



Ranjūjha (warrior), Kodjit (one who has conquered a score of people) and others. The territorial names are derived from those of villages where the caste reside at present. Marriage within the *vansa* is forbidden, but some of the *vansas* have been divided into *bad* and *sān*, or great and small, and members of these may marry with each other, the subdivision having been adopted when the original group became so large as to include persons who were practically not relations. The binding portion of the wedding ceremony is that the bridegroom should carry the bride in a basket seven times round the *hom* or sacrificial fire. If he cannot do this, the girl's grandfather carries them both. After the ceremony the pair return to the bridegroom's village, and are made to sleep on the same bed, some elder woman of the family lying between them. After a few days the girl goes back to her parents and does not rejoin her husband until she attains maturity. The remarriage of widows is permitted, and in Native States is not less costly to the bridegroom than the regular ceremony. In Sonpur the suitor must proceed to the Rāja and pay him twenty rupees for his permission, which is given in the shape of a present of rice and nuts. Similar sums are paid to the caste-fellows and the parents of the girl, and the Rāja's rice and nuts are then placed on the heads of the couple, who become man and wife. Divorce may be effected at the instance of the husband or the wife's parents on the mere ground of incompatibility of temper. The position of the caste corresponds to that of the Koshtas; that is, they rank below the good cultivating castes, but above the menial and servile classes. They eat fowls and the flesh of wild pig, and drink liquor. A *liaison* with one of the impure castes is the only offence entailing permanent expulsion from social intercourse. A curious rule is that in the case of a woman going wrong with a man of the caste, the man only is temporarily outcasted and forced to pay a fine on readmission, while the woman escapes without penalty. They employ Brāhmans for ceremonial purposes. They are considered proverbially stupid, like the Koris in the northern Districts, but very laborious. One saying about them is: "The Kewat catches fish but himself eats crabs,



and the Bhulia weaves loin-cloths but himself wears only a rag"; and another: "A Bhulia who is idle is as useless as a confectioner's son who eats sweetmeats, or a money-lender's son with a generous disposition, or a cultivator's son who is extravagant."

1. Origin
and
traditions.

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Bhunjia.¹—A small Dravidian tribe residing in the Bindrānawāgarh and Khariār zamīndāris of the Raipur District, and numbering about 7000 persons. The tribe was not returned outside this area in 1911, but Sherring mentions them in a list of the hill tribes of the Jaipur zamīndāri of Vizagapatam, which touches the extreme south of Bindrānawāgarh. The Bhunjias are divided into two branches, Chaukhtia and Chinda, and the former have the following legend of their origin. On one occasion a Bhatra Gond named Bāchar cast a net into the Pairi river and brought out a stone. He threw the stone back into the river and cast his net again, but a second and yet a third time the stone came out. So he laid the stone on the bank of the river and went back to his house, and that night he dreamt that the stone was Bura Deo, the great God of the Gonds. So he said: 'If this dream be true let me draw in a deer in my net to-morrow for a sign'; and the next day the body of a deer appeared in his net. The stone then called upon the Gond to worship him as Bura Deo, but the Gond demurred to doing so himself, and said he would provide a substitute as a devotee. To this Bura Deo agreed, but said that Bāchar, the Gond, must marry his daughter to the substituted worshipper. The Gond then set out to search for somebody, and in the village of Lafandi he found a Halba of the name of Konda, who was a cripple, deaf and dumb, blind, and a leper. He brought Konda to the stone, and on reaching it he was miraculously cured of all his ailments and gladly began to worship Bura Deo. He afterwards married the Gond's daughter and they had a son called Chaukhtia Bhunjia, who was the ancestor of the Chaukhtia division of the tribe. Now the term Chaukhtia in

¹ This article is based on papers by Mr. Hira Lal, Mr. Gokul Prasad, Tahsildār, Dhamtari, Mr. Pyare Lal

Misra of the Gazetteer office, and Munshi Ganpati Giri, Superintendent, Bindrānawāgarh estate.



Chhattisgarhi signifies a bastard, and the story related above is obviously intended to signify that the Chaukhtia Bhunjias are of mixed descent from the Gonds and Halbas. It is clearly with this end in view that the Gond is made to decline to worship the stone himself and promise to find a substitute, an incident which is wholly unnatural and is simply dragged in to meet the case. The Chaukhtia sub-tribe especially worship Bura Deo, and sing a song relating to the finding of the stone in their marriage ceremony as follows :

*Johār, johār Thākūr Deota, Tumko lāgon,
Do matia ghar men dīne tumhāre nām.
Johār, johār Konda, Tumko lāgon,
Do matia ghar men, etc.
Johār, johār Bāchar Jhākar Tumko lāgon, etc.
Johār, johār Būdha Rāja Tumko lāgon, etc.
Johār, johār Lafandī Māti Tumko lāgon, etc.
Johār, johār Ānand Māti Tumko lāgon, etc.*

which may be rendered :

I make obeisance to thee, O Thākūr Deo, I bow down to thee !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house (as a mark of respect).
I make obeisance to thee, O Konda Pujāri, I bow down to thee !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house.
I make obeisance to thee, O Bāchar Jhākar !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house.
I make obeisance to thee, O Būdha Rāja !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house.
I make obeisance to thee, O Soil of Lafandī !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house.
I make obeisance to thee, O Happy Spot !
In thy name have I placed two pots in my house.

The song refers to the incidents in the story. Thākūr Deo is the title given to the divine stone, Konda is the Halba priest, and Bāchar the Gond who cast the net. Būdha Rāja, otherwise Singh Sei, is the Chief who was ruling in Bindrānawāgarh at the time, Lafandī the village where Konda Halba was found, and the Ānand Māti or Happy Spot is that where the stone was taken out of the river. The majority of the sept-names returned are of Gond origin, and there seems no doubt that the Chaukhtias are, as the story says, of mixed descent from the Halbas and Gonds. It is



noticeable, however, that the Bhunjias, though surrounded by Gonds on all sides, do not speak Gondi but a dialect of Hindi, which Sir G. Grierson considers to resemble that of the Halbas, and also describes as "A form of Chhattisgarhi which is practically the same as Baigāni. It is a jargon spoken by Binjhawars, Bhumias and Bhunjias of Raipur, Raigarh, Sārangarh and Patna in the Central Provinces."¹ The Binjhawars also belong to the country of the Bhunjias, and one or two estates close to Bindrānawāgarh are held by members of this tribe. The Chinda division of the Bhunjias have a saying about themselves: '*Chinda Rāja, Bhunjia Pāik*'; and they say that there was originally a Kamār ruler of Bindrānawāgarh who was dispossessed by Chinda. The Kamārs are a small and very primitive tribe of the same locality. *Pāik* means a foot-soldier, and it seems therefore that the Bhunjias formed the levies of this Chinda, who may very probably have been one of themselves. The term Bhunjia may perhaps signify one who lives on the soil, from *bhūm*, the earth, and *jia*, dependent on. The word *Birjia*, a synonym for Binjhawār, is similarly a corruption of *bewar jia*, and means one who is dependent on *dahia* or patch cultivation. Sir H. Risley gives *Birjia*, *Binjhia* and *Binjhawār*² as synonymous terms, and Bhunjia may be another corruption of the same sort. The Binjhawars are a Hinduised offshoot of the ancient Baiga tribe, who may probably have been in possession of the hills bordering the Chhattisgarh plain as well as of the Satpūra range before the advent of the Gonds, as the term Baiga is employed for a village priest over a large part of this area. It thus seems not improbable that the Chinda Bhunjias may have been derived from the Binjhawars, and this would account for the fact that the tribe speaks a dialect of Hindi and not Gondi. As already seen, the Chaukhtia subcaste appear to be of mixed origin from the Gonds and Halbas, and as the Chindas are probably descended from the Baigas, the Bhunjias may be considered to be an offshoot from these three important tribes.

Of the two subtribes already mentioned the Chaukhtia

¹ From the *Index of Languages and Dialects*, furnished by Sir G. Grierson for the census.

² *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Binjhia.



are recognised to be of illegitimate descent. As a consequence of this they strive to obtain increased social estimation by a ridiculously strict observance of the rules of ceremonial purity. If any man not of his own caste touches the hut where a Chaukhtia cooks his food, it is entirely abandoned and a fresh one built. At the time of the census they threatened to kill the enumerator if he touched their huts to affix the census number. Pegs had therefore to be planted in the ground a little in front of the huts and marked with their numbers. The Chaukhtia will not eat food cooked by other members of his own community, and this is a restriction found only among those of bastard descent, where every man is suspicious of his neighbour's parentage. He will not take food from the hands of his own daughter after she is married; as soon as the ceremony is over her belongings are at once removed from the hut, and even the floor beneath the seat of the bride and bridegroom during the marriage ceremony is dug up and the surface earth thrown away to avoid any risk of defilement. Only when it is remembered that these rules are observed by people who do not wash themselves from one week's end to the other, and wear the same wisp of cloth about their loins until it comes to pieces, can the full absurdity of such customs as the above be appreciated. But the tendency appears to be of the same kind as the intense desire for respectability so often noticed among the lower classes in England. The Chindas, whose pedigree is more reliable, are far less particular about their social purity.

As already stated, the exogamous divisions of the Bhunjias are derived from those of the Gonds. Among the Chaukhtias it is considered a great sin if the signs of puberty appear in a girl before she is married, and to avoid this, if no husband has been found for her, they perform a 'Kānd Byāh' or 'Arrow Marriage': the girl walks seven times round an arrow fixed in the ground, and is given away without ceremony to the man who by previous arrangement has brought the arrow. If a girl of the Chinda group goes wrong with an outsider before marriage and becomes pregnant, the matter is hushed up, but if she is a Chaukhtia it is said that she is finally expelled from the community,

3. Marriage.



the same severe course being adopted even when she is not pregnant if there is reason to suppose that the offence has been committed. A proposal for marriage among the Chaukhutias is made on the boy's behalf by two men who are known as Mahālia and Jangālia, and are supposed to represent a Nai (barber) and Dhīmar (water-carrier), though they do not actually belong to these castes. As among the Gonds, the marriage takes place at the bridegroom's village, and the Mahālia and Jangālia act as stewards of the ceremony, and are entrusted with the rice, pulse, salt, oil and other provisions, the bridegroom's family having no function in the matter except to pay for them. The provisions are all stored in a separate hut, and when the time for the feast has come they are distributed raw to all the guests, each family of whom cook for themselves. The reason for this is, as already explained, that each one is afraid of losing status by eating with other members of the tribe. The marriage is solemnised by walking round the sacred post, and the ceremony is conducted by a hereditary priest known as Dīnwāri, a member of the tribe, whose line it is believed will never become extinct. Among the Chinda Bhunjias the bride goes away with her husband, and in a short time returns with him to her parents' house for a few days, to make an offering to the deities. But the Chaukhutias will not allow her, after she has lived in her father-in-law's house, to return to her home. In future if she goes to visit her parents she must stay outside the house and cook her food separately. Widow-marriage and divorce are permitted, but a husband will often overlook transgressions on the part of his wife and only put her away when her conduct has become an open scandal. In such a case he will either quietly leave house and wife and settle alone in another village, or have his wife informed by means of a neighbour that if she does not leave the village he will do so. It is not the custom to bring cases before the tribal committee or to claim damages. A special tie exists between a man and his sister's children. The marriage of a brother's son or daughter to a sister's daughter or son is considered the most suitable. A man will not allow his sister's children to eat the leavings of food on his plate,



though his own children may do so. This is a special token of respect to his sister's children. He will not chastise his sister's children, even though they deserve it. And it is considered especially meritorious for a man to pay for the wedding ceremony of his sister's son or daughter.

Every third year in the month of Chait (March) the tribe offer a goat and a cocoanut to Māta, the deity of cholera and smallpox. They bow daily to the sun with folded hands, and believe that he is of special assistance to them in the liquidation of debt, which the Bhunjias consider a primary obligation. When a debt has been paid off they offer a cocoanut to the sun as a mark of gratitude for his assistance. They also pay great reverence to the tortoise. They call the tortoise the footstool (*pīdha*) of God, and have adopted the Hindu theory that the earth is supported by a tortoise swimming in the midst of the ocean. Professor Tylor explains as follows how this belief arose:¹ "To man in the lower levels of science the earth is a flat plain over which the sky is placed like a dome as the arched upper shell of the tortoise stands upon the flat plate below, and this is why the tortoise is the symbol or representative of the world." It is said that Bhunjia women are never allowed to sit either on a footstool or a bed-cot, because these are considered to be the seats of the deities. They consider it disrespectful to walk across the shadow of any elderly person, or to step over the body of any human being or revered object on the ground. If they do this inadvertently, they apologise to the person or thing. If a man falls from a tree he will offer a chicken to the tree-spirit.

4. Religion.

The tribe will eat pork, but abstain from beef and the flesh of monkeys. Notwithstanding their strictness of social observance, they rank lower than the Gonds, and only the Kamārs will accept food from their hands. A man who has got maggots in a wound is purified by being given to drink water, mixed with powdered turmeric, in which silver and copper rings have been dipped. Women are secluded during the menstrual period for as long as eight days, and during this time they may not enter the dwelling-hut nor touch any article belonging to it. The Bhunjias take their

5. Social rules.

¹ *Early History of Mankind*, p. 341.



