deposited on the ground half-way to the cemetery. On return each family of the sept brings a wheaten cake to the mourners and these are eaten. On the third day they place on the grave a thick cake of wheaten flour, water in an earthen pot and tobacco or any other stimulant which the deceased was in the habit of using in his life.

11. Social customs.

The Hindu Bhīls say that they do not admit outsiders into the caste, but the Muhammadans will admit a man of any but the impure castes. The neophyte must be shaved and circumcised, and the Kāzi gives him some holy water to drink and teaches him the profession of belief in Islām. If a man is not circumcised, the Tadvi or Muhammadan Bhīls will not bury his body. Both classes of Bhīls employ Brāhmans at their ceremonies. The tribe eat almost all kinds of flesh and drink liquor, but the Hindus now abjure beef and the Muhammadans pork. Some Bhīls now refuse to take the skins off dead cattle, but others will do so. The Bhīls will take food from any caste except the impure ones, and none except these castes will now take food from

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. xii. p. 87.
[2] *An Account of the Bhīls*, pp. 362, 363.

them. Temporary or permanent exclusion from caste is imposed for the same offences as among the Hindus.

12. Appearance and characteristics.

The typical Bhīl is small, dark, broad-nosed and ugly, but well built and active. The average height of 128 men measured by Major Hendley was 5 feet 6.4 inches. The hands are somewhat small and the legs fairly developed, those of the women being the best. "The Bhīl is an excellent woodsman, knows the shortest cuts over the hills, can walk the roughest paths and climb the steepest crags without slipping or feeling distressed. He is often called in old Sanskrit works Venaputra, 'child of the forest,' or Pāl Indra, 'lord of the pass.' These names well describe his character. His country is approached through narrow defiles (*pāl*), and through these none could pass without his permission. In former days he always levied *rakhwāli* or blackmail, and even now native travellers find him quite ready to assert what he deems his just rights. The Bhīl is a capital huntsman, tracking and marking down tigers, panthers and bears, knowing all their haunts, the best places to shoot them, the paths they take and all those points so essential to success in big-game shooting; they will remember for years the spots where tigers have been disposed of, and all the circumstances connected with their deaths. The Bhīl will himself attack a leopard, and with his sword, aided by his friends, cut him to pieces."[1] Their agility impressed the Hindus, and an old writer says: "Some Bhīl chieftains who attended the camp of Sidhrāj, king of Gujarāt, astonished him with their feats of activity; in his army they seemed as the followers of Hanumān in attendance upon Rām."[2]

13. Occupation.

The Bhīls have now had to abandon their free use of the forests, which was highly destructive in its effects, and their indiscriminate slaughter of game. Many of them live in the open country and have become farmservants and field-labourers. A certain proportion are tenants, but very few own villages. Some of the Tadvi Bhīls, however, still retain villages which were originally granted free of revenue on condition of their keeping the hill-passes of the Satpūras

[1] *Account of the Mewār Bhīls*, pp. 357, 358.
[2] Forbes, *Rāsmāla*, i. p. 113.

open and safe for travellers. These are known as Hattiwāla. Bhīls also serve as village watchmen in Nimār and the adjoining tracts of the Berār Districts. Captain Forsyth, writing in 1868, described the Bhīls as follows: "The Muhammadan Bhīls are with few exceptions a miserable lot, idle and thriftless, and steeped in the deadly vice of opium-eating. The unconverted Bhīls are held to be tolerably reliable. When they borrow money or stock for cultivation they seldom abscond fraudulently from their creditors, and this simple honesty of theirs tends, I fear, to keep numbers of them still in a state little above serfdom."[1]

14. Language.

The Bhīls have now entirely abandoned their own language and speak a corrupt dialect based on the Aryan vernaculars current around them. The Bhīl dialect is mainly derived from Gujarāti, but it is influenced by Mārwāri and Marāthi; in Nimār especially it becomes a corrupt form of Marāthi. Bhīli, as this dialect is called, contains a number of non-Aryan words, some of which appear to come from the Mundāri, and others from the Dravidian languages; but these are insufficient to form any basis for a deduction as to whether the Bhīls belonged to the Kolarian or Dravidian race.[2]

1. General notice.

Bhilāla.[3]—A small caste found in the Nimār and Hoshangābād Districts of the Central Provinces and in Central India. The total strength of the Bhilālas is about 150,000 persons, most of whom reside in the Bhopāwār Agency, adjoining Nimār. Only 15,000 were returned from the Central Provinces in 1911. The Bhilālas are commonly considered, and the general belief may in their case be accepted as correct, to be a mixed caste sprung from the alliances of immigrant Rājpūts with the Bhīls of the Central India hills. The original term was not improbably Bhīlwāla, and may have been applied to those Rājpūt chiefs, a numerous body, who acquired small estates in the Bhīl country, or to those who took the daughters of Bhīl chieftains to wife, the second course being often no

[1] *Nimār Settlement Report*, pp. 246, 247.

[2] Sir G. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. ix. part iii. pp. 6-9.

[3] This article is based mainly on Captain Forsyth's *Nimār Settlement Report*, and a paper by Mr. T. T. Korke, Pleader, Khandwa.

doubt a necessary preliminary to the first. Several Bhilāla families hold estates in Nimār and Indore, and their chiefs now claim to be pure Rājpūts. The principal Bhilāla houses, as those of Bhāmgarh, Selāni and Mandhāta, do not intermarry with the rest of the caste, but only among themselves and with other families of the same standing in Mālwa and Holkar's Nimār. On succession to the *Gaddī* or headship of the house, representatives of these families are marked with a *tīka* or badge on the forehead and sometimes presented with a sword, and the investiture may be carried out by custom by the head of another house. Bhilāla landholders usually have the title of Rao or Rāwat. They do not admit that a Bhilāla can now spring from intermarriage between a Rājpūt and a Bhīl. The local Brāhmans will take water from them and they are occasionally invested with the sacred thread at the time of marriage. The Bhilāla Rao of Mandhāta is hereditary custodian of the great shrine of Siva at Onkār Mandhāta on an island in the Nerbudda. According to the traditions of the family, their ancestor, Bhārat Singh, was a Chauhān Rājpūt, who took Mandhāta from Nāthu Bhīl in A.D. 1165, and restored the worship of Siva to the island, which had been made inaccessible to pilgrims by the terrible deities, Kāli and Bhairava, devourers of human flesh. In such legends may be recognised the propagation of Hinduism by the Rājpūt adventurers and the reconsecration of the aboriginal shrines to its deities. Bhārat Singh is said to have killed Nāthu Bhīl, but it is more probable that he only married his daughter and founded a Bhilāla family. Similar alliances have taken place among other tribes, as the Korku chiefs of the Gāwilgarh and Mahādeo hills, and the Gond princes of Garha Mandla. The Bhilālas generally resemble other Hindus in appearance, showing no marked signs of aboriginal descent. Very probably they have all an infusion of Rājpūt blood, as the Rājpūts settled in the Bhīl country in some strength at an early period of history. The caste have, however, totemistic group names; they will eat fowls and drink liquor; and they bury their dead with the feet to the north, all these customs indicating a Dravidian origin. Their subordinate position in past times is shown by the fact that they will accept cooked food from a Kunbi

or a Gūjar; and indeed the status of all except the chief's families would naturally have been a low one, as they were practically the offspring of kept women. As already stated, the landowning families usually arrange alliances among themselves. Below these comes the body of the caste and below them is a group known as the Chhoti Tad or bastard Bhilālas, to which are relegated the progeny of irregular unions and persons expelled from the caste for social offences.

2. Marriage.

The caste, for the purpose of avoiding marriages between relations, are also divided into exogamous groups called *kul* or *kuri*, several of the names of which are of totemistic origin or derived from those of animals and plants. Members of the Jāmra *kuri* will not cut or burn the *jāmun*[1] tree; those of the Saniyār *kuri* will not grow *san*-hemp, while the Astaryas revere the *sona*[2] tree and the Pipalādya, the *pīpal* tree. Some of the *kuris* have Rājpūt sept names, as Mori, Baghel and Solanki. A man is forbidden to take a wife from within his own sept or that of his mother, and the union of first cousins is also prohibited. The customs of the Bhilālas resemble those of the Kunbis and other cultivating castes. At their weddings four cart-yokes are arranged in a square, and inside this are placed two copper vessels filled with water and considered to represent the Ganges and Jumna. When the sun is half set, the bride and the bridegroom clasp hands and then walk seven times round the square of cart-yokes. The water of the pots is mixed and this is considered to represent the mingling of the bride's and bridegroom's personalities as the Ganges and Jumna meet at Allahābād. A sum of about Rs. 60 is usually paid by the parents of the bridegroom to those of the bride and is expended on the ceremony. The ordinary Bhilālas have, Mr. Korke states, a simple form of wedding which may be gone through without consulting a Brāhman on the Ekādashi or eleventh of Kārtik (October); this is the day on which the gods awake from sleep and marks the commencement of the marriage season. A cone is erected of eleven plants of juāri, roots and all, and the couple simply walk round this seven times at night, when the marriage is complete. The

[1] *Eugenia jambolana.* [2] *Bauhinia racemosa.*

remarriage of widows is permitted. The woman's forehead is marked with cowdung by another widow, probably as a rite of purification, and the cloths of the couple are tied together.

3. Social customs.

The caste commonly bury the dead and erect memorial stones at the heads of graves which they worship in the month of Chait (April), smearing them with vermilion and making an offering of flowers. This may either be a Dravidian usage or have been adopted by imitation from the Muhammadans. The caste worship the ordinary Hindu deities, but each family has a *Kul-devi* or household god, Mr. Korke remarks, to which they pay special reverence. The offerings made to the Kul-devi must be consumed by the family alone, but married daughters are allowed to participate. They employ Nimāri Brāhmans as their priests, and also have *gurus* or spiritual preceptors, who are Gosains or Bairāgis. They will take food cooked with water from Brāhmans, Rājpūts, Munda Gūjars and Tirole Kunbis. The last two groups are principal agricultural castes of the locality and the Bhilālas are probably employed by them as farmservants, and hence accept cooked food from their masters in accordance with a common custom. The local Brāhmans of the Nāgar, Nāramdeo, Baisa and other subcastes will take water from the hand of a Bhilāla. Temporary excommunication from caste is imposed for the usual offences, such as going to jail, getting maggots in a wound, killing a cow, a dog or a squirrel, committing homicide, being beaten by a man of low caste, selling shoes at a profit, committing adultery, and allowing a cow to die with a rope round its neck ; and further, for touching the corpses of a cow, cat or horse, or a Barhai (carpenter) or Chamār (tanner). They will not swear by a dog, a cat or a squirrel, and if either of the first two animals dies in a house, it is considered to be impure for a month and a quarter. The head of the caste committee has the designation of Mandloi, which is a territorial title borne by several families in Nimār. He receives a share of the fine levied for the *Sarni* or purification ceremony, when a person temporarily expelled is readmitted into caste. Under the Mandloi is the Kotwāl whose business is to summon the members to the caste

assemblies; he also is paid out of the fines and his office is hereditary.

The caste are cultivators, farmservants and field-labourers, and a Bhilāla also usually held the office of Mānkar, a superior kind of Kotwār or village watchman. The Mānkar did no dirty work and would not touch hides, but attended on any officer who came to the village and acted as a guide. Where there was a village *sarai* or rest-house, it was in charge of the Mānkar, who was frequently also known as zamīndār. This may have been a recognition of the ancient rights of the Bhilālas and Bhīls to the country. 4. Occupation and character.

Captain Forsyth, Settlement Officer of Nimār, had a very unfavourable opinion of the Bhilālas, whom he described as proverbial for dishonesty in agricultural engagements and worse drunkards than any of the indigenous tribes.[1] This judgment was probably somewhat too severe, but they are poor cultivators, and a Bhilāla's field may often be recognised by its slovenly appearance.[2] 5. Character.

A century ago Sir J. Malcolm also wrote very severely of the Bhilālas: "The Bhilāla and Lundi chiefs were the only robbers in Mālwa whom under no circumstances travellers could trust. There are oaths of a sacred but obscure kind among those that are Rājpūts or who boast their blood, which are almost a disgrace to take, but which, they assert, the basest was never known to break before Mandrup Singh, a Bhilāla, and some of his associates, plunderers on the Nerbudda, showed the example. The vanity of this race has lately been flattered by their having risen into such power and consideration that neighbouring Rājpūt chiefs found it their interest to forget their prejudices and to condescend so far as to eat and drink with them. Hatti Singh, Grassia chief of Nowlāna, a Khīchi Rājpūt, and several others in the vicinity cultivated the friendship of Nādir, the late formidable Bhilāla robber-chief of the Vindhya range; and among other sacrifices made by the Rājpūts, was eating and drinking with him. On seeing this take place in my camp, I asked Hatti Singh whether he was not degraded by doing so; he said no, but that Nādir was elevated."[3]

[1] *Settlement Report* (1869), para. 411.

[2] Mr. Montgomerie's *Nimār Settlement Report*.

[3] *Memoir of Central India*, ii. p. 156.

Bhishti.—A small Muhammadan caste of water-bearers. Only 26 Bhishtis were shown in the Central Provinces in 1901 and 278 in 1891. The tendency of the lower Muhammadan castes, as they obtain some education, is to return themselves simply as Muhammadans, the caste name being considered derogatory. The Bhishtis are, however, a regular caste numbering over a lakh of persons in India, the bulk of whom belong to the United Provinces. Many of them are converts from Hinduism, and they combine Hindu and Muhammadan practices. They have *gotras* or exogamous sections, the names of which indicate the Hindu origin of their members, as Huseni Brāhman, Samri Chauhān, Bahmangour and others. They prohibit marriage within the section and within two degrees of relationship on the mother's side. Marriages are performed by the Muhammadan ritual or Nikāh, but a Brāhman is sometimes asked to fix the auspicious day, and they erect a marriage-shed. The bridegroom goes to the bride's house riding on a horse, and when he arrives drops Rs. 1-4 into a pot of water held by a woman. The bride whips the bridegroom's horse with a switch made of flowers. During the marriage the bride sits inside the house and the bridegroom in the shed outside. An agent or Vakīl with two witnesses goes to the bride and asks her whether she consents to marry the bridegroom, and when she gives her consent, as she always does, they go out and formally communicate it to the Kāzi. The dowry is then settled, and the bond of marriage is sealed. But when the parents of the bride are poor they receive a bride-price of Rs. 30, from which they pay the dowry. The Bhishtis worship their leather bag (*mashk*) as a sort of fetish, and burn incense before it on Fridays.[1] The traditional occupation of the Bhishti is to supply water, and he is still engaged in this and other kinds of domestic service. The name is said to be derived from the Persian *bihisht*, 'paradise,' and to have been given to them on account of the relief which their ministrations afforded to the thirsty soldiery.[2] Perhaps, too, the grandiloquent name was applied partly in derision,