BHUNJIA

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food on plates of leaves, and often a whole family will have only one brass vessel, which will be reserved for production on the visit of a guest. But no strangers can be admitted to the house, and a separate hut is kept in the village for their use. Here they are given uncooked grain and pulse, which they prepare for themselves. When the women go out to work they do not leave their babies in the house, but carry them tied up in a small rag under the arm. They have no knowledge of medicine and are too timid to enter a Government dispensary. Their panacea for most diseases is branding the skin with a hot iron, which is employed indifferently for headache, pains in the stomach and rheumatism. Mr. Pyāre Lāl notes that one of his informants had recently been branded for rheumatism on both knees and said that he felt much relief.



BINJHWĀR

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

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Binjhwār, Binjhāl.¹—A comparatively civilised Dravidian tribe, or caste formed from a tribe, found in the Raipur and Bilāspur Districts and the adjoining Uriya country. In 1911 the Binjhwārs numbered 60,000 persons in the Central Provinces. There is little or no doubt that the Binjhwārs are an offshoot of the primitive Baiga tribe of Mandla and Bālāghāt, who occupy the Satpūra or Maikal hills to the north of the Chhattīsgarh plain. In these Districts a Binjhwār subdivision of the Baigas exists; it is the most civilised and occupies the highest rank in the tribe. In Bhandāra is found the Injhwār caste who are boatmen and cultivators. This caste is derived from the Binjhwār subdivision of the Baigas, and the name Injhwār is simply a corruption of Binjhwār. Neither the Binjhwārs nor the Baigas are found except in the territories above mentioned, and it seems clear that the Binjhwārs are a comparatively civilised section of the Baigas, who have become a distinct caste. They are in fact the landholding section of the Baigas, like the Rāj-Gonds among the Gonds and the Bhilālas among Bhils. The zamīndārs of Bodāsāmar, Rāmpur, Bhatgāon and other estates to the south and east of the Chhattīsgarh plain belong to this tribe. But owing

1. Origin
and
tradition.

¹ This article is based on a paper by Mr. Miān Bhai Abdul Hussain, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Sambalpur.



to the change of name their connection with the parent Baigas has now been forgotten. The name Binjhwār is derived from the Vindhya hills, and the tribe still worship the goddess Vindhyabāsini of these hills as their tutelary deity. They say that their ancestors migrated from Binjhakop to Lāmpa, which may be either Lāmta in Bālāghāt or Lāphāgarh in Bilāspur. The hills of Mandla, the home of perhaps the most primitive Baigas, are quite close to the Vindhya range. The tribe say that their original ancestors were *Bārāh bhai betkār*, or the twelve Brother Archers. They were the sons of the goddess Vindhyabāsini. One day they were out shooting and let off their arrows, which flew to the door of the great temple at Puri and stuck in it. Nobody in the place was able to pull them out, not even when the king's elephants were brought and harnessed to them; till at length the brothers arrived and drew them forth quite easily with their hands, and the king was so pleased with their feat that he gave them the several estates which their descendants now hold. The story recalls that of Arthur and the magic sword. According to another legend the mother of the first Rāja of Patna, a Chauhān Rājput, had fled from northern India to Sambalpur after her husband and relations had been killed in battle. She took refuge in a Binjhwār's hut and bore a son who became Rāja of Patna; and in reward for the protection afforded to his mother he gave the Binjhwār the Bodāsāmar estate, requiring only of him and his descendants the tribute of a silk cloth on accession to the zamīndāri; and this has been rendered ever since by the zamīndārs of Bodāsāmar to the Rājas of Patna as a mark of fealty. It is further stated that the twelve archers when they fired the memorable arrows in the forest were in pursuit of a wild boar; and the landholding class of Binjhwārs are called Bāriha from *bārāh*, a boar. As is only fitting, the Binjhwārs have taken the arrow as their tribal symbol or mark; their cattle are branded with it, and illiterate Binjhwārs sign it in place of their name. If a husband cannot be found for a girl she is sometimes married to an arrow. At a Binjhwār wedding an arrow is laid on the trunk of mahua¹ which forms the

¹ *Bassia latifolia*.



marriage-post, and honours are paid to it as representing the bridegroom.

The tribe have four subdivisions, the Binjhwārs proper, the Sonjharas, the Birjhias and the Binjhias. The Sonjharas consist of those who took to washing for gold in the sands of the Mahānadi, and it may be noted that a separate caste of Sonjharas is also in existence in this locality besides the Binjhwār group. The Birjhias are those who practised *bewar* or shifting cultivation in the forests, the name being derived from *bewarjia*, one living by *bewar*-sowing. Binjhia is simply a diminutive form of Binjhwār, but in Bilāspur it is sometimes regarded as a separate caste. The zamīndār of Bhatgaon belongs to this group. The tribe have also exogamous divisions, the names of which are of a diverse character, and on being scrutinised show a mixture of foreign blood. Among totemistic names are Bāgh, a tiger; Pod, a buffalo; Kamalia, the lotus flower; Panknāli, the water-crow; Tār, the date-palm; Jāl, a net, and others. Some of the sections are nicknames, as Udhār, a debtor; Marai Meli Bāgh, one who carried a dead tiger; Ultum, a talker; Jālia, a liar; Kessal, one who has shaved a man, and so on. Several are the names of other castes, as Lohār, Dūdh Kawaria, Bhil, Bānka and Mājhi, indicating that members of these castes have become Binjhwārs and have founded families. The sept names also differ in different localities; the Birjhia subtribe who live in the same country as the Mundas have several Munda names among their septs, as Munna, Son, Solai; while the Binjhwārs who are neighbours of the Gonds have Gond sept names, as Tekām, Sonwāni, and others. This indicates that there has been a considerable amount of intermarriage with the surrounding tribes, as is the case generally among the lower classes of the population in Chhattīsgarh. Even now if a woman of any caste from whom the Binjhwārs will take water to drink forms a connection with a man of the tribe, though she herself must remain in an irregular position, her children will be considered as full members of it. The Bārhias or landowning group have now adopted names of Sanskrit formation, as Gajendra, an elephant, Rāmeswar, the god Rāma, and Nāgeshwar, the cobra deity. Two of their septs are named Lohār (black-

a. Tribal sub-divisions.



smith) and Kumhār (potter), and may be derived from members of these castes who became Binjhwārs or from Binjhwārs who took up the occupations. At a Binjhwār wedding the presence of a person belonging to each of the Lohār and Kumhār septs is essential, the reason being probably the estimation in which the two handicrafts were held when the Binjhwārs first learnt them from their Hindu neighbours.

3. Marriage.

In Sambalpur there appears to be no system of exogamous groups, and marriage is determined simply by relationship. The union of agnates is avoided as long as the connection can be traced between them, but on the mother's side all except first cousins may marry. Marriage is usually adult, and girls are sometimes allowed to choose their own husbands. A bride-price of about eight *khandis* (1400 lbs.) of unhusked rice is paid. The ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's house, to which the bride proceeds after bidding farewell to her family and friends in a fit of weeping. Weddings are avoided during the four months of the rainy season, and in Chait (March) because it is inauspicious, Jeth (May) because it is too hot, and Pūs (December) because it is the last month of the year among the Binjhwārs. The marriage ceremony should begin on a Sunday, when the guests are welcomed and their feet washed. On Monday the formal reception of the bride takes place, the Gandsān or scenting ceremony follows on Tuesday, and on Wednesday is the actual wedding. At the scenting ceremony seven married girls dressed in new clothes dyed yellow with turmeric conduct the bridegroom round the central post; one holds a dish containing rice, mango leaves, myrobalans and betel-nuts, and a second sprinkles water from a small pot. At each round the bridegroom is made to throw some of the condiments from the dish on to the wedding-post, and after the seven rounds he is seated and is rubbed with oil and turmeric.

4. The marriage ceremony.

Among the Birhias a trunk of mahua with two branches is erected in the marriage-shed, and on this a dagger is placed in a winnowing-fan filled with rice, the former representing the bridegroom and the latter the bride. The bride first goes round the post seven times alone, and then the bridegroom, and after this they go round it together. A



plough is brought and they stand upon the yoke, and seven cups of water having been collected from seven different houses, four are poured over the bridegroom and three over the bride. Some men climb on to the top of the shed and pour pots of water down on to the couple. This is now said to be done only as a joke. Next morning two strong men take the bridegroom and bride, who are usually grown up, on their backs, and the parties pelt each other with unhusked rice. Then the bridegroom holds the bride in his arms from behind and they stand facing the sun, while some old man ties round their feet a thread specially spun by a virgin. The couple stand for some time and then fall to the ground as if dazzled by his rays, when water is again poured over their bodies to revive them. Lastly, an old man takes the arrow from the top of the marriage-post and draws three lines with it on the ground to represent the Hindu trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and the bridegroom jumps over these holding the bride in his arms. The couple go to bathe in a river or tank, and on the way home the bridegroom shoots seven arrows at an image of a sāmbar deer made with straw. At the seventh shot the bride's brother takes the arrow, and running away and hiding it in his cloth lies down at the entrance of the bridegroom's house. The couple go up to him, and the bridegroom examines his body with suspicion, pretending to think that he is dead. He draws the arrow out of his cloth and points to some blood which has been previously sprinkled on the ground. After a time the boy gets up and receives some liquor as a reward. This procedure may perhaps be a symbolic survival of marriage by capture, the bridegroom killing the bride's brother before carrying her off, or more probably, perhaps, the boy may represent a dead deer. In some of the wilder tracts the man actually waylays and seizes the girl before the wedding, the occasion being previously determined, and the women of her family trying to prevent him. If he succeeds in carrying her off they stay for three or four days in the forest and then return and are married.

If a Binjhār girl is seduced and rendered pregnant by a man of the tribe, the people exact a feast and compel them to join their hands in an informal manner before the

5. Sexual morality.



caste committee, the tie thus formed being considered as indissoluble as a formal marriage. Polygamy is permitted; a Binjhwār zamīndār marries a new wife, who is known as Pāt Rānī, to celebrate his accession to his estates, even though he may have five or six already.

Divorce is recognised but is not very common, and a married woman having an intrigue with another Binjhwār is often simply made over to him and they live as husband and wife. If this man does not wish to take her she can live with any other, conjugal morality being very loose in Sambalpur. In Bodāsāmar a fine of from one to ten rupees is payable to the zamīndār in the case of each divorce, and a feast must also be given to the caste-fellows.

6. Disposal
of the
dead.

The tribe usually bury the dead, and on the third day they place on the grave some uncooked rice and a lighted lamp. As soon as an insect flies to the lamp they catch it, and placing it in a cake of flour carry this to a stream, where it is worshipped with an offering of coloured rice. It is then thrust into the sand or mud in the bed of the stream with a grass broom. This ceremony is called Khārpāni or 'Grass and Water,' and appears to be a method of disposing of the dead man's spirit. It is not performed at all for young children, while, on the other hand, in the case of respected elders a second ceremony is carried out of the same nature, being known as Badāpāni or 'Great Water.' On this occasion the *jīva* or soul is worshipped with greater pomp. Except in the case of wicked souls, who are supposed to become malignant ghosts, the Binjhwārs do not seem to have any definite belief in a future life. They say, '*Je maris te saris*,' or 'That which is dead is rotten and gone.'

7. Reli-
gion.

The tribe worship the common village deities of Chhat-tisgarh, and extend their veneration to Bura Deo, the principal god of the Gonds. They venerate their daggers, spears and arrows on the day of Dasahra, and every third year their tutelary goddess Vindhyabāsini is carried in procession from village to village. Mr. Miān Bhai gives the following list of precepts as forming the Binjhwār's moral code:—Not to commit adultery outside the caste; not to eat beef; not to murder; not to steal; not to swear falsely before the caste committee. The tribe have *gurus* or



spiritual preceptors, whom he describes as the most ignorant Bairāgis, very little better than impostors. When a boy or girl grows up the Bairāgi comes and whispers the *Karn mantra* or spell in his ear, also hanging a necklace of *tulsi* (basil) beads round his neck; for this the *guru* receives a cloth, a cocoanut and a cash payment of four annas to a rupee. Thereafter he visits his disciples annually at harvest time and receives a present of grain from them.

On the 11th of Bhādon (August) the tribe celebrate the *karma* festival, which is something like May-Day or a harvest feast. The youths and maidens go to the forest and bring home a young *karma* tree, singing, dancing and beating drums. Offerings are made to the tree, and then the whole village, young and old, drink and dance round it all through the night. Next morning the tree is taken to the nearest stream or tank and consigned to it. After this the young girls of five or six villages make up a party and go about to the different villages accompanied by drummers and Gānda musicians. They are entertained for the night, and next morning dance for five or six hours in the village and then go on to another.

8. Festivals.

The tribe are indiscriminate in their diet, which includes pork, snakes, rats, and even carnivorous animals, as panthers. They refuse only beef, monkeys and the leavings of others. The wilder Binjhawārs of the forests will not accept cooked food from any other caste, but those who live in association with Hindus will take it when cooked without water from a few of the higher ones. The tribe are not considered as impure. Their dress is very simple, consisting as a rule only of one dirty white piece of cloth in the case of both men and women. Their hair is unkempt, and they neither oil nor comb it. A genuine Binjhawār of the hills wears long frizzled hair with long beard and moustaches, but in the open country they cut their hair and shave the chin. Every Binjhawār woman is tattooed either before or just after her marriage, when she has attained to the age of adolescence. A man will not touch or accept food from a woman who is not tattooed on the feet. The expenses must be paid either by the woman's parents or her brothers and not by her husband. The practice is carried to an extreme, and many

9. Social customs.



women have the upper part of the chest, the arms from shoulder to wrist, and the feet and legs up to the knee covered with devices. On the chest and arms the patterns are in the shape of flowers and leaves, while along the leg a succession of zigzag lines are pricked. The Binjhwārs are usually cultivators and labourers, while, as already stated, several zamīndāri and other estates are owned by members of the tribe. Binjhwārs also commonly hold the office of Jhānkar or priest of the village gods in the Sambalpur District, as the Baigas do in Mandla and Bālāghāt. In Sambalpur the Jhānkar or village priest is a universal and recognised village servant of fairly high status. His business is to conduct the worship of the local deities of the soil, crops, forests and hills, and he generally has a substantial holding, rent free, containing some of the best land in the village. It is said locally that the Jhānkar is looked on as the founder of the village, and the representative of the old owners who were ousted by the Hindus. He worships on their behalf the indigenous deities, with whom he naturally possesses a more intimate acquaintance than the later immigrants; while the gods of these latter cannot be relied on to exercise a sufficient control over the works of nature in the foreign land to which they have been imported, or to ensure that the earth and the seasons will regularly perform their necessary functions in producing sustenance for mankind.



BISHNOI

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

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| 9. <i>Development into a caste.</i> | |

Bishnoi¹—A Hindu sect which has now developed into a caste. The sect was founded in the Punjab, and the Bishnois are immigrants from northern India. In the Central Provinces they numbered about 1100 persons in 1911, nearly all of whom belonged to the Hoshangābād District. The best description of the sect is contained in Mr. Wilson's *Sirsa Settlement Report* (quoted in Sir E. Maclagan's *Census Report of the Punjab* for 1891), from which the following details are taken: "The name Bishnoi means a worshipper of Vishnu. The founder of the sect was a Panwār Rājput named Jhāmbāji, who was born in a village of Bikaner State in A.D. 1451. His father had hitherto remained childless, and being greatly oppressed by this misfortune had been promised a son by a Muhammadan Fakīr. After nine months Jhāmbāji was born and showed his miraculous origin in various ways, such as producing sweets from nothing for the delectation of his companions. Until he was thirty-four years old he spoke no word and was employed in tending his father's cattle. At this time a Brāhman was sent for to get him to speak, and on confessing his failure, Jhāmbāji showed his power by lighting a

1. Origin of the sect.

¹ This article is compiled from Mr. Wilson's account of the Bishnois as reproduced in Mr. Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, and from notes taken by Mr. Adurām Chaudhri in the Hoshangābād District.



lamp with a snap of his fingers and spoke his first word. He adopted the life of a teacher and went to reside on a sandhill some thirty miles south of Bikaner. In 1485 a fearful famine desolated the country, and Jhāmbāji gained an enormous number of disciples by providing food for all who would declare their belief in him. He is said to have died on his sandhill at the good old age of eighty-four, and to have been buried at a spot about a mile distant from it. A further account says that his body remained suspended for six months in the bier without decomposing. His name Jhāmbāji was a contraction of Achambha (The Wonder), with the honorific suffix *jī*.

2. Precepts
of Jhām-
bāji.

“The sayings (*shabd*) of Jhāmbāji, to the number of one hundred and twenty, were recorded by his disciples, and have been handed down in a book (*pothi*) which is written in the Nāgari character, and in a Hindu dialect similar to Bāgri and therefore probably a dialect of Rājasthāni. The following is a translation of the twenty-nine precepts given by him for the guidance of his followers: ‘For thirty days after childbirth and five days after a menstrual discharge a woman must not cook food. Bathe in the morning. Commit no adultery. Be content. Be abstemious and pure. Strain your drinking-water. Be careful of your speech. Examine your fuel in case any living creature be burnt with it. Show pity to living creatures. Keep duty present to your mind as the teacher bade. Do not steal. Do not speak evil of others. Do not tell lies. Never quarrel. Avoid opium, tobacco, *bhāng* and blue clothing. Flee from spirits and flesh. See that your goats are kept alive (not sold to Musalmāns, who will kill them for food). Do not plough with bullocks. Keep a fast on the day before the new moon. Do not cut green trees. Sacrifice with fire. Say prayers; meditate. Perform worship and attain heaven.’ And the last of the twenty-nine duties prescribed by the teacher: ‘Baptise your children if you would be called a true Bishnoi.’¹

“Some of these precepts are not strictly obeyed. For

¹ The total number of precepts as given above is only twenty-five, but can be raised to twenty-nine by counting

the prohibition of opium, tobacco, *bhāng*, blue clothing, spirits and flesh separately.



instance, though ordinarily they allow no blue in their clothing, yet a Bishnoi, if he is a police constable, is allowed to wear a blue uniform; and Bishnois do use bullocks, though most of their farming is done with camels. They also seem to be generally quarrelsome (in words) and given to use bad language. But they abstain from tobacco, drugs and spirits, and are noted for their regard for animal life, which is such that not only will they not themselves kill any living creature, but they do their utmost to prevent others from doing so. Consequently their villages are generally swarming with antelope and other animals, and they forbid their Musalmān neighbours to kill them, and try to dissuade European sportsmen from interfering with them. They wanted to make it a condition of their settlement that no one should be allowed to shoot on their land, but at the same time they asked that they might be assessed at lower rates than their neighbours, on the ground that the antelope, being thus left undisturbed, did more damage to their crops; but I told them that this would lessen the merit (*pun*) of their actions in protecting the animals, and they must be treated just as the surrounding villages were. They consider it a good deed to scatter grain to pigeons and other birds, and often have a large number of half-tame birds about their villages. The day before the new moon (*Amāwas*) they observe as a Sabbath and fast-day, doing no work in the fields or in the house. They bathe and pray three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening, saying 'Bishnu! Bishnu!' instead of the ordinary Hindu 'Rām! Rām.' Their clothing is the same as that of other Bāgrīs, except that their women do not allow the waist to be seen, and are fond of wearing black woollen clothing. They are more particular about ceremonial purity than ordinary Hindus are, and it is a common saying that if a Bishnoi's food is on the first of a string of twenty camels and a man of another caste touches the last camel of the string, the Bishnoi would consider his food defiled and throw it away."

3. Customs of the Bishnois in the Punjab.

The ceremony of initiation is as follows: "A number of representative Bishnois assemble, and before them a Sādh or Bishnoi priest, after lighting a sacrificial fire (*hom*), instructs the novice in the duties of the faith. He then

4. Initiation and baptism.

takes some water in a new earthen vessel, over which he prays in a set form (*Bishno gāyatrī*), stirring it the while with his string of beads (*māla*), and after asking the consent of the assembled Bishnois he pours the water three times into the hands of the novice, who drinks it off. The novice's scalp-lock (*chotī*) is then cut off and his head shaved, for the Bishnois shave the whole head and do not leave a scalp-lock like the Hindus, but they allow the beard to grow, only shaving the chin on the father's death. Infant baptism is also practised, and thirty days after birth the child, whether boy or girl, is baptised by the priest (*Sādh*) in much the same way as an adult; only the set form of prayer is different, and the priest pours a few drops of water into the child's mouth, and gives the child's relatives each three handfuls of the consecrated water to drink; at the same time the barber clips off the child's hair. The baptismal ceremony has the effect of purifying the house, which has been made impure by the birth (*sūtāk*).

"The Bishnois do not revere Brāhmans, but have priests of their own known as *Sādh*, who are chosen from among the laity. The priests are a hereditary class, and do not intermarry with other Bishnois, from whom, like Brāhmans, they receive food and offerings. The Bishnois do not burn their dead, but bury them below the cattle-shed or in some place like a pen frequented by cattle. They make pilgrimages to the place where Jhāmbāji is buried to the south of Bikaner; here a tomb and temple have been erected to his memory, and gatherings are held twice a year. The sect observe the Holi in a different way from other Hindus. After sunset on that day they fast till the next forenoon when, after hearing read the account of how Prahlād was tortured by his infidel father, Hrianya Kasipu, for believing in the god Vishnu, until he was delivered by the god himself in his incarnation of Narsingh, the Man-lion, and mourning over Prahlād's sufferings, they light a sacrificial fire and partake of consecrated water, and after distributing sugar (*gur*) in commemoration of Prahlād's delivery from the fire into which he was thrown, they break their fast."

The above interesting account of the Bishnois by Mr. Wilson shows that Jhāmbāji was a religious reformer, who



attempted to break loose from the debased Hindu polytheism and arrogant supremacy of the Brāhmins by choosing one god, Vishnu, out of the Hindu pantheon and exalting him into the sole and supreme deity. In his method he thus differed from Kabīr and other reformers, who went outside Hinduism altogether, preaching a monotheistic faith with one unseen and nameless deity. The case of the Mānbhaos, whose unknown founder made Krishna the one god, discarding the Vedas and the rest of Hinduism, is analogous to Jhāmbāji's movement. His creed much resembles that of the other Hindu reformers and founders of the Vaishnavite sects. The extreme tenderness for animal life is a characteristic of most of them, and would be fostered by the Hindu belief in the transmigration of souls. The prohibition of liquor is another common feature, to which Jhāmbāji added that of all kinds of drugs. His mind, like those of Kabīr and Nānak, was probably influenced by the spectacle of the comparatively liberal creed of Islām, which had now taken root in northern India. Mr. Crooke remarks that the Bishnois of Bijnor appear to differ from those of the Punjab in using the Muhammadan form of salutation, *Salām alaikum*, and the title of Shaikhji. They account for this by saying they murdered a Muhammadan Kāzi, who prevented them from burning a widow, and were glad to compound the offence by pretending to adopt Islām. But it seems possible that on their first rupture with Hinduism they were to some extent drawn towards the Muhammadans, and adopted practices of which, on tending again to conform to their old religion, they have subsequently become ashamed.

In northern India the members of different castes who have become Bishnois have formed separate endogamous groups, of which Mr. Crooke gives nine; among these are the Brāhman, Bania, Jāt, Sunār, Ahīr and Nai Bishnois. Only members of comparatively good castes appear to have been admitted into the community, and in the Punjab they are nearly all Jāts and Banias. In the Central Provinces the caste forms only one endogamous group. They have *gotras* or exogamous sections, the names of which appear to be of the titular or territorial type. Some of the *gotras*,

6. Bishnois
in the
Central
Provinces.



Jhuria, Ajna, Sain and Ahir,¹ are considered to be lower than the others, and though they are not debarred from intermarriage, a connection with them is looked upon as something of a *mésalliance*. They are not consulted in the settlement of tribal disputes. No explanation of the comparatively degraded position of these septs is forthcoming, but it may probably be attributed to some blot in their ancestral escutcheon. The Bishnois celebrate their marriages at any period of the year, and place no reliance on astrology. According to their saying, "Every day is as good as Sankrānt,² every day is as good as Amāwas.³ The Ganges flows every day, and he whose preceptor has taught him the most truth will get the most good from bathing in it."

7. Marriage.

Before a wedding the bride's father sends, by the barber, a cocoanut and a silver ring tied round it with a yellow thread. On the thread are seven, nine, eleven or thirteen knots, signifying the number of days to elapse before the ceremony. The barber on his arrival stands outside the door of the house, and the bridegroom's father sends round to all the families of his caste. The men go to the house and the women come singing to the barber, and rub turmeric on the boy. A married woman touches the cocoanut and waves a lighted lamp seven times round the bridegroom's head. This is meant to scare off evil spirits. On arrival at the bride's village the bridegroom touches the marriage-shed with the branch of a *ber* or wild plum tree. The mother of the bride gives him some sugar, rubs lamp-black on his eyes and twists his nose. The bride and bridegroom are seated side by side on wooden boards, and after the caste priest (Sādh) has chanted some sacred verses, water is poured nine times on to the palms of the bridegroom, and he drinks it. They do not perform the ceremony of walking round the sacred pole. Girls are usually married at a very early age, sometimes when they are only a few months old. Subsequently, when the bride-

¹ Jhuria may be Jharia, jungly; Sain is a term applied to beggars; the Ahir or herdsman sept may be descended from a man of this caste who became a Bishnoi.

² The day when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign into another.

³ The New Moon day or the day before.



groom comes to take his bride, her family present her with clothing and a spinning-wheel, this implement being still in favour among the Bishnois. When a widow is to be married again she is taken to her new husband's house at night, and there grinds a flour-mill five times, being afterwards presented with lac bangles.