[1] Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bhishti.
[2] Elliott's *Memoirs of the North-Western Provinces*, i. p. 191.

like similar titles given to other menial servants. They are also known as Mashki or Pakhāli, after their leathern water-bag. The leather bag is a distinctive sign of the Bhishti, but when he puts it away he may be recognised from the piece of red cloth which he usually wears round his waist. There is an interesting legend to the effect that the Bhishti who saved the Emperor Humayun's life at Chausa, and was rewarded by the tenure of the Imperial throne for half a day, employed his short lease of power by providing for his family and friends, and caused his leather bag to be cut up into rupees, which were gilded and stamped with the record of his date and reign in order to perpetuate its memory.[1] The story of the Bhishti obtaining his name on account of the solace which he afforded to the Muhammadan soldiery finds a parallel in the case of the English army:

> The uniform 'e wore
> Was nothin' much before,
> An' rather less than 'arf o' that be'ind,
> For a piece o' twisty rag
> An' a goatskin water-bag
> Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> With 'is mussick on 'is back,
> 'E would skip with our attack,
> An' watch us till the bugles made 'Retire,'
> An' for all 'is dirty 'ide
> 'E was white, clear white, inside
> When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire.[2]

An excellent description of the Bhishti as a household servant is contained in Eha's *Behind the Bungalow*,[3] from which the following extract is taken: "If you ask: Who is the Bhishti? I will tell you. Bihisht in the Persian tongue means Paradise, and a Bihishtee is therefore an inhabitant of Paradise, a cherub, a seraph, an angel of mercy. He has no wings; the painters have misconceived him; but his back is bowed down with the burden of a great goat-skin swollen to bursting with the elixir of life. He walks the land when the heaven above him is brass and the earth iron, when the trees and shrubs are languishing and the last blade

[1] Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, ii. p. 100.

[2] Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, 'Gunga Din.'

[3] Thacker and Co., London.

of grass has given up the struggle for life, when the very roses smell only of dust, and all day long the roaming dust-devils waltz about the fields, whirling leaf and grass and corn-stalk round and round and up and away into the regions of the sky; and he unties a leather thong which chokes the throat of his goat-skin just where the head of the poor old goat was cut off, and straightway, with a life-reviving gurgle, the stream called *thandha pāni* gushes forth, and plant and shrub lift up their heads and the garden smiles again. The dust also on the roads is laid, and a grateful incense rises from the ground, the sides of the water *chatti* grow dark and moist and cool themselves in the hot air, and through the dripping interstices of the *khaskhas* tattie a chilly fragrance creeps into the room, causing the mercury in the thermometer to retreat from its proud place. I like the Bhishti and respect him. As a man he is temperate and contented, eating *bājri* bread and slaking his thirst with his own element. And as a servant he is laborious and faithful, rarely shirking his work, seeking it out rather. For example, we had a bottle-shaped filter of porous stoneware, standing in a bucket of water which it was his duty to fill daily; but the good man, not content with doing his bare duty, took the plug out of the filter and filled it too. And all the station knows how assiduously he fills the rain-gauge." With the construction of water-works in large stations the Bhishti is losing his occupation, and he is a far less familiar figure to the present generation of Anglo-Indians than to their predecessors.

1. Origin and traditions.

Bhoyar,[1] **Bhoir** (Honorific titles, Mahājan and Patel).—A cultivating caste numbering nearly 60,000 persons in 1911, and residing principally in the Betūl and Chhindwāra Districts. The Bhoyars are not found outside the Central Provinces. They claim to be the descendants of a band of Panwār Rājpūts, who were defending the town of Dhārānagri or Dhār in Central India when it was besieged by Aurāngzeb. Their post was on the western part of the wall, but they gave way and fled into the town as the sun was rising, and it

[1] This article is mainly compiled from papers by Mr. Pāndurang Lakshman Bākre, pleader, Betūl, and Munshi Pyāre Lāl, ethnographic clerk.

shone on their faces. Hence they were called Bhoyar from a word *bhor* meaning morning, because they were seen running away in the morning. They were put out of caste by the other Rājpūts, and fled to the Central Provinces. The name may also be a variant of that of the Bhagore Rājpūts. And another derivation is from *bhora*, a simpleton or timid person. Their claim to be immigrants from Central India is borne out by the fact that they still speak a corrupt form of the Mālwi dialect of Rājputāna, which is called after them Bhoyari, and their Bhāts or genealogists come from Mālwa. But they have now entirely lost their position as Rājpūts.

a. Subcastes and sections.

The Bhoyars are divided into the Panwāri, Dholewār, Chaurāsia and Daharia subcastes. The Panwārs are the most numerous and the highest, as claiming to be directly descended from Panwār Rājpūts. They sometimes called themselves Jagdeo Panwārs, Jagdeo being the name of the king under whom they served in Dhārānagri. The Dholewārs take their name from Dhola, a place in Mālwa, or from *dhol*, a drum. They are the lowest subcaste, and some of them keep pigs. It is probable that these subcastes immigrated with the Mālwa Rājas in the fifteenth century, the Dholewārs being the earlier arrivals, and having from the first intermarried with the local Dravidian tribes. The Daharias take their name from Dāhar, the old name of the Jubbulpore country, and may be a relic of the domination of the Chedi kings of Tewar. The name of the Chaurāsias is probably derived from the Chaurāsi or tract of eighty-four villages formerly held by the Betūl Korku family of Chāndu. The last two subdivisions are numerically unimportant. The Bhoyars have over a hundred *kuls* or exogamous sections. The names of most of these are titular, but some are territorial and a few totemistic. Instances of such names are Onkār (the god Siva), Deshmukh and Chaudhari, headman, Hazāri (a leader of 1000 horse), Gore (fair-coloured), Dongardiya (a lamp on a hill), Pinjāra (a cotton-cleaner), Gādria (a shepherd), Khaparia (a tyler), Khawāsi (a barber), Chiknyā (a sycophant), Kinkar (a slave), Dukhi (penurious), Suplya toplya (a basket and fan maker), Kasai (a butcher), Gohattya (a cow-killer), and Kālebhūt (black devil). Among the territorial sections may be mentioned Sonpūria, from Sonpur,

and Pathāria, from the hill country. The name Badnagrya is also really territorial, being derived from the town of Badnāgar, but the members of the section connect it with the *bad* or banyan tree, the leaves of which they refrain from eating. Two other totemistic gotras are the Bāranga and Baignya, derived from the *bārang* plant (*Kydia calycina*) and from the brinjal respectively. Some sections have the names of Rājpūt septs, as Chauhān, Parihār and Panwār. This curiously mixed list of family names appears to indicate that the Bhoyars originate from a small band of Rājpūts who must have settled in the District about the fifteenth century as military colonists, and taken their wives from the people of the country. They may have subsequently been recruited by fresh bands of immigrants who have preserved a slightly higher status. They have abandoned their old high position, and now rank below the ordinary cultivating castes like Kunbis and Kurmis who arrived later; while the caste has probably in times past also been recruited to a considerable extent by the admission of families of outsiders.