The dead are never burnt, but their bodies are weighted with sand-bags and thrown into a stream. The practice which formerly prevailed among the Bishnois of burying their dead in the courtyard of the house by the cattle-stalls has now fallen into desuetude as being insanitary. A red cloth is spread over the body of a woman, and if her maternal relatives are present each of them places a piece of cloth on the bier. After the funeral the mourning party proceed to a river to bathe, and then cook and eat their food on the bank. This custom is also followed by the Panwār Rājputs of the Wainganga Valley, but is forbidden by most of the good Hindu castes. No period of impurity is observed after a death, but on some day between the fourth and tenth days afterwards a feast is given to the caste-fellows.

8. Disposal of the dead.

The Bishnois of the Central Provinces are gradually becoming an ordinary Hindu caste, a fate which has several times befallen the adherents of Hindu reformers. Many of the precepts of Jhāmbāji are neglected. They still usually strain their water and examine their fuel before burning it to remove insects, and they scatter flour to feed the ants and grain for peacocks and pigeons. The wearing of blue cloth is avoided by most, blue being for an obscure reason a somewhat unlucky colour among the Hindus. But they now use bullocks for ploughing, and cut green trees except on the Amāwas day. Many of them, especially the younger generation, have begun to grow the Hindu *choti* or scalp-lock. They go on pilgrimage to all the Hindu sacred places, and no doubt make presents there to Brāhman priests. They offer *pindas* or sacrificial cakes to the spirits of their deceased ancestors. They observe some of the ordinary Hindu festivals, as the Anant Chaturthi, and some of them employ Brāhmins to read the Satya Nārāyan Katha, the favourite Hindu sacred book. They still retain their special

9. Development into a caste.



BISHNOI

CSL
PART II

observance of the Holi. The admission of proselytes has practically ceased, and they marry among themselves like an ordinary Hindu caste, in which light they are gradually coming to be regarded. The Bishnois are usually cultivators or moneylenders by calling.



BOHRA

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| 2. <i>Their religious tenets.</i> | 5. <i>Religious customs.</i> |
| 3. <i>The Mullahs.</i> | 6. <i>Occupation.</i> |
| 7. <i>Houses, and dress.</i> | |

Bohra, Bohora.¹—A Muhammadan caste of traders who come from Gujarāt and speak Gujarāti. At the last census they numbered nearly 5000 persons, residing principally in the Nimār, Nāgpur and Amraoti Districts, Burhānpur being the headquarters of the sect in the Central Provinces. The name is probably derived from the Hindi *byohāra*, a trader. Members of the caste are honorifically addressed as Mullāji. According to the received account of the rise of the Bohras in Gujarāt a missionary, Abdulla, came from Yemen to Cambay in A.D. 1067. By his miracles he converted the great king Sidhrāj of Anhilvāda Pātan in Gujarāt, and he with numbers of his subjects embraced the new faith. For two centuries and a half the Bohras flourished, but with the establishment of Muzaffar Shāh's power (A.D. 1390–1413) in that country the spread of Sunni doctrines was encouraged and the Bohra and other Shia sects suppressed. Since then, with gradually lessening numbers, they have passed through several bitter persecutions, meeting with little favour or protection, till at the close of the eighteenth century they found shelter under British rule. In 1539 the members of the sect living in Arabia were expelled from there and came to Gujarāt, where they were hospitably received by their brethren, the headquarters of the sect being thenceforward

1. Origin
of the sect.

¹ This article is largely based on Mr. F. L. Faridi's full description of the sect in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, *Muhammadans of Gujarāt*, and on a paper by Mr. Habib Ullah, pleader, Burhānpur.



fixed at Surat. The Bohras are Shias of the great Isma'ilia sect of Egypt. The Isma'ilia sect split off from the orthodox Shias on the question of the succession to the sixth Imām, Jāfar Sādik, in A.D. 765. The dispute was between his eldest son's son Ismail and his second son Musi, the Ismailias being those who supported the former and the orthodox Shias the latter. The orthodox Shias are distinguished as believers in twelve Imāms, the last of whom is still to come. The Ismailias again divided on a similar dispute as to the succession to the Khalifa Almustansir Billah by his eldest son Nazār or his younger son Almusta'ili. The Bohras are descended from the Musta'ilians or supporters of the younger son and the Khojas from the Nazārians who supported the elder son.¹ All these distinctions appear somewhat trivial.

2. Their religious tenets.

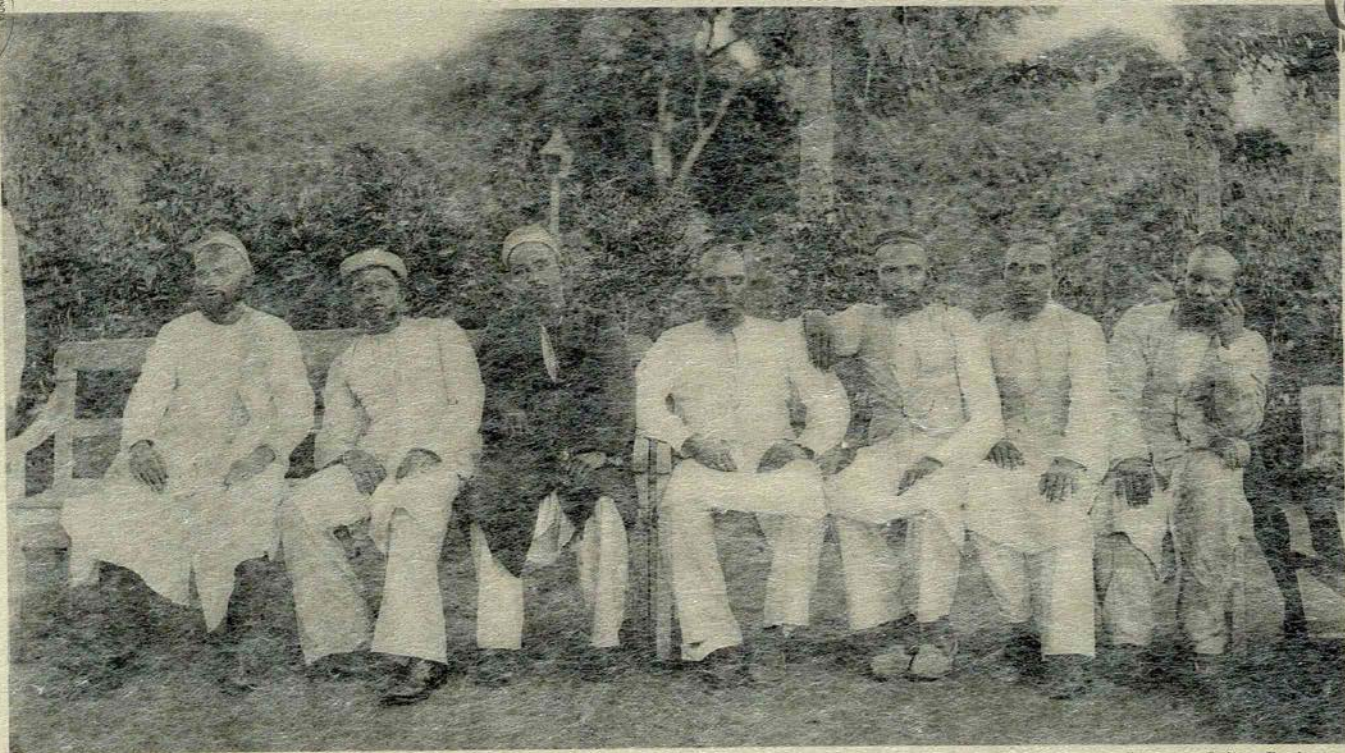
Gujarāt contains two classes of Bohras: the traders who are all Shias and are the only immigrants into the Central Provinces, and a large class of cultivating Bohras who are Sunnis. The latter may be the descendants of the earliest converts and may have been forced to become Sunnis when this sect was dominant in Gujarāt as noticed above, while the Shias are perhaps descended from the later immigrants from Arabia. The Shia Bohras themselves are further divided into several sects of which the Dāudi are the principal.

Mr. Farīdi writes of them:² "They are attentive to their religious duties, both men and women knowing the Korān. They are careful to say their prayers, to observe Muharram as a season of mourning and to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Kerbala. They strictly abstain from music and dancing and from using or dealing in intoxicating drinks or drugs. Though fierce sectarians, keenly hating and hated by the regular Sunnis and other Muhammadans than those of their own sect, their reverence for Ali and for their high priest seems to be further removed from adoration than among the Khojahs. They would appear to accept the ordinary distinctions of right and wrong, punishing drunkenness, adultery and other acts generally considered

¹ *Bombay Gazetteer, Muhammadans of Gujarāt*, p. 30. Sir H. T. Colebrooke and Mr. Conolly thought that

the Bohras were true Shias and not Ismailias.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 30-32.



Remrose, Colln., Derby.

GROUP OF BOHRAS AT BURHĀNPUR (NIMĀR).



disgraceful. Of the state beyond death they hold that, after passing a time of freedom as evil spirits, unbelievers go to a place of torment. Believers, but apparently only believers of the Ismaili faith, after a term of training enter a state of perfection. Among the faithful each disembodied spirit passes the term of training in communion with the soul of some good man. The spirit can suggest good or evil to the man and may learn from his good deeds to love the right; when the good man dies the spirits in communion with his soul are, if they have gained by their training, attached to some more perfect man, or if they have lost by their opportunities are sent back to learn; spirits raised to a higher degree of knowledge are placed in communion with the High Priest on earth; and on his death are with him united to the Imāms, and when through the Imāms they have learnt what they still require to know they are absorbed in perfection. Except for some peculiarities in their names; that they attach special importance to circumcision; that the sacrifice or *alsikah* ceremony is held in the Mullah's house; that at marriage the bride and bridegroom when not of age are represented by sponsors or *walis*; that at death a prayer for pity on his soul and body is laid in the dead man's hands; and that on certain occasions the High Priest feeds the whole community—Bohra customs do not so far as has been ascertained differ from those of ordinary Muhammadans.

“ Their leader, both in things religious and social, is the head Mullah of Surat. The ruling Mullah names his successor, generally, but it is said not always, from among the members of his own family. Short of worship the head Mullah is treated with the greatest respect. He lives in much state and entertains with the most profuse liberality. On both religious and civil questions his authority is final. Discipline is enforced in religious matters by fine, and in case of adultery, drunkenness and other offences, by fine, excommunication and rarely by flogging. On ceremonial occasions the head Mullah sits on his throne, and in token of his power has the flyflapper, *chauri*, held before him. As the Bohras enter they make three prostrations, *salaams*, close their hands and stand before him. To such as are worthy

3. The
Mullahs.



he says 'Be seated,' to others 'Stand.' Once a year, on the 18th Rajjab, every Dāūdī lays his palm within the head Mullah's hand and takes an oath to be faithful. On this day when he goes to the mosque the Bohras are said to kiss the Mullah's footsteps and to apply the dust he treads to their heads and eyes." Each considerable settlement of the sect has a deputy Mullah of its own.

4. Bohra
graveyards.

The Sahadra or burial-place of the Bohras at Burhānpur contains the tombs of three of the Surat Mullahs who happened to die when they were at Burhānpur. The tombs are in shell-lime and are fairly handsome erections. The Bohras support here by voluntary subscription a rest-house, where members of the sect coming to the city can obtain free board and lodging for as long as they like to stay. Mr. Conolly says of their graveyards :¹

"Their burial-grounds have a pleasing appearance, the tombs being regularly arranged in streets, east and west. The tombs themselves, which are, of course, north and south, the corpse resting on its right side, differ in no respect from those of Sunnis, with the exception of a small *chirāgh takia* or lamp-socket, cut out of the north face, just like the cavity for the inscription of our own tombs."

5. Reli-
gious
customs.

Of their religion Mr. Kitts writes :² "In prayers they differ both from Shias and Sunnis in that they follow their Mullah, praying aloud after him, but without much regularity of posture. The times for commencing their devotions are about five minutes later than those observed by Sunnis. After the midday and sunset supplications they allow a short interval to elapse, remaining themselves in the mosque meanwhile. They then commence the afternoon and evening prayers and thus run five services into three."

Mr. Thurston notes that the Bohras consider themselves so superior to other sects that if another Muhammadan enters their mosque they afterwards clean the spot which he has occupied during his prayers.³ They show strictness in other ways, making their own sweetmeats at home and declining to eat those of the Halwai (confectioner). It is said

¹ J.A.S.B. vol. vi. (1837), part ii.
p. 847.

² *Benar Census Report* (1818), p. 70.

³ *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, art. Bohra.



also that they will not have their clothes washed by a Dhobi, nor wear shoes made by a Charnār, nor take food touched by any Hindu. They are said to bathe only on Fridays, and some of them not on every Friday. If a dog touches them they are unclean and must change their clothes. They celebrate the Id and Ramazān a day before other Muhammadans. At the Muharram their women break all their bangles and wear new bangles next day to show that they have been widowed, and during this period they observe mourning by going without shoes and not using umbrellas. Mr. Conolly says of them: "I must not omit to notice that a fine of 20 cowries (equally for rich and poor) punishes the non-attendance of a Bohra at the daily prayers. A large sum is exacted for remissness during the Ramazān, and it is said that the dread of loss operates powerfully upon a class of men who are particularly penny-wise. The money collected thus is transmitted by the Ujjain Mullah to his chief at Surat, who devotes it to religious purposes such as repairing or building mosques, assisting the needy of his subjects and the like. Several other offences have the same characteristic punishment, such as fornication, drunkenness, etc. But the cunning Bohras elude many of the fines and daily indulge in practices not sanctioned by their creed; thus in their shops pictures and figures may be purchased though it is against the commandments to sell the likeness of any living thing."

It has been seen that when a Bohra is buried a prayer for pity on his soul and body is laid in the dead man's hands, of which Mr. Farīdī gives the text. But other Muhammadans tell a story to the effect that the head Mullah writes a letter to the archangel Gabriel in which he is instructed to supply a stream of honey, a stream of milk, water and some fruit trees, a golden building and a number of houris, the extent of the order depending on the amount of money which has been paid to the Mullah by the departed in his lifetime; and this letter is placed beneath the dead man's head in the grave, the Bohras having no coffins. The Bohras indignantly repudiate any such version of the letter, and no doubt if the custom ever existed it has died out.

The Bohras, Captain Forsyth remarks, though bigoted

religionists, are certainly the most civilised and enterprising and perhaps also the most industrious class in the Nimār District. They deal generally in hardware, piece-goods and drugs, and are very keen traders. There is a proverb, "He who is sharper than a Bohra must be mad, and he who is fairer than a Khatri must be a leper." Some of them are only pedlars and hawkers, and in past times their position seems to have been lower than at present. An old account says:¹ "The Bohras are an inferior set of travelling merchants. The inside of a Bohra's box is like that of an English country shop ; spelling-books, prayer-books, lavender-water, soap, tapes, scissors, knives, needles and thread make but a small part of the variety." And again: "In Bombay the Bohras go about the town as the dirty Jews do in London early and late, carrying a bag and inviting by the same nasal tone servants and others to fill it with old clothes, empty bottles, scraps of iron, etc."²

7. Houses
 and dress.

Of their method of living Malcolm wrote:³ "I visited several of the houses of this tribe at Shāhjahānpur, where a colony of them are settled, and was gratified to find not only in their apartments, but in the spaciousness and cleanliness of their kitchens, in the well-constructed chimney, the neatly arranged pantries, and the polished dishes and plates as much of real comfort in domestic arrangements as could be found anywhere. We took the parties we visited by surprise and there could have been no preparation." The Bohras do not charge interest on loans, and they combine to support indigent members of the community, never allowing one of their caste to beg. The caste may easily be known from other Muhammadans by their small, tightly wound turbans and little skull-caps, and their long flowing robes, and loose trousers widening from the ankle upwards and gathered in at the waist with a string. The women dress in a coloured cotton or silk petticoat, a short-sleeved bodice and a coloured cotton head-scarf. When they go out of doors they throw a dark cloak over the head which covers the body to the ankles, with gauze openings for the eyes.

¹ Crooke's edition of *Hobson-Jobson*,
 art. Bohra.

² Moor's *Hindu Infanticide*, p. 168.

³ *Memoir of Central India*, ii. p.
 111.

BRĀHMAN¹

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| 1. <i>Origin and development of the caste.</i> | 13. <i>Sati or burning of widows.</i> |
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| | 25. <i>Character of Brāhmins.</i> |

LIST OF SUBORDINATE ARTICLES ON SUBCASTES

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| 1. Ahivāsi. | 7. Mālwi. |
| 2. Jijhotia. | 8. Nāgar. |
| 3. Kanaujia, Kanyākubja. | 9. Nāramdeo. |
| 4. Khedāwāl. | 10. Sanādhyā, Sanaurhia. |
| 5. Mahārāshtra, Marātha. | 11. Sarwaria. |
| 6. Maithil. | 12. Utkal. |

Brāhman, Bāman.—The well-known priestly caste of India and the first of the four traditional castes of the Hindu scriptures. In 1911 the Brāhmins numbered about 450,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār, or

1. Origin and development of the caste.

¹ This article is mainly compiled from a full and excellent account of the caste by Mr. Gopal Datta Joshi, Civil Judge, Saugor, C.P., to whom the writer is much indebted. Extracts have also been taken from Mr. W. Crooke's and Sir H. Risley's articles on the caste in their works on the

Tribes and Castes of the United Provinces and Bengal respectively; from Mr. J. N. Bhattachārya's Hindu Castes and Sects (Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1896), and from the Rev. W. Ward's View of the History, Literature and Religion of the Hindus (London, 1817).



nearly 3 per cent of the population. This is less than the average strength for India as a whole, which is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The caste is spread over the whole Province, but is in greatest numbers in proportion to the population in Saugor and Jubbulpore, and weakest in the Feudatory States.

The name Brāhman or Brahma is said to be from the root *brih* or *vrih*, to increase. The god Brahma is considered as the spirit and soul of the universe, the divine essence and source of all being. Brāhmana, the masculine numerative singular, originally denoted one who prays, a worshipper or the composer or reciter of a hymn.¹ It is the common term used in the Vedas for the officiating priest. Sir H. Risley remarks on the origin of the caste:² "The best modern opinion seems disposed to find the germ of the Brāhman caste in the bards, ministers and family priests who were attached to the king's household in Vedic times. Different stages of this institution may be observed. In the earliest ages the head of every Aryan household was his own priest, and even a king would himself perform the sacrifices which were appropriate to his rank. By degrees families or guilds of priestly singers arose, who sought service under the kings, and were rewarded by rich presents for the hymns or praise and prayer recited and sacrifices offered by them on behalf of their masters. As time went on the sacrifices became more numerous and more elaborate, and the mass of ritual grew to such an extent that the king could no longer cope with it unaided. The employment of *purohīts* or family priests, formerly optional, now became a sacred duty if the sacrifices were not to fall into disuse. The Brāhman obtained a monopoly of priestly functions, and a race of sacerdotal specialists arose which tended continually to close its ranks against the intrusion of outsiders." Gradually then from the household priests and those who made it their business to commit to memory and recite the sacred hymns and verses handed down orally from generation to generation through this agency, an

¹ Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Brāhman, quoting Professor Eggeling in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v.

Brāhmanism.

² *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Brāhman.



occupational caste emerged, which arrogated to itself the monopoly of these functions, and the doctrine developed that nobody could perform them who was not qualified by birth, that is, nobody could be a Brāhman who was not the son of a Brāhman. When religious ritual became more important, as apparently it did, a desire would naturally arise among the priests to make their revered and lucrative profession a hereditary monopoly ; and this they were easily and naturally able to do by only teaching the sacred songs and the sacrificial rules and procedure to their own descendants. The process indeed would be to a considerable extent automatic, because the priests would always take their own sons for their pupils in the first place, and in the circumstances of early Indian society a married priesthood would thus naturally evolve into a hereditary caste. The Levites among the Jews and the priests of the Pārsis formed similar hereditary orders, and the reason why they did not arise in other great religions would appear to have been the prescription or encouragement of the rule of celibacy for the clergy and the foundation of monasteries, to which admission was free. But the military landed aristocracies of Europe practically formed hereditary castes which were analogous to the Brāhman and Rājput castes, though of a less stereotyped and primitive character. The rise of the Brāhman caste was thus perhaps a comparatively simple and natural product of religious and social evolution, and might have occurred independently of the development of the caste system as a whole. The former might be accounted for by reasons which would be inadequate to explain the latter, even though as a matter of fact the same factors were at work in both cases.

The hereditary monopoly of the sacred scriptures would be strengthened and made absolute when the Sanskrit language, in which they had been composed and handed down, ceased to be the 'ordinary spoken language of the people. Nobody then could learn them unless he was taught by a Brāhman priest. And by keeping the sacred literature in an unknown language the priesthood made their own position absolutely secure and got into their own hands the allocation of the penalties and rewards promised

2. Their monopoly of literature.



by religion, for which these books were the authority, that is to say, the disposal of the souls of Hindus in the after-life. They, in fact, held the keys of heaven and hell. The jealousy with which they guarded them is well shown by the Abbé Dubois:¹ "To the Brāhmins alone belongs the right of reading the Vedas, and they are so jealous of this, or rather it is so much to their interest to prevent other castes obtaining any insight into their contents, that the Brāhmins have inculcated the absurd theory, which is implicitly believed, that should anybody of any other caste be so highly imprudent as even to read the title-page his head would immediately split in two. The very few Brāhmins who are able to read those sacred books in the original, only do so in secret and in a whisper. Expulsion from caste, without the smallest hope of re-entering it, would be the lightest punishment of a Brāhman who exposed those books to the eyes of the profane." It would probably be unfair, however, to suppose that the Vedas were kept in the original Sanskrit simply from motives of policy. It was probably thought that the actual words of the sacred text had themselves a concrete force and potency which would be lost in a translation. This is the idea underlying the whole class of beliefs in the virtue of charms and spells.

But the Brāhmins had the monopoly not only of the sacred Sanskrit literature, but practically of any kind of literacy or education. They were for long the only literate section of the people. Subsequently two other castes learnt to read and write in response to an economic demand, the Kāyasths and the Banias. The Kāyasths, it has been suggested in the article on that caste, were to a large extent the offspring and inmates of the households of Brāhmins, and were no doubt taught by them, but only to read and write the vernacular for the purpose of keeping the village records and accounts of rent. They were excluded from any knowledge of Sanskrit, and the Kāyasths subsequently became an educated caste in spite of their Brāhman preceptors, by learning Persian under their Muhammadan, and English under their European employers. The Banias never desired nor were encouraged to attain to any higher

¹ *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, 3rd ed. p. 172.



degree of literacy than that necessary for keeping accounts of sale and loan transactions. The Brāhmins thus remained the only class with any real education, and acquired a monopoly not only of intellectual and religious leadership, but largely of public administration under the Hindu kings. No literature existed outside their own, which was mainly of a sacerdotal character; and India had no heritage such as that bequeathed by Greece and Rome to mediaeval Europe which could produce a Renaissance or revival of literacy, leading to the Reformation of religion and the breaking of the fetters in which the Roman priesthood had bound the human mind. The Brāhmins thus established, not only a complete religious, but also a social ascendancy which is only now beginning to break down since the British Government has made education available to all.

The Brāhman body, however, lacked one very important element of strength. They were apparently never organised nor controlled by any central authority such as that which made the Roman church so powerful and cohesive. Colleges and seats of learning existed at Benāres and other places, at which their youth were trained in the knowledge of religion and of the measure of their own pretensions, and the means by which these were to be sustained. But probably only a small minority can have attended them, and even these when they returned home must have been left practically to themselves, spread as the Brāhmins were over the whole of India with no means of postal communication or rapid transit. And by this fact the chaotic character of the Hindu religion, its freedom of belief and worship, its innumerable deities, and the almost complete absence of dogmas may probably be to a great extent explained. And further the Brāhman caste itself cannot have been so strictly organised that outsiders and the priests of the lower alien religions never obtained entrance to it. As shown by Mr. Crooke, many foreign elements, both individuals and groups, have at various times been admitted into the caste.

The early texts indicate that Brāhmins were in the habit of forming connections with the widows of Rājanyas and Vaishyas, even if they did not take possession of the

3. Absence of central authority.

4. Mixed elements in the caste.



wives of such men while they were still alive.¹ The sons of Angiras, one of the great ancestral sages, were Brāhmanas as well as Kshatriyas. The descendants of Garga, another well-known eponymous ancestor, were Kshatriyas by birth but became Brāhmanas. Visvāmitra was a Kshatriya, who, by the force of his austerities, compelled Brahma to admit him into the Brāhmanical order, so that he might be on a level with Vasishtha with whom he had quarrelled. According to a passage in the Mahābhārata all castes become Brāhmanas when once they have crossed the Gomti on a pilgrimage to the hermitage of Vasishtha.² In more recent times there are legends of persons created Brāhmanas by Hindu Rājas. Sir J. Malcolm in Central India found many low-caste female slaves in Brāhman houses, the owners of which had treated them as belonging to their own caste.³

It would appear also that in some cases the caste priests of different castes have become Brāhmanas. Thus the Sāraswat Brāhmanas of the Punjab are the priests of the Khatri caste. They have the same complicated arrangement of exogamy and hypergamy as the Khatrias, and will take food from that caste. It seems not improbable that they are really descendants of Khatri priests who have become Brāhmanas.⁴

Similarly such groups as the Oswāl, Srimāl and Palliwāl Brāhmanas of Rājputāna, who are priests of the subcastes of Banias of the same name, may originally have been caste priests and become Brāhmanas. The Nāramdeo Brāhmanas, or those living on the Nerbudda River, are said to be descendants of a Brāhman father by a woman of the Naoda or Dhīmar caste; and the Golapūrab Brāhmanas similarly of a Brāhman father and Ahīr mother. In many cases, such as the island of Onkar Mandhātā in the Nerbudda in Nimār, and the Mahādeo caves at Pachmarhi, the places of worship of the non-Aryan tribes have been adopted by Hinduism and the old mountain or river gods transformed into Hindu deities. At the same time it is not improbable that the tribal priests of the old shrines have been admitted into the Brāhman caste.