3. Marriage.

Marriage within the *kul* or family group is forbidden, as also the union of first cousins. Girls are usually married young, and sometimes infants of one or two months are given in wedlock, while contracts of betrothal are made for unborn children if they should be of the proper sex, the mother's womb being touched with *kunku* or red powder to seal the agreement. A small *dej* or price is usually paid for the bride, amounting to Rs. 5 with 240 lbs. of grain, and 8 seers of *ghī* and oil. At the betrothal the Joshi or astrologer is consulted to see whether the names of the couple make an auspicious conjunction. He asks for the names of the bride and bridegroom, and if these are found to be inimical another set of names is given, and the experiment is continued until a union is obtained which is astrologically auspicious. In order to provide for this contingency some Bhoyars give their children ten or twelve names at birth. If all the names fail, the Joshi invents new ones of his own, and in some way brings about the auspicious union to the satisfaction of both parties, who consider it no business of theirs to pry into the Joshi's calculations or to question his methods. After the marriage-shed is erected

the family god must be invoked to be present at the ceremony. He is asked to come and take his seat in an earthen pot containing a lighted wick, the pot being supported on a toy chariot made of sticks. A thread is coiled round the neck of the jar, and the Bhoyars then place it in the middle of the house, confident that the god has entered it, and will ward off all calamities during the marriage. This is performed by the *bhānwar* ceremony, seven earthen pots being placed in a row, while the bride and bridegroom walk round in a circle holding a basket with a lighted lamp in it. As each circle is completed, one pot is removed. This always takes place at night. The Dholewārs do not perform the *bhānwar* ceremony, and simply throw sacred rice on the couple, and this is also done in Wardha. Sometimes the Bhoyars dispense with the presence of the Brāhman and merely get some rice and juāri consecrated by him beforehand, which they throw on the heads of the couple, and thereupon consider the marriage complete. Weddings are generally held in the bright fortnight of Baisākh (April–May), and sometimes can be completed in a single day. Widow-marriage is allowed, but it is considered that the widow should marry a widower and not a bachelor.

4. Occupation.

The regular occupation of the Bhoyars is agriculture, and they are good cultivators, growing much sugar-cane with well-irrigation. They are industrious, and their holdings on the rocky soils of the plateau Districts are often cleared of stones at the cost of much labour. Their women work in the fields. In Betūl they have the reputation of being much addicted to drink.

5. Social status.

They do not now admit outsiders, but their family names show that at one time they probably did so, and this laxity of feeling survives in the toleration with which they readmit into caste a woman who has gone wrong with an outsider. They eat flesh and fowls, and the Dholewārs eat pork, while as already stated they are fond of liquor. To have a shoe thrown on his house by a caste-fellow is a serious degradation for a Bhoyar, and he must break his earthen pots, clean his house and give a feast. To be beaten with a shoe by a low caste like Mahār entails shaving the moustaches and paying a heavy fine, which is spent on a

feast. The Bhoyars do not take food from any caste but Brāhmans, but no caste higher than Kunbis and Mālis will take water from them. In social status they rank somewhat below Kunbis. In appearance they are well built, and often of a fair complexion. Unmarried girls generally wear skirts instead of *sāris* or cloths folding between the legs; they also must not wear toe-rings. Women of the Panwār subcaste wear glass bangles on the left hand, and brass ones on the right. All women are tattooed. They both burn and bury the dead, placing the corpse on the pyre with its head to the south or west, and in Wardha to the north. Here they have a peculiar custom as regards mourning, which is observed only till the next Monday or Thursday whichever falls first. Thus the period of mourning may extend from one to four days. The Bhoyars are considered in Wardha to be more than ordinarily timid, and also to be considerable simpletons, while they stand in much awe of Government officials, and consider it a great misfortune to be brought into a court of justice. Very few of them can read and write.

BHUIYA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Bhuiya, Bhuinhār, Bhumia.[1]—The name of a very important tribe of Chota Nāgpur, Bengal and Orissa. The Bhuiyas numbered more than 22,000 persons in the Central Provinces in 1911, being mainly found in the Sargūja and Jashpur States. In Bengal and Bihār the Bhuiyas proper count about half a million persons, while the Mūsahar and Khandait castes, both of whom are mainly derived from the Bhuiyas, total together well over a million. 1. The tribe and its name.

The name Bhuiya means 'Lord of the soil,' or 'Belonging to the soil,' and is a Sanskrit derivative. The tribe have completely forgotten their original name, and adopted this designation conferred on them by the immigrant Aryans. The term Bhuiya, however, is also employed by other tribes and by some Hindus as a title for landholders, being practically equivalent to zamīndār. And hence a certain confusion arises, and classes or individuals may have the name of Bhuiya without belonging to the tribe at all. "In most

[1] This article is compiled partly from Colonel Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal* and Sir H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*; a monograph has also been furnished by Mr. B. C. Mazumdār, pleader, Sambalpur, and papers by Mr. A. B. Napier, Deputy Commissioner, Raipur, and Mr. Hīra Lāl.

parts of Chota Nāgpur," Sir H. Risley says, "there is a well-known distinction between a Bhuiya by tribe and a Bhuiya by title. The Bhuiyas of Bonai and Keonjhar described by Colonel Dalton belong to the former category; the Bhuiya Mundas and Oraons to the latter. The distinction will be made somewhat clearer if it is explained that every 'tribal Bhuiya' will as a matter of course describe himself as Bhuiya, while a member of another tribe will only do so if he is speaking with reference to a question of land, or desires for some special reason to lay stress on his status as a land-holder or agriculturist."

We further find in Bengal and Benāres a caste of land-holders known as Bhuinhār or Bābhan, who are generally considered as a somewhat mixed and inferior group of Brāhman and Rājpūt origin. Both Sir H. Risley and Mr. Crooke adopt this view and deny any connection between the Bhuinhārs and the Bhuiya tribes. Bābhan appears to be a corrupt form of Brāhman. Mr. Mazumdār, however, states that Bhuiya is never used in Bengali as an equivalent for zamīndār or landholder, and he considers that the Bhuinhārs and also the Bārah Bhuiyas, a well-known group of twelve landholders of Eastern Bengal and Assam, belonged to the Bhuiya tribe. He adduces from Sir E. Gait's *History of Assam* the fact that the Chutias and Bhuiyas were dominant in that country prior to its conquest by the Ahoms in the thirteenth century, and considers that these Chutias gave their name to Chutia or Chota Nāgpur. I am unable to express any opinion on Mr. Mazumdār's argument, and it is also unnecessary as the question does not concern the Central Provinces.