¹ Muir, *Ancient Sanskrit Texts*, i. 282 sq.

² Quoted in Mr. Crooke's *Tribes and Castes*, art. Brāhman.

³ Quoted by Mr. Crooke.

⁴ *Tribes and Castes of the Punjab*, by Mr. H. A. Rose, vol. ii. p. 123.



The Brāhman caste has ten main territorial divisions, forming two groups, the Pāñch-Gaur or five northern, and the Pāñch-Drāvīda or five southern. The boundary line between the two groups is supposed to be the Nerbudda River, which is also the boundary between Hindustān and the Deccan. But the Gujarāti Brāhmins belong to the southern group, though Gujarāt is north of the Nerbudda. The five northern divisions are :

(a) *Sāraswat*.—These belong to the Punjab and are named after the Sāraswatī river of the classical period, on whose banks they are supposed to have lived.

(b) *Gaur*.—The home of these is the country round Delhi, but they say that the name is from the old Gaur or Lakhnauti kingdom of Bengal. If this is correct, it is difficult to understand how they came from Bengal to Delhi contrary to the usual tendency of migration. General Cunningham has suggested that Gaura was also the name of the modern Gonda District, and it is possible that the term was once used for a considerable tract in northern India as well as Bengal, since it has come to be applied to all the northern Brāhmins.¹

(c) *Kānkubja or Kanaujia*.—These are named after the old town of Kanauj on the Ganges near Cawnpore, once the capital of India. The Kanaujia are the most important of the northern groups and extend from the west of Oudh to beyond Benāres and into the northern Districts of the Central Provinces. Here they are subdivided into four principal groups—the Kanaujia, Jijhotia, Sarwaria and Sanādhya, which are treated in annexed subordinate articles.

(d) *Maithil*.—They take their name from Mithila, the old term for Bihār or Tirhūt, and belong to this tract.

(e) *Utkal*.—These are the Brāhmins of Orissa.

The five groups of the Pāñch-Drāvīda are as follows :

(a) *Maharāshtra*.—These belong to the Marātha country or Bombay. They are subdivided into three main territorial groups—the Deshashth, or those of the home country, that is the Poona tract above the Western Ghāts; the Konkonasth, who belong to the Bombay Konkan or littoral;

¹ See also article Rājput-Gaur.



and the Karhāra, named after a place in the Satāra District.¹

(b) *Tailānga or Andhra*.—The Brāhmans of the Telugu country, Hyderābād and the northern part of Madras. This territory was known as Andhra and governed by an important dynasty of the same name in early times.

(c) *Drāvida*.—The Brāhmans of the Tamil country or the south of Madras.

(d) *Karnāta*.—The Brāhmans of the Carnatic, or the Canarese country. The Canarese area comprises the Mysore State, and the British Districts of Canara, Dharwar and Belgaum.

(e) *Gurjara*.—The Brāhmans of Gujarāt, of whom two subcastes are found in the Central Provinces. The first consists of the Khedāwāls, named after Kheda, a village in Gujarāt, who are a strictly orthodox class holding a good position in the caste. And the second are the Nāgar Brāhmans, who have been long settled in Nimār and the adjacent tracts, and act as village priests and astrologers. Their social status is somewhat lower.

There are, however, a large number of other subcastes, and the tendency to fissure in a large caste, and to the formation of small local groups which marry among themselves, is nowhere more strikingly apparent than among the Brāhmans. This is only natural, as they, more than any other caste, attach importance to strict ceremonial observance in matters of food and the daily ritual of prayer, and any group which was suspected of backsliding in respect of these on emigration to a new locality would be debarred from intermarriage with the parent caste at home. An instance of this is found among the Chhattisgarhi Brāhmans, who have been long settled in this backward tract and cut off from communication with northern India. They are mainly of the Kanaujia division, but the Kanaujias of Oudh will neither take food nor intermarry with them, and they now constitute a separate subcaste of Kanaujias. Similarly the Mālwi Brāhmans, whose home is in Mālwa, whence they have spread to Hoshangābād and Betul, are believed to have been originally a branch of the Gaur or Kanaujia,

¹ See subordinate articles.



but have now become a distinct subcaste, and have adopted many of the customs of Marātha Brāhmans. Mandla contains a colony of Sarwaria¹ Brāhmans who received grants of villages from the Gond kings and have settled down there. They are now cultivators, and some have taken to the plough, while they also permit widow-remarriage in all but the name. They are naturally cut off from intercourse with the orthodox Sarwaris and marry among themselves. The Harenia Brāhmans of Saugor are believed to have immigrated from Hariāna some generations ago and form a separate local group; and also the Laheria Brāhmans of the same District, who, like the Mandla Sarwaris, permit widows to marry. In Hoshangābād there is a small subcaste of Bawisa or 'Twenty-two' Brāhmans, descended from twenty-two families from northern India, who settled here and have since married among themselves. A similar diversity of subcastes is found in other Provinces. The Brāhmans of Bengal are also mainly of the Kanaujia division, but they are divided into several local subcastes, of which the principal are Rārhi and Barendra, named after tracts in Bengal, and quite distinct from the subdivisions of the Kanaujia group in the Central Provinces.

Another class of local subdivisions consists of those Brāhmans who live on the banks of the various sacred rivers or at famous shrines, and earn their livelihood by conducting pilgrims through the series of ceremonies and acts of worship which are performed on a visit to such places; they receive presents from the pilgrims and the offerings made at the shrines. The most prominent among these are the Gayawāls of Gaya, the Prayāgwāls of Allahābād (Prayāg), the Chaubes of Mathura, the Gangapūtras (Sons of the Ganges) of Benāres, the Pandarāms of southern India and the Nāramdeo Brāhmans who hold charge of the many temples on the Nerbudda. As such men accept gifts from pilgrims they are generally looked down on by good Brāhmans and marry among themselves. Many of them have a character for extortion and for fleecing their clients, a propensity commonly developed in a profession of this kind. Such a reputation particularly attaches to the Chaubes of Mathura

6. Miscellaneous groups.

¹ A section of the Kanaujia. See above.

and Brindāban, the holy places of the god Krishna. They are strong and finely built men, but gluttonous, idle and dissolute. Some of the Benāres Brāhmans are known as Sawalākhi, or having one and a quarter lakhs, apparently on account of the wealth they amass from pilgrims. A much lower group are the Mahā-Brāhmans (great Brāhmans), who are also known as Patit (degraded) or Katia. These accept the gifts offered by the relatives after a death for the use of the dead man in the next world during the period of mourning; they also eat food which it is supposed will benefit the dead man, and are considered to represent him. Probably on this account they share in the impurity attaching to the dead, and are despised by all castes and sometimes not permitted to live in the village. Other Brāhmans are degraded on account of their having partly adopted Muhammadan practices. The Husaini Brāhmans of western India are so called as they combine Muhammadan with Hindu rites. They are principally beggars. And the Kalanki Brāhmans of Wardha and other Districts are looked down upon because, it is said, that at the bidding of a Muhammadan governor they make a figure of a cow from sugar and eat it up. Probably they may have really acted as priests to Muhammadans who were inclined to adopt certain Hindu rites on the principle of imitation, and with a view to please their disciples conformed to some extent to Islām.

Brāhmans have also sectarian divisions according to the different Vedas, which they especially study. It is held that the ancient Rishis or saints, like the Jewish patriarchs, lived far beyond the ordinary span of existence, and hence had time to learn all the Vedas and their commentaries. But this was impossible for their shorter-lived descendants, and hence each Veda has been divided into a number of Shākhas or branches, and the ordinary Brāhman only learns one Shākha of one Veda. Most Brāhmans of the Central Provinces are either Rigvedis or Yajurvedis, and these commonly marry only followers of their own Veda, thus forming a sort of cross set of endogamous divisions. The restriction on marriage may also extend to the Shākha, so that a man can only marry in a family of the same Shākha



as himself. This applies in the Central Provinces mainly to the Yajurvedis, who have three well-known Shākhās or branches called Kānnaṇa, Apastambha and Mādhyandina. These are derived from the Shukla or White Yajurveda, which can be understood, while the Black Yajurveda is obscure and unintelligible. The Rigvedis and Yajurvedis have some differences in their methods of recitation. The Rigvedis are said to move the head up and down when they recite and not to use the hands; while the Yajurvedis swing the hands and body from side to side. It is said that a Mādhyandina cannot say his prayers nor take his food before midday, and hence the name, which means half the day. These points of distinction are given as stated by the local Brāhmins, and it is not known whether they would be endorsed by the Pandits. The Marāṭha Brāhmins of the Central Provinces are usually Rigvedis and the Kanaujia Brāhmins Yajurvedis. Followers of the other two Vedas are practically not found. Among Kanaujia Brāhmins it is also customary to ask the head of a family with which a marriage is proposed whether he ties a knot in the right or left half of his Shikha or scalp-lock during his prayers and whether he washes his right or left foot first in the performance of a religious ceremony.

The exogamous arrangements of the Brāhmins are also very complex. It is said that the Brāhmins are descended from the seven sons of the god Brahma, who were Bhrigu, Angirasa, Marichi, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya and Vasishtha. But Pulaha only begot demons and Pulastya giants, while Vasishtha died and was born again as a descendant of Marichi. Consequently the four ancestors of the Brāhmins were Bhrigu, Angirasa, Marichi and Atri. But according to another account the ancestors of the Brāhmins were the seven Rishis or saints who form the constellation of the Great Bear. These were Jamadagni, Bhāradwāj, Gautam, Kashyap, Vasishtha, Agastya, Atri and Visvāmitra, who makes the eighth and is held to be descended from Atri. These latter saints are also said to be the descendants of the four original ones, Atri appearing in both lists. But the two lists taken together make up eleven great saints, who were the eponymous ancestors of the Brāhmins. All the

8. Exogamy.



different subcastes have as a rule exogamous classes tracing their descent from these saints. But each group, such as that of Bhrigu or Angirasa, contains a large number of exogamous sections usually named after other more recent saints, and intermarriage is sometimes prohibited among the different sections, which are descended from the same son of Brahma or star of the Great Bear. The arrangement thus bears a certain resemblance to the classification system of exogamy found among primitive races, only that the number of groups is now fairly large; but it is said that originally there were only four, from the four sons of Brahma who gave birth to Brāhmans. The names of other important saints, after whom exogamous sections are most commonly called, are Garg, Sandilya, Kaushik, Vatsya and Bhārgava. These five appear sometimes to be held as original ancestors in addition to the eleven already mentioned. It may be noted that some of the above names of saints have a totemistic character; for instance, Bhāradwāj means a lark; Kashyap resembles Kachhap, the name for a tortoise; Kaushik may come from the *kusha* grass; Agastya from the *agasti* flower, and so on. Within the main group exogamy sometimes also goes by titles or family names. Thus the principal titles of the Kanaujias are: Pānde, a wise man; Dube, learned in two Vedas; Tiwāri, learned in three Vedas; Chaube, learned in four Vedas; Sukul, white or pure; Upādhya, a teacher; Agnihotri, the priest who performs the fire-sacrifice; Dikshit, the initiator, and so on. Marriage between persons bearing the same family name tends to be prohibited, as they are considered to be relations.

9. Restrictions on marriage.

The prohibition of marriage within the *gotra* or exogamous section bars the union of persons related solely through males. In addition to this, according to Hindu law a Brāhman must not marry a girl of his mother's or maternal grandfather's *gotra*, or one who is a *sapinda* of his father or maternal grandfather. Mr. Joshi states that *sapindas* are persons related through being particles of the same body. It is also understood that two persons are said to be *sapindas* when they can offer *pindas* or funeral cakes to the same ancestor. The rule barring the marriage of *sapindas* is that two persons cannot marry if they are



both as near as fourth in descent from a common ancestor, and the relationship is derived through the father of either party. If either is more remote than fourth in descent they apparently could marry. If the relationship of the couple is through their mothers in each case, then they cannot marry if they are third in descent from the same ancestor, but may do so in the fourth or subsequent generations. It is of no importance whether the intervening links between the common ancestor and the proposed couple are male or female; descent is considered to be male if through the father, and female if through the mother. In practice, marriages are held to be valid between persons fourth in descent from a common ancestor in the case of male relationship, and third in the case of female relationship, that is, persons having a common greatgrandparent in the male line or a common grandparent in the female line can marry.

Other rules are that girls must not be exchanged in marriage between two families, and a man may not marry two sisters, though he can marry his deceased wife's sister. The bride should be both younger in age and shorter in stature than the bridegroom. A younger sister should not be married while her elder sister is single.