2. Distribution of the tribe.

The principal home of the Bhuiya tribe proper is the south of the Chota Nāgpur plateau, comprised in the Gāngpur, Bonai, Keonjhar and Bāmra States. "The chiefs of these States," Colonel Dalton says, "now call themselves Rājpūts; if they be so, they are strangely isolated families of Rājpūts. The country for the most part belongs to the Bhuiya sub-proprietors. They are a privileged class, holding as hereditaments the principal offices of the State, and are organised as a body of militia. The chiefs have no right to exercise any authority till they have received the *tilak* or

token of investiture from their powerful Bhuiya vassals. Their position altogether renders their claim to be considered Rājpūts extremely doubtful, and the stories told to account for their acquisition of the dignity are palpable fables. They were no doubt all Bhuiyas originally; they certainly do not look like Rājpūts." Members of the tribe are the household servants of the Bāmra Rāja's family, and it is said that the first Rāja of Bāmra was a child of the Patna house, who was stolen from his home and anointed king of Bāmra by the Bhuiyas and Khonds. Similarly Colonel Dalton records the legend that the Bhuiyas twenty-seven generations ago stole a child of the Moharbhanj Rāja's family, brought it up amongst them and made it their Rāja. He was freely admitted to intercourse with Bhuiya girls, and the children of this intimacy are the progenitors of the Rājkuli branch of the tribe. But they are not considered first among Bhuiyas because they are not of pure Bhuiya descent. Again the Rāja of Keonjhar is always installed by the Bhuiyas. These facts indicate that the Bhuiyas were once the rulers of Chota Nāgpur and are recognised as the oldest inhabitants of the country. From this centre they have spread north through Lohardaga and Hazāribāgh and into southern Bihār, where large numbers of Bhuiyas are encountered on whom the opprobrious designation of Mūsahar or 'rat-eater' has been conferred by their Hindu neighbours. Others of the tribe who travelled south from Chota Nāgpur experienced more favourable conditions, and here the tendency has been for the Bhuiyas to rise rather than to decline in social status. "Some of their leading families," Sir H. Risley states, "have come to be chiefs of the petty States of Orissa, and have now sunk the Bhuiya in the Khandait or swordsman, a caste of admitted respectability in Orissa and likely in course of time to transform itself into some variety of Rājpūt."

3. Example of the position of the aborigines in Hindu society.

The varying status of the Bhuiyas in Bihār, Chota Nāgpur and Orissa is a good instance of the different ways in which the primitive tribes have fared in contact with the immigrant Aryans. Where the country has been completely colonised and populated by Hindus, as in Bihār, the aboriginal residents have commonly become transformed into village

drudges, relegated to the meanest occupations, and despised as impure by the Hindu cultivators, like the Chamārs of northern India and the Mahārs of the Marātha Districts. Where the Hindu immigration has only been partial and the forests have not been cleared, as in Chota Nāgpur and the Central Provinces, they may keep their old villages and tribal organisation and be admitted as a body into the hierarchy of caste, ranking above the impure castes but below the Hindu cultivators. This is the position of the Gonds, Baigas and other tribes in these tracts. While, if the Hindus come only as colonists and not as rulers, the indigenous residents may retain the overlordship of the soil and the landed proprietors among them may be formed into a caste ranking with the good cultivating castes of the Aryans. Instances of such are the Khandaits of Orissa, the Binjhwārs of Chhattīsgarh and the Bhilālas of Nimār and Indore.

4. The Bhuiyas a Kolarian tribe.

The Bhuiyas have now entirely forgotten their own language and speak Hindi, Uriya and Bengali, according as each is the dominant vernacular of their Hindu neighbours. They cannot therefore on the evidence of language be classified as a Munda or Kolarian or as a Dravidian tribe. Colonel Dalton was inclined to consider them as Dravidian:[1] "Mr. Stirling in his account of Orissa classes them among the Kols; but there are no grounds that I know of for so connecting them. As I have said above, they appear to me to be linked with the Dravidian rather than with the Kolarian tribes." His account, however, does not appear to contain any further evidence in support of this view; and, on the other hand, he identifies the Bhuiyas with the Savars or Saonrs. Speaking of the Bendkars or Savars of Keonjhar, he says: "It is difficult to regard them otherwise than as members of the great Bhuiya family, and thus connecting them we link the Bhuiyas and Savaras and give support to the conjecture that the former are Dravidian." But it is now shown in the *Linguistic Survey* that the Savars have a Munda dialect. In Chota Nāgpur this has been forgotten, and the tribe speak Hindi or Uriya like the Bhuiyas, but it remains in the hilly tracts of Ganjām and

[1] *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 140.

Vizagapatām.[1] Savara is closely related to Kharia and Juāng, the dialects of two of the most primitive Munda tribes. The Savars must therefore be classed as a Munda or Kolarian tribe, and since Colonel Dalton identified the Bhuiyas with the Savars of Chota Nāgpur, his evidence appears really to be in favour of the Kolarian origin of the Bhuiyas. He notes further that the ceremony of naming children among the Bhuiyas is identical with that of the Mundas and Hos.[2] Mr. Mazumdār writes: "Judging from the external appearance and general physical type one would be sure to mistake a Bhuiya for a Munda. Their habits and customs are essentially Mundāri. The Bhuiyas who live in and around the District of Mānbhūm are not much ashamed to admit that they are Kol people; and Bhumia Kol is the name that has been given them there by the Hindus. The Mundas and Larka-Kols of Chota Nāgpur tell us that they first established themselves there by driving out the Bhuiyas; and it seems likely that the Bhuiyas formed the first batch of the Munda immigrants in Chota Nāgpur and became greatly Hinduised there, and on that account were not recognised by the Mundas as people of their kin." If the tradition of the Mundas and Kols that they came to Chota Nāgpur after the Bhuiyas be accepted, and tradition on the point of priority of immigration is often trustworthy, then it follows that the Bhuiyas must be a Munda tribe. For the main distinction other than that of language between the Munda and Dravidian tribes is that the former were the earlier and the latter subsequent immigrants. The claim of the Bhuiyas to be the earliest residents of Chota Nāgpur is supported by the fact that they officiate as priests in certain temples. Because in primitive religion the jurisdiction of the gods is entirely local, and foreigners bringing their own gods with them are ignorant of the character and qualities of the local deities, with which the indigenous residents are, on the other hand, well acquainted. Hence the tendency of later comers to employ these latter in the capacity of priests of the godlings of the earth, corn, forests and hills. Colonel Dalton writes:[3]

[1] *Linguistic Survey*, vol. xiv. *Munda and Dravidian Languages*, p. 217.
[2] Page 142. [3] *Ibidem*, p. 141.