The practice of hypergamy is, or was until recently, common among Brāhmans. This is the rule by which the social estimation of a family is raised if its girls are married into a class of higher social status than its own. Members of the superior classes will take daughters from the lower classes on payment usually of a substantial bride-price, but will not give their daughters to them. According to Manu, men of the higher castes were allowed to take wives from the lower ones but not to give daughters to them. The origin of the custom is obscure. If caste was based on distinctions of race, then apparently the practice of hypergamy would be objectionable, because it would destroy the different racial classes. If, on the other hand, the castes consisted of groups of varying social status, the distinction being that those of the lower ones could not participate in the sacramental or communal meals of the higher ones, then the marriage of a daughter into a higher group, which would carry with it participation at the sacramental marriage

10. Hypergamy.



feast of this group, might well be a coveted distinction. The custom of hypergamy prevails somewhat largely in northern India between different subcastes, groups of different social status in the same subcaste, and occasionally even between different castes. The social results of hypergamy, when commonly practised, are highly injurious. Men of the higher subcastes get paid for marrying several wives, and indulge in polygamy, while the girls of the higher subcastes and the boys of the lower ones find it difficult and sometimes even impossible to obtain husbands and wives. The custom attained its most absurd development among the Kulin Brāhman of eastern Bengal, as described by Sir H. Risley.¹ Here the Brāhman were divided by a Hindu king, Ballāl Sen, into two classes, the Kulin (of good family), who had observed the entire nine counsels of perfection; and the Srotriya, who, though regular students of the Vedas, had lost sanctity by intermarrying with families of inferior birth. The latter were further subdivided into three classes according to their degree of social purity, and each higher class could take daughters from the next one or two lower ones. The doctrine known as Kula-gotra was developed, whereby the reputation of a family depended on the character of the marriages made by its female members. In describing the results of the system Sir H. Risley states: "The rush of competition for Kulin husbands on the part of the inferior classes became acute. In order to dispose of the surplus of women in the higher groups polygamy was resorted to on a very large scale: it was popular with the Kulins because it enabled them to make a handsome income by the accident of their birth; and it was accepted by the parents of the girls concerned as offering the only means of complying with the requirements of the Hindu religion. Tempted by a *pān* or premium, which often reached the sum of two thousand rupees, Swābhava Kulins made light of their *kul* and its obligations, and married girls, whom they left after the ceremony to be taken care of by their parents. Matrimony became a sort of profession, and the honour of marrying a girl to a Kulin is said to have been so highly valued in

¹ *Tribes and Castes*, art. Brāhman.



eastern Bengal that as soon as a boy was ten years old his friends began to discuss his matrimonial prospects, and before he was twenty he had become the husband of many wives of ages varying from five to fifty." The wives were commonly left at home to be supported by their parents, and it is said that when a Kulin Brāhman had a journey to make he usually tried to put up for the night at the house of one of his fathers-in-law. All the marriages were recorded in the registers of the professional Ghātaks or marriage-brokers, and each party was supplied with an extract. On arrival at his father-in-law's house the Kulin would produce his extract showing the date on which his marriage took place; and the owner of the house, who was often unfamiliar with the bridegroom's identity, would compare it with his own extract. When they agreed he was taken in and put up for the night, and enjoyed the society of his wife. The system thus entailed the greatest misery to large numbers of women, both those who were married to husbands whom they scarcely ever saw, and those of the higher classes who got no husbands at all. It is now rapidly falling into abeyance. Hypergamy is found in the Central Provinces among the subcastes of Kanaujia Brāhmans. The Sarwaria subcaste, which is the highest, takes daughters from Kanaujias and Jijhotias, and the Kanaujias take them from the Jijhotias. These and other subcastes such as the Khedāwāls are also often divided into two groups of different status, the higher of which takes daughters from the lower. Usually the parents of the girl pay a liberal bridegroom-price in money or ornaments. It has never, however, been carried to the same length here as in Bengal, and two, or in some cases three, wives are the limit for a man of the higher classes. One division of Kanaujias is called the Sātkul or seven families, and is the highest. Other Kanaujias, who are known as Pachhādar, pay substantial sums for husbands for this group, and it is reported that if such a marriage takes place and the bridegroom-price is not paid up, the husband will turn his wife out and send her home to her father. Certain subcastes of Sunārs also have hypergamy and, as between different castes, it exists between the Dāngis and Rājputs, pure Rājputs being



held willing to take daughters in marriage from the highest clans of Dāngis.

xx. Marriage
customs.

A text of Manu prescribes :¹ "If a young woman marry while she is pregnant, whether her pregnancy be known or unknown, the male child in her womb belongs to the bridegroom and is called a son received with his bride." But at present a Brāhman girl who is known to be pregnant will be wholly debarred from the sacrament of marriage. An invitation to a wedding is sent by means of grains of rice coloured yellow with turmeric and placed in a brass bowl with areca-nuts over them. All the members of the caste or subcaste who eat food with the host and are resident in the same town or close at hand are as a rule invited, and all relatives of the family who reside at a distance. The head of the family goes himself to the residence of the guests and invites them with expressions of humility to honour his home. Before the wedding the ancestors of the family and also the divine mothers are worshipped, these latter consisting of the consorts of the principal gods. In front of the wedding procession are carried *kalashas* or earthen jars filled to the brim with water, and with green shoots and branches floating on the top. The *kalasha* is said to represent the universe and to contain the principal gods and divine mothers, while the waters in it are the seven seas. All these are witnesses to the wedding. Among other ceremonies, presents of fruit, food, ornaments and jewellery are exchanged between the parties, and these are called *choli-ka-bharāna* or filling the bride's breast-cloth. The original object of giving these presents was thus, it would appear from the name, to render the bride fertile. The father then gives his daughter away in a set form of speech. After reciting the exact moment of time, the hour, the day, the minute according to solar and lunar reckoning, the year and the epoch, he proceeds: "In the name of Vishnu (repeating the name three times), the supreme spirit, father and creator of the universe, and in furtherance of his wish for the propagation of the human species, I (specifying his full name and section, etc.), in the company of my married wife, do hereby offer the hand of my daughter—may she live

¹ Chap. ix. v. 173.



long—full of all virtuous qualities, image of Lakshmi, wife of Vishnu, anxious of union in lawful wedlock, ornamented and dressed, brought up and instructed according to the best of my means, by name (naming her and repeating the full description of ancestors, class, etc.) in the solemn presence of the Brāhman, Gurus, fire and deities, to you—may you live long—(repeating the bridegroom's name and full description), anxious to obtain a wife with a view to secure the abode of bliss and eternal happiness in the heaven of Brahma. Accept her with *kusha* grass, grains of rice, water and presents of money." Afterwards the father asks the bridegroom never to disregard the feelings and sentiments of his wife in matters of religion, social pleasures and the acquisition of money, and the bridegroom agrees. The binding portion of the ceremony consists in walking seven times round the sacred post, and when the seventh round is completed the marriage is irrevocable. Among the Marātha Brāhman the bridegroom is called Nawar Deo or the new god. During the five days of the wedding he is considered to be a sort of king, and is put in the highest place, and everybody defers to him. They make the bridegroom and bride name each other for a joke, as they are ashamed to do this, and will not untie their clothes to let them bathe until they have done it. At all the feasts the bride and bridegroom are made to eat out of the same plate, and they put pieces of food in each other's mouth, which is supposed to produce affection between them. The wedding expenses in an ordinary Kanaujia Brāhman's family, whose income is perhaps Rs. 20 to 40 a month, are estimated at Rs. 200 for the bridegroom's party and Rs. 175 for the bride's, exclusive of any bride- or bridegroom-price. The bulk of the expenditure is on feasts to the caste. The bride does not live with her husband until after she arrives at puberty, but it is thought desirable that she should spend long visits with his family before this, in order that she may assimilate their customs and be trained by her mother-in-law, according to the saying, 'Tender branches are easily bent.' Among some Marātha Brāhman, when the bride arrives at puberty a ceremony called Garhbhadān is performed, and the husband confesses whether he has cohabited with his wife

before her puberty, and if so, he is fined a small sum. Such instances usually occur when the signs of puberty are delayed. If the planet Mangal or Mars is adverse to a girl in her horoscope, it is thought that her husband will die. The women of her family will, therefore, first marry her secretly to a pipal-tree, so that the tree may die instead. But they do not tell this to the bridegroom. In Saugor, girls whose horoscope is unfavourable to the husband are first married to the *arka* or swallow-wort plant. If a Brāhman has not sufficient funds to arrange for the marriage of his daughter he will go about and beg, and it is considered that alms given for this purpose acquire special merit for the donor, nor will any good Brāhman refuse a contribution according to his means.

Polygamy conveys no stigma among Brāhmans, but is uncommon. Divorce is not recognised, a woman who is put away by her husband being turned out of the caste. The remarriage of widows is strictly prohibited. It is said that marriage is the only sacrament (*Sanskār*) for a woman, and she can only go through it once. The holy nuptial texts may not be repeated except for a virgin. The prohibition of the remarriage of widows has become a most firmly rooted prejudice among the higher classes of Hindus, and is the last to give way before the inroads of liberal reform. Only a small minority of the most advanced Brāhmans have recognised widow-remarriage, and these are generally held to be excluded from the caste, though breaches of the rules against the consumption of prohibited kinds of meat, and the drinking of aerated waters and even alcoholic liquor, are now winked at and not visited with the proper penalty. Nevertheless, many classes of Brāhmans, who live in the country and have taken to cultivation, allow widows to live with men without putting the family out of caste. Where this is not permitted, surreptitious intercourse may occasionally take place with members of the family. The treatment of widows is also becoming more humane. Only Marātha and Khedawāl Brāhmans in the Central Provinces still force them to shave their heads, and these will permit a child-widow to retain her hair until she grows up, though they regard her as impure while she has it. A widow is usually



forbidden to have a cot or bed, and must sleep on the ground or on a plank. She may not chew betel-leaves, should eat only once a day, and must rigorously observe all the prescribed fasts. She wears white clothes only, no glass bangles, and no ornaments on her feet. She is subject to other restrictions and is a general drudge in the family. It is probable that the original reason for such treatment of a widow was that she was considered impure through being perpetually haunted by her husband's ghost. Hindus say that a widow is half-dead. She should not be allowed to cook the household food, because while cooking it she will remember her husband and the food will become like a corpse. The smell of such food will offend the gods, and it cannot be offered to them. A widow is not permitted to worship the household god or the ancestors of the family. It was no doubt an advantage under the joint family system that a widow should not claim any life-interest in her husband's property. The modern tendency of widows, who are left in possession, to try and alienate the property from the husband's relatives has been a fruitful cause of litigation and the ruin of many old landed families. The severe treatment of widows was further calculated to suppress any tendency on the part of wives to poison their husbands. These secondary grounds may have contributed something to the preservation and enforcement of an idea based originally on superstitious motives.

For a widow to remain single and lead an austere and joyless life was held to confer great honour on her family; and this was enormously enhanced when she decided to become *sati* and die with her husband on the funeral pyre. Though it is doubtful whether this practice is advocated by the Vedas, subsequent Hindu scriptures insist strongly on it. It was said that a widow who was burnt with her husband would enjoy as many years in paradise as there are hairs on the human head, that is to say, thirty-five million. Conversely, one who insisted on surviving him would in her next birth go into the body of some animal. By the act of *sati* she purified all her husband's ancestors, even from the guilt of killing a Brāhman, and also those of her own family. If a man died during an absence from home in another

13. *Sati* or burning of widows.

country his wife was recommended to take his slippers or any other article of dress and burn herself with them tied to her breast.¹

Great honour was paid to a Sati, and a temple or memorial stone was always erected to her at which her spirit was venerated, and this encouraged many pious women not only to resign themselves to this terrible death but ardently to desire it. The following account given by Mr. Ward of the method of a *sati* immolation in Bengal may be reproduced : ²

“When the husband’s life is despaired of and he is carried to the bank of the Ganges, the wife declares her resolution to be burnt with him. In this case she is treated with great respect by her neighbours, who bring her delicate food, and when her husband is dead she again declares her resolve to be burnt with his body. Having broken a small branch from a mango tree she takes it with her and proceeds to the body, where she sits down. The barber then paints the sides of her feet red, after which she bathes and puts on new clothes. During these preparations the drum beats a certain sound by which it is known that a widow is about to be burnt with the corpse of her husband. A hole is dug in the ground round which posts are driven into the earth, and thick green stakes laid across to form a kind of bed ; and upon these are laid in abundance dry faggots, hemp, clarified butter and pitch. The officiating Brāhman now causes the widow to repeat the prayer that as long as fourteen Indras reign, or as many years as there are hairs on her head, she may abide in heaven with her husband ; that during this time the heavenly dancers may wait on her and her husband ; and that by this act of merit all the ancestors of her mother and husband may ascend to heaven. She now presents her ornaments to her friends, ties some red cotton on both wrists, puts two new combs in her hair, paints her forehead, and takes into the end of the cloth that she wears some parched rice and cowries. The dead body is bathed, anointed with butter, and dressed in new clothes. The son takes a handful of boiled rice and offers it in the name of his deceased father. Ropes and another piece of

¹ Ward’s *Hindus*, vol. ii. p. 97.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 98, 100.



cloth are spread on the wood, and the dead body is laid upon the pile. The widow next walks round the pyre seven times, as she did round the marriage-post at her wedding, strewing parched rice and cowries as she goes, which the spectators catch and keep under the belief that they will cure diseases. The widow then lies down on the fatal pile by the side of the dead body. The bodies are bound together with ropes and the faggots placed over them. The son, averting his head, puts fire to the face of his father, and at the same moment several persons light the pile at different sides, when the women and mourners set up cries. More faggots are hastily brought and thrown over the pile, and two bamboo levers are pressed over them to hold down the bodies and the pile. Several persons are employed in holding down these levers. More clarified butter, pitch and faggots are thrown on to the pile till the bodies are consumed. This may take about two hours, but I conceive the woman must be dead in a few minutes after the fire has been kindled."