"It is strange that these Hinduised Bhuiyas retain in their own hands the priestly duties of certain old shrines to the exclusion of Brāhmans. This custom has no doubt descended in Bhuiya families from the time when Brāhmans were not, or had obtained no footing amongst them, and when the religion of the land and the temples were not Hindu; they are now indeed dedicated to Hindu deities, but there are evidences of the temples having been originally occupied by other images. At some of these shrines human sacrifices were offered every third year and this continued till the country came under British rule." And again of the Pauri Bhuiyas of Keonjhar: "The Pauris dispute with the Juāngs the claim to be the first settlers in Keonjhar, and boldly aver that the country belongs to them. They assert that the Rāja is of their creation and that the prerogative of installing every new Rāja on his accession is theirs, and theirs alone. The Hindu population of Keonjhar is in excess of the Bhuiya and it comprises Gonds and Kols, but the claim of the Pauris to the dominion they arrogate is admitted by all; even Brāhmans and Rājpūts respectfully acknowledge it, and the former by the addition of Brāhmanical rites to the wild ceremonies of the Bhuiyas affirm and sanctify their installation." In view of this evidence it seems a probable hypothesis that the Bhuiyas are the earliest residents of these parts of Chota Nāgpur and that they are a Kolarian tribe.

5. The Baigas and the Bhuiyas. Chhattīsgarh the home of the Baigas.

There appears to be considerable reason for supposing that the Baiga tribe of the Central Provinces are really a branch of the Bhuiyas. Though the Baigas are now mainly returned from Mandla and Bālāghāt, it seems likely that these Districts were not their original home, and that they emigrated from Chhattīsgarh into the Satpūra hills on the western borders of the plain. The hill country of Mandla and the Maikal range of Bālāghāt form one of the wildest and most inhospitable tracts in the Province, and it is unlikely that the Baigas would have made their first settlements here and spread thence into the fertile plain of Chhattīsgarh. Migration in the opposite direction would be more natural and probable. But it is fairly certain that the Baiga tribe were among the earliest if not the earliest

residents of the Chhattīsgarh plain and the hills north and east of it. The Bhaina, Bhunjia and Binjhwār tribes who still reside in this country can all be recognised as offshoots of the Baigas. In the article on Bhaina it is shown that some of the oldest forts in Bilāspur are attributed to the Bhainas and a chief of this tribe is remembered as having ruled in Bilaigarh south of the Mahānadi. They are said to have been dominant in Pendra where they are still most numerous, and to have been expelled from Phuljhar in Raipur by the Gonds. The Binjhwārs or Binjhāls again are an aristocratic subdivision of the Baigas, belonging to the hills east of Chhattīsgarh and the Uriya plain country of Sambalpur beyond them. The zamīndārs of Bodāsāmar, Rāmpur, Bhatgaon and other estates to the south and east of the Chhattīsgarh plain are members of this tribe. Both the Bhainas and Binjhwārs are frequently employed as priests of the village deities all over this area, and may therefore be considered as older residents than the Gond and Kawar tribes and the Hindus. Sir G. Grierson also states that the language of the Baigas of Mandla and Bālāghāt is a form of Chhattīsgarhi, and this is fairly conclusive evidence of their first having belonged to Chhattīsgarh.[1] It seems not unlikely that the Baigas retreated into the hills round Chhattīsgarh after the Hindu invasion and establishment of the Haihaya Rājpūt dynasty of Ratanpur, which is now assigned to the ninth century of the Christian era; just as the Gonds retired from the Nerbudda valley and the Nāgpur plain before the Hindus several centuries later. Sir H. Risley states that the Binjhias or Binjhwārs of Chota Nāgpur say that their ancestors came from Ratanpur twenty generations ago.[2]

6. The Baigas a branch of the Bhuiyas.

But the Chhattīsgarh plain and the hills north and east of it are adjacent to and belong to the same tract of country as the Chota Nāgpur States, which are the home of the Bhuiyas. Sir H. Risley gives Baiga as a name for a sorcerer, and as a synonym or title of the Khairwār tribe in Chota Nāgpur, possibly having reference to the idea that

[1] In the article on Binjhwār, it was supposed that the Baigas migrated east from the Satpūra hills into Chhattisgarh. But the evidence adduced above appears to show that this view is incorrect.

[2] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Binjhia.

they, being among the original inhabitants of the country, are best qualified to play the part of sorcerer and propitiate the local gods. It has been suggested in the article on Khairwār that that tribe are a mongrel offshoot of the Santāls and Cheros, but the point to be noticed here is the use of the term Baiga in Chota Nāgpur for a sorcerer; and a sorcerer may be taken as practically equivalent for a priest of the indigenous deities, all tribes who act in this capacity being considered as sorcerers by the Hindus. If the Bhuiyas of Chota Nāgpur had the title of Baiga, it is possible that it may have been substituted for the proper tribal name on their migration to the Central Provinces. Mr. Crooke distinguishes two tribes in Mīrzāpur whom he calls the Bhuiyas and Bhuiyārs. The Bhuiyas of Mīrzāpur seem to be clearly a branch of the Bhuiya tribe of Chota Nāgpur, with whom their section-names establish their identity.[1] Mr. Crooke states that the Bhuiyas are distinguished with very great difficulty from the Bhuiyārs with whom they are doubtless very closely connected.[2] Of the Bhuiyārs[3] he writes that the tribe is also known as Baiga, because large numbers of the aboriginal local priests are derived from this caste. He also states that "Most Bhuiyārs are Baigas and officiate in their own as well as allied tribes; in fact, as already stated, one general name for the tribe is Baiga."[4] It seems not unlikely that these Bhuiyārs are the Baigas of the Central Provinces and that they went to Mīrzāpur from here with the Gonds. Their original name may have been preserved or revived there, while it has dropped out of use in this Province. The name Baiga in the Central Provinces is sometimes applied to members of other tribes who serve as village priests, and, as has already been seen, it is used in the same sense in Chota Nāgpur. The Baigas of Mandla are also known as Bhumia, which is only a variant of Bhuiya, having the same meaning of lord of the soil or belonging to the soil. Both Bhuiya and Bhumia are in fact nearly equivalent to our word 'aboriginal,' and both are names given to the tribe by the

[1] Crooke, *Tribes and Castes*, art. Bhuiya, para. 4.
[2] *Ibidem*, para. 3.
[3] *Ibidem*, art. Bhuiyār, para. 1.
[4] *Ibidem*, para. 16.

Hindus and not originally that by which its members called themselves. It would be quite natural that a branch of the Bhuiyas, who settled in the Central Provinces and were commonly employed as village priests by the Hindus and Gonds should have adopted the name of the office, Baiga, as their tribal designation; just as the title of Munda or village headman has become the name of one branch of the Kol tribe, and Bhumij, another term equivalent to Bhuiya, of a second branch. Mr. A. F. Hewitt, Settlement Officer of Raipur, considered that the Buniyas of that District were the same tribe as the Bhuiyas of the Garhjāt States.[1] By Buniya he must apparently have meant the Bhunjia tribe of Raipur, who as already stated are an offshoot of the Baigas. Colonel Dalton describes the dances of the Bhuiyas of Chota Nāgpur as follows:[2] "The men have each a wide kind of tambourine. They march round in a circle, beating these and singing a very simple melody in a minor key on four notes. The women dance opposite to them with their heads covered and bodies much inclined, touching each other like soldiers in line, but not holding hands or wreathing arms like the Kols." This account applies very closely to the Sela and Rīna dances of the Baigas. The Sela dance is danced by men only who similarly march round in a circle, though they do not carry tambourines in the Central Provinces. Here, however, they sometimes carry sticks and march round in opposite directions, passing in and out and hitting their sticks against each other as they meet, the movement being exactly like the grand chain in the Lancers. Similarly the Baiga women dance the Rīna dance by themselves, standing close to each other and bending forward, but not holding each other by the hands and arms, just as described by Colonel Dalton. The Gonds now also have the Sela and Rīna dances, but admit that they are derived from the Baigas. Another point of some importance is that the Bhuiyas of Chota Nāgpur and the Baigas and the tribes derived from them in the Central Provinces have all completely abandoned their own language and speak a broken form of that of their Hindu neighbours. As has been seen, too, the Bhuiyas are commonly employed as priests in Chota

[1] Dalton, p. 147. [2] Page 142.