As showing the tenacity with which women sometimes adhered to their resolve to be burned with their husbands, and thus, as they believed, resume their conjugal life in heaven, the following account by Sir William Sleeman, in his *Rambles and Recollections*, of a *sati* at Jubbulpore may be given :

"At Gopālpur on the Nerbudda are some very pretty temples built for the most part to the memory of women who have burned themselves with the remains of their husbands, and on the very spot where the cremation occurred. Among them was one recently raised over the ashes of one of the most extraordinary old bodies I had ever seen, who burned herself in my presence in 1829. In March 1828 I had issued a proclamation prohibiting any one from aiding or assisting in *sati*, and distinctly stating that to bring one ounce of wood for the purpose would be considered as so doing. Subsequently, on Tuesday, 24th November, I had an application from the heads of the most respectable and most extensive family of Brāhmans in the District, to suffer this old woman to burn herself with the remains of her husband, Umeid Singh Upādhyā, who had that morning died upon the banks of the Nerbudda. I threatened to



enforce my order and punish severely any man who assisted ; and placed a police guard for the purpose of seeing that no one did so. The old woman remained by the edge of the water without eating or drinking. Next day the body of her husband was burned in the presence of several thousand spectators, who had assembled to see the *sati*. The sons and grandsons of the old woman remained with her, urging her to desist from her resolve, while her other relatives surrounded my house urging me to allow her to burn. All the day she remained sitting upon a bare rock in the bed of the Nerbudda, refusing every kind of sustenance, and exposed to the intense heat of the sun by day and the severe cold of the night, with only a thin sheet thrown over her shoulders. On the next day, Thursday, to cut off all hope of her being moved from her purpose, she put on the *dhuja* or coarse red turban and broke her bracelets in pieces, by which she became dead in law and for ever excluded from caste. Should she choose to live after this she could never return to her family. On the morning of Saturday, the fourth day after the death, I rode out ten miles to the spot, and found the poor old widow sitting with the *dhuja* round her head, a brass plate before her with undressed rice and flowers, and a cocoanut in each hand. She talked very collectedly, telling me that she had determined to mix her ashes with those of her departed husband, and should patiently await my permission to do so, assured that God would enable her to sustain life till that was given, though she dared not eat or drink. Looking at the sun, then rising before her over a long and beautiful reach of the Nerbudda, she said calmly : ' My soul has been for five days with my husband's near that sun ; nothing but my earthly frame is left, and this I know you will in time suffer to be mixed with the ashes of his in yonder pit, because it is not in your nature wantonly to prolong the miseries of a poor old woman.' I told her that my object and duty was to save and preserve her ; I was come to urge her to live and keep her family from the disgrace of being thought her murderers. I tried to work upon her pride and fears. I told her that the rent-free lands on which her family had long subsisted might be resumed by Government if her children permitted her to do



this act; and that no brick or stone should ever mark the place of her death; but if she would live, a splendid habitation should be made for her among the temples, and an allowance given her from the rent-free lands. She smiled, but held out her arm and said, 'My pulse has long ceased to beat, for my spirit has departed, and I have nothing left but a little earth that I wish to mix with the ashes of my husband. I shall suffer nothing in burning, and if you wish proof order some fire, and you shall see this arm consumed without giving me any pain.' I did not attempt to feel her pulse, but some of my people did, and declared that it had ceased to be perceptible. At this time every native present believed that she was incapable of suffering pain, and her end confirmed them in their opinion. Satisfied myself that it would be unavailing to attempt to save her life, I sent for all the principal members of the family, and consented that she should be suffered to burn herself if they would enter into engagements that no other member of their family should ever do the same. This they all agreed to, and the papers having been drawn out in due form about midday, I sent down notice to the old lady, who seemed extremely pleased and thankful. The ceremonies of bathing were gone through before three, while the wood and other combustible materials for a strong fire were collected and put into the pit. After bathing she called for a *pān* (betel-leaf) and ate it, then rose up, and with one arm on the shoulder of her eldest son, and the other on that of her nephew, approached the fire. As she rose up fire was set to the pile, and it was instantly in a blaze. The distance was about one hundred and fifty yards; she came on with a calm and cheerful countenance, stopped once, and casting her eyes upwards said, 'Why have they kept me five days from thee, my husband?' On coming to the sentries her supports stopped, she walked round the pit, paused a moment; and while muttering a prayer threw some flowers into the fire. She then walked deliberately and steadily to the brink, stepped into the centre of the flame, sat down, and leaning back in the midst as if reposing upon a couch, was consumed without uttering a shriek or betraying one sign of agony."

In cases, however, where women shrank from the flames

they were frequently forced into them, as it was a terrible disgrace to their families that they should recoil on the scene of the sacrifice. Opium and other drugs were also administered to stupefy the woman and prevent her from feeling pain. Widows were sometimes buried alive with their dead husbands. The practice of *sati* was finally prohibited in 1829, without exciting the least discontent.

x4. Funeral
rites and
mourning.

The bodies of children dying before they are named, or before the tonsure ceremony is performed on them, are buried, and those of other persons are burnt. In the grave of a small child some of its mother's milk, or, if this is not available, cow's milk in a leaf-cup or earthen vessel, is placed. Before a body is burnt cakes of wheat-flour are put on the face, breast and both shoulders, and a coin is always deposited for the purchase of the site. Mourning or impurity is observed for varying periods, according to the nearness of relationship. For a child, relatives other than the parents have only to take a bath to remove the impurity caused by the death. In a small town or village all Brāhmans of the same subcaste living in the place are impure from the time of the death until cremation has taken place. After the funeral the chief mourner performs the *shrāddh* ceremony, offering *pindas* or cakes of rice, with libations of water, to the dead. Presents are made to Brāhmans for the use of the dead man in the other world, and these are sometimes very valuable, as it is thought that the spirit will thereby be profited. Such presents are taken by the Mahā-Brāhman, who is much despised. When a late zamindār of Khariār died, Rs. 2000 were given to the Mahā-Brāhman for the use of his soul in the next world. The funeral rites are performed by an ordinary Brāhman, known as Malai, who may receive presents after the period of impurity has expired. Formerly a calf was let loose in the name of the deceased after being branded with the mark of a trident to dedicate it to Siva, and allowed to wander free thenceforth. Sometimes it was formally married to three or four female calves, and these latter were presented to Brāhmans. Sometimes the calf was brought to stand over the dying man and water poured down its tail into his mouth. The practice of letting loose a male calf is now declining, as these animals



are a great nuisance to the crops, and cultivators put them in the pound. The calf is therefore also presented to a Brāhman. It is believed that the *shrāddh* ceremony is necessary to unite the dead man's spirit with the Pitris or ancestors, and without this it wanders homeless. Some think that the ancestors dwell on the under or dark side of the moon. Those descendants who can offer the *pindas* or funeral cakes to the same ancestor are called Sapindas or relatives, and the man who fills the office of chief mourner thereby becomes the dead man's heir. Persons who have died a violent death or have been executed are not entitled to the ordinary funeral oblations, and cannot at once be united with the ancestors. But one year after the death an effigy of the deceased person is made in *kusha* grass and burnt, with all the ordinary funeral rites, and offerings are made to his spirit as if he had died on this occasion. If the death was caused by snake-bite a gold snake is made and presented to a Brāhman before this ceremony is begun. This is held to be the proper funeral ceremony which unites his spirit with the ancestors. Formerly in Madras if a man died during the last five days of the waning of the moon it was considered very unlucky. In order to escape evil effects to the relatives a special opening was made in the wall of the house, through which the body was carried, and the house itself was afterwards abandoned for three to six months.¹ A similar superstition prevails in the Central Provinces about a man dying in the *Mul Nakshatra* or lunar asterism, which is perhaps the same or some similar period. In this case it is thought that the deaths of four other members of the household are portended, and to avert this four human figures are made of flour or grass and burnt with the corpse. According to the Abbé Dubois if a man died on a Saturday it was thought that another death would occur in the family, and to avert this a living animal, such as a ram, goat or fowl, was offered with the corpse.²

The religion of the Brāhmans is Hinduism, of which they are the priests and exponents. Formerly the Brāhman considered himself as a part of Brahma, and hence a god.

15. Religion.

¹ *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, by the Abbé Dubois, 3rd ed. p. 499.

² *Ibidem*, p. 500.



This belief has decayed, but the gods are still held to reside in the body; Siva in the crown of the head, Vishnu in the chest, Brahma in the navel, Indra in the genitals and Ganesh in the rectum. Most Brāhmans belong to a sect worshipping especially Siva or Vishnu, or Rāma and Krishna, the incarnations of the latter god, or Sakti, the female principle of energy of Siva. But as a rule Brāhmans, whether of the Sivite or Vishnuite sects, abstain from flesh meat and are averse to the killing of any living thing. The following account of the daily ritual prayers of a Benāres Brāhman may be reproduced from M. André Chevrillon's *Romantic India*,¹ as, though possibly not altogether accurate in points of detail, it gives an excellent idea of their infinitely complicated nature:

16. Daily ritual.

"Here is the daily life of one of the twenty-five thousand Brāhmans of Benāres. He rises before the dawn, and his first care is to look at an object of good omen. If he sees a crow at his left, a kite, a snake, a cat, a hare, a jackal, an empty jar, a smoking fire, a wood-pile, a widow, a man blind of one eye, he is threatened with great dangers during the day. If he intended to make a journey, he puts it off. But if he sees a cow, a horse, an elephant, a parrot, a lizard, a clear-burning fire, a virgin, all will go well. If he should sneeze once, he may count upon some special good fortune; but if twice some disaster will happen to him. If he yawns some demon may enter his body. Having avoided all objects of evil omen, the Brāhman drops into the endless routine of his religious rites. Under penalty of rendering all the day's acts worthless, he must wash his teeth at the bank of a sacred stream or lake, reciting a special *mantra*, which ends in this ascription: 'O Ganges, daughter of Vishnu, thou springest from Vishnu's foot, thou art beloved by him! Remove from us the stains of sin and birth, and until death protect us thy servants!' He then rubs his body with ashes, saying: 'Homage to Siva, homage to the source of all birth! May he protect me during all births!' He traces the sacred signs upon his forehead—the three vertical lines representing the foot of Vishnu, or the three horizontal lines which symbolise the

¹ London, Heinemann (1897), pp. 84-91.



trident of Siva—and twists into a knot the hair left by the razor on the top of his head, that no impurity may fall from it to pollute the sacred river.

“He is now ready to begin the ceremonies of the morning (*sandhya*), those which I have just observed on the banks of the river. Minutely and mechanically each Brāhman performs by himself these rites of prescribed acts and gestures. First the internal ablution: the worshipper takes water in the hollow of his hand, and, letting it fall from above into his mouth, cleanses his body and soul. Meanwhile he mentally invokes the names of Vishnu, saying, ‘Glory to Keshava, to Narāyana, to Mādhava, to Govinda,’ and so on.

“The second rite is the exercise or ‘discipline’ of the respiration (*prajayama*). Here there are three acts: first, the worshipper compresses the right nostril with the thumb, and drives the breath through the left; second, he inhales through the left nostril, then compresses it, and inhales through the other; third, he stops the nose completely with thumb and forefinger, and holds his breath as long as possible. All these acts must be done before sunrise, and prepare for what is to follow. Standing on the water’s edge, he utters solemnly the famous syllable OM, pronouncing it *aum*, with a length equalling that of three letters. It recalls to him the three persons of the Hindu trinity: Brahma, who creates; Vishnu, who preserves; Siva, who destroys. More noble than any other word, imperishable, says Manu, it is eternal as Brahma himself. It is not a sign, but a being, a force; a force which constrains the gods, superior to them, the very essence of all things. Mysterious operations of the mind, strange associations of ideas, from which spring conceptions like these! Having uttered this ancient and formidable syllable, the man calls by their names the three worlds: earth, air, sky; and the four superior heavens. He then turns towards the east, and repeats the verse¹ from the Rig-Veda: ‘Let us meditate upon the resplendent glory of the divine vivifier, that it may enlighten our minds.’ As he says the last words he takes water in the palm of his hand and pours it upon the top of his head. ‘Waters,’ he says,

¹ This is the famous Gayatri.