Nāgpur, and there seems therefore to be a strong case for the original identity of the two tribes.[1] Both the Baigas and Bhuiyas, however, have now become greatly mixed with the surrounding tribes, the Baigas of Mandla and Bālāghāt having a strong Gond element.

7. Tribal sub-divisions.

In Singhbhūm the Bhuiyas call themselves *Pāwan-bans* or 'The Children of the Wind,' and in connection with Hanumān's title of *Pāwan-ka-pūt* or 'The Son of the Wind,' are held to be the veritable apes of the Rāmāyana who, under the leadership of Hanumān, the monkey-god, assisted the Aryan hero Rāma on his expedition to Ceylon. This may be compared with the name given to the Gonds of the Central Provinces of Rāwanbansi, or descendants of Rāwan, the idea being that their ancestors were the subjects of Rāwan, the demon king of Ceylon, who was conquered by Rāma. "All Bhuiyas," Sir H. Risley states, "affect great reverence for the memory of Rikhmun or Rikhiasan, whom they regard, some as a patron deity, others as a mythical ancestor, whose name distinguishes one of the divisions of the tribe. It seems probable that in the earliest stage of belief Rikhmun was the bear-totem of a sept of the tribe, that later on he was transformed into an ancestral hero, and finally promoted to the rank of a tribal god." The Rikhiasan Mahatwār subtribe of the Bhuiyas in the Central Provinces are named after this hero Rikhmun; the designation of Mahatwār signifies that they are the Mahtos or leaders of the Bhuiyas. The Khandaits or Pāiks are another subcaste formed from those who became soldiers; in Orissa they are now, as already stated, a separate caste of fairly high rank. The Parja or 'subject people' are the ordinary Bhuiyas, probably those living in Hindu tracts. The Dhur or 'dust' Gonds, and the Parja Gonds of Bastar may be noted as a parallel in nomenclature. The Rautadi are a territorial group, taking their name from a place called Raotal. The Khandaits practise hypergamy with the Rautadi, taking daughters from them, but not giving their daughters to them. The Pābudia or Mādhai are the hill Bhuiyas, and are the

[1] The question of the relation of the Baiga tribe to Mr. Crooke's Bhuiyārs was first raised by Mr. E. A. H. Blunt, Census Superintendent, United Provinces.

most wild and backward portion of the tribe. Dalton writes of them in Keonjhar: "They are not bound to fight for the Rāja, though they occasionally take up arms against him. Their duty is to attend on him and carry his loads when he travels about, and so long as they are satisfied with his person and his rule, no more willing or devoted subjects could be found. They are then in Keonjhar, as in Bonai, a race whom you cannot help liking and taking an interest in from the primitive simplicity of their customs, their amenability and their anxiety to oblige; but unsophisticated as they are they wield an extraordinary power in Keonjhar, and when they take it into their heads to use that power, the country may be said to be governed by an oligarchy composed of the sixty chiefs of the Pawri Desh, the Bhuiya Highlands. A knotted string passed from village to village in the name of the sixty chiefs throws the entire country into commotion, and the order verbally communicated in connection with it is as implicitly obeyed as if it emanated from the most potent despot." This knotted string is known as *Gānthi*. The Pābudias say that their ancestors were twelve brothers belonging to Keonjhar, of whom eight went to an unknown country, while the remaining four divided among themselves all the territory of which they had knowledge, this being comprised in the four existing states of Keonjhar, Bāmra, Palahāra and Bonai. Any Pābudia who takes up his residence permanently beyond the boundaries of these four states is considered to lose his caste, like Hindus in former times who went to dwell in the foreign country beyond the Indus.[1] But if the wandering Pābudia returns in two years, and proves that he has not drunk water from any other caste, he is taken back into the fold. Other subdivisions are the Kāti or Khatti and the Bāthudia, these last being an inferior group who are said to be looked down on because they have taken food from other low castes. No doubt they are really the offspring of irregular unions.

8. Exogamous septs.

In Raigarh the Bhuiyas appear to have no exogamous divisions. When they wish to arrange a marriage they compare the family gods of the parties, and if these are not identical and there is no recollection of a common ancestor

[1] Mr. Mazumdār's monograph.

for three generations, the union is permitted. In Sambalpur, however, Mr. Mazumdār states, all Bhuiyas are divided into the following twelve septs: Thākur, or the clan of royal blood; Saont, from *sāmanta*, a viceroy; Padhān, a village headman; Nāik, a military leader; Kālo, a wizard or priest; Dehri, also a priest; Chatria, one who carried the royal umbrella; Sāhu, a moneylender; Mājhi, a headman; Behra, manager of the household; Amāta, counsellor; and Dandsena, a police official. The Dehrin sept still worship the village gods on behalf of the tribe.

9. Marriage customs.

Marriage is adult, but the more civilised Bhuiyas are gradually adopting Hindu usages, and parents arrange matches for their children while they are still young. Among the Pābudias some primitive customs survive. They have the same system as the Oraons, by which all the bachelors of the village sleep in one large dormitory; this is known as Dhāngarbāsa, *dhāngar* meaning a farmservant or young man, or Māndarghar, the house of the drums, because these instruments are kept in it. "Some villages," Colonel Dalton states, "have a Dhāngaria bāsa, or house for maidens, which, strange to say, they are allowed to occupy without any one to look after them. They appear to have very great liberty, and slips of morality, so long as they are confined to the tribe, are not much heeded." This intimacy between boys and girls of the same village does not, however, commonly end in marriage, for which a partner should be sought from another village. For this purpose the girls go in a body, taking with them some ground rice decorated with flowers. They lay this before the elders of the village they have entered, saying, 'Keep this or throw it into the water, as you prefer.' The old men pick up the flowers, placing them behind their ears. In the evening all the boys of the village come and dance with the girls, with intervals for courtship, half the total number of couples dancing and sitting out alternately. This goes on all night, and in the morning any couples who have come to an understanding run away together for a day or two. The boy's father must present a rupee and a piece of cloth to the girl's mother, and the marriage is considered to be completed.

Among the Pābudia or Madhai Bhuiyas the bride-price

consists of two bullocks or cows, one of which is given to the girl's father and the other to her brother. The boy's father makes the proposal for marriage, and the consent of the girl is necessary. At the wedding turmeric and rice are offered to the sun; some rice is then placed on the girl's head and turmeric rubbed on her body, and a brass ring is placed on her finger. The bridegroom's father says to him, "This girl is ours now: if in future she becomes one-eyed, lame or deaf, she will still be ours." The ceremony concludes with the usual feast and drinking bout. If the boy's father cannot afford the bride-price the couple sometimes run away from home for two or three days, when their parents go in search of them and they are brought back and married in the boy's house.

10. Widow-marriage and divorce.

A widow is often taken by the younger brother of the deceased husband, though no compulsion is exerted over her. But the match is common because the Bhuiyas have the survival of fraternal polyandry, which consists in allowing unmarried younger brothers to have access to an elder brother's wife during his lifetime.[1] Divorce is allowed for misconduct on the part of the wife or mutual disagreement.

11. Religion.

The Bhuiyas commonly take as their principal deity the spirit of the nearest mountain overlooking their village, and make offerings to it of butter, rice and fowls. In April they present the first-fruits of the mango harvest. They venerate the sun as Dharam Deota, but no offerings are made to him. Nearly all Bhuiyas worship the cobra, and some of them call it their mother and think they are descended from it. They will not touch or kill a cobra, and do not swear by it. In Rairakhol they venerate a goddess, Rambha Devi, who may be a corn-goddess, as the practice of burning down successive patches of jungle and sowing seed on each for two or three years is here known as *rambha*. They think that the sun and moon are sentient beings, and that fire and lightning are the children of the sun, and the stars the children of the moon. One day the moon invited the sun to dinner and gave him very nice food, so that the sun asked what it was. The moon said she had cooked her own children, and on this the sun went home and cooked all

[1] From Mr. Mazumdār's monograph.

his children and ate them, and this is the reason why there are no stars during the day. But his eldest son, fire, went and hid in a *rengal* tree, and his daughter, the lightning, darted hither and thither so that the sun could not catch her. And when night came again, and the stars came out, the sun saw how the moon had deceived him and cursed her, saying that she should die for fifteen days in every month. And this is the reason for the waxing and waning of the moon. Ever since this event fire has remained hidden in a *rengal* tree, and when the Bhuiyas want him they rub two pieces of its wood together and he comes out. This is the Bhuiya explanation of the production of fire from the friction of wood.

12. Religious dancing.

In the month of Kārtik (October), or the next month, they bring from the forest a branch of the *karm* tree and venerate it and perform the *karma* dance in front of it. They think that this worship and dance will cause the *karma* tree, the mango, the jack-fruit and the mahua to bear a full crop of fruit. Monday, Wednesday and Friday are considered the proper days for worshipping the deities, and children are often named on a Friday.

13. Funeral rites and inheritance.

The dead are either buried or burnt, the corpse being placed always with the feet pointing to its native village. On the tenth day the soul of the dead person is called back to the house. But if a man is killed by a tiger or by falling from a tree no mourning is observed for him, and his soul is not brought back. To perish from snake-bite is considered a natural death, and in such cases the usual obsequies are awarded. This is probably because they revere the cobra as their first mother. The Pābudia Bhuiyas throw four to eight annas' worth of copper on to the pyre or into the grave, and if the deceased had a cow some *ghī* or melted butter. No division of property can take place during the lifetime of either parent, but when both have died the children divide the inheritance, the eldest son taking two shares and the others one equal share each.

14. Physical appearance and occupation.

Colonel Dalton describes the Bhuiyas as, "A dark-brown, well-proportioned race, with black, straight hair, plentiful on the head, but scant on the face, of middle height, figures well knit and capable of enduring great fatigue, but

light-framed like the Hindu rather than presenting the usual muscular development of the hillman." Their dress is scanty, and in the Tributary States Dalton says that the men and women all wear dresses of brown cotton cloth. This may be because white is a very conspicuous colour in the forests. They wear ornaments and beads, and are distinctive in that neither men nor women practise tattooing, though in some localities this rule is not observed by the women. To keep themselves warm at night they kindle two fires and sleep between them, and this custom has given rise to the saying, 'Wherever you see a Bhuiya he always has a fire.' In Bāmra the Bhuiyas still practise shifting cultivation, for which they burn the forest growth from the hillsides and sow oilseeds in the fresh soil. This method of agriculture is called locally Khasrathumi. They obtain their lands free from the Rāja in return for acting as luggage porters and coolies. In Bāmra they will not serve as farm-servants or labourers for hire, but elsewhere they are more docile.

15. Social customs.

A woman divorced for adultery is not again admitted to caste intercourse. Her parents take her to their village, where she has to live in a separate hut and earn her own livelihood. If any Bhuiya steals from a Kol, Gānda or Ghasia he is permanently put out of caste, while for killing a cow the period of expulsion is twelve years. The emblem of the Bhuiyas is a sword, in reference to their employment as soldiers, and this they affix to documents in place of their signature.

Bhulia,[1] **Bholia, Bhoriya, Bholwa, Mihir, Mehar.**—A caste of weavers in the Uriya country. In 1901 the Bhulias numbered 26,000 persons, but with the transfer of Sambalpur and the Uriya States to Bengal this figure has been reduced to 5000. A curious fact about the caste is that though solely domiciled in the Uriya territories, many families belonging to it talk Hindi in their own houses. According to one of their traditions they immigrated to this part of the country with the first Chauhān Rāja of Patna, and it may be that they are members of some

[1] This article is compiled from a paper taken by Mr. Hīra Lāl at Sonpur.

northern caste who have forgotten their origin and taken to a fresh calling in the land of their adoption. The Koshtas of Chhattīsgarh have a subcaste called Bhoriya, and possibly the Bhulias have some connection with these. The caste sometimes call themselves Devāng, and Devāng or Devāngan is the name of another subcaste of Koshtis. Various local derivations of the name are current, generally connecting it with *bhūlna*, to forget. The Bhulias occupy a higher rank than the ordinary weavers, corresponding with that of the Koshtis elsewhere, and this is to some extent considered to be an unwarranted pretension. Thus one saying has it: "Formerly a son was born from a Chandāl woman; at that time none were aware of his descent or rank, and so he was called Bhulia (one who is forgotten). He took the loom in his hands and became the brother-in-law of the Gānda." The object here is obviously to relegate the Bhulia to the same impure status as the Gānda. Again the Bhulias affect the honorific title of Meher, and another saying addresses them thus: "Why do you call yourself Meher? You make a hole in the ground and put your legs into it and are like a cow with foot-and-mouth disease struggling in the mud." The allusion here is to the habit of the weaver of hollowing out a hole for his feet as he sits before the loom, while cattle with foot-and-mouth disease are made to stand in mud to cool and cleanse the feet.

The caste have no subcastes, except that in Kālāhandi a degraded section is recognised who are called Sānpāra Bhulias, and with whom the others refuse to intermarry. These are, there is little reason to doubt, the progeny of illicit unions. They say that they have two *gotras*, Nāgas from the cobra and Kachhap from the tortoise. But these have only been adopted for the sake of respectability, and exercise no influence on marriage, which is regulated by a number of exogamous groups called *vansa*. The names of the *vansas* are usually either derived from villages or are titles or nicknames. Two of them, Bāgh (tiger) and Kimir (crocodile), are totemistic, while two more, Kumhār (potter) and Dhuba (washerman), are the names of other castes. Examples of titular names are Bānkra (crooked),