'give me strength and vigour that I may rejoice. Like loving mothers, bless us, penetrate us with your sacred essence. We come to wash ourselves from the pollution of sins: make us fruitful and prosperous.' Then follow other ablutions, other *mantras*, verses from the Rig-Veda, and this hymn, which relates the origin of all things: 'From the burning heat came out all things. Yes, the complete order of the world; Night, the throbbing Ocean, and after the throbbing Ocean, Time, which separates Light from Darkness. All mortals are its subjects. It is this which disposes of all things, and has made, one after another, the sun, the sky, the earth, the intermediate air.' This hymn, says Manu, thrice repeated, effaces the gravest sins.

"About this time, beyond the sands of the opposite shore of the Ganges, the sun appears. As soon as its brilliant disc becomes visible the multitude welcome it, and salute it with 'the offering of water.' This is thrown into the air, either from a vase or from the hand. Thrice the worshipper, standing in the river up to his waist, flings the water towards the sun. The farther and wider he flings it, the greater the virtue attributed to this act. Then the Brāhman, seated upon his heels, fulfils the most sacred of his religious duties: he meditates upon his fingers. For the fingers are sacred, inhabited by different manifestations of Vishnu; the thumb by Govinda, the index-finger by Mādhava, the middle finger by Hrikesa, the third by Trivikama and the little finger by Vishnu himself. 'Homage to the two thumbs,' says the Brāhman, 'to the two index-fingers, to the two middle fingers, to the two "unnamed fingers," to the two little fingers, to the two palms, to the two backs of the hands.' Then he touches the various parts of the body, and lastly, the right ear, the most sacred of all, where reside fire, water, the sun and the moon. He then takes a red bag (*gomukhi*), into which he plunges his hand, and by contortions of the fingers rapidly represents the chief incarnations of Vishnu: a fish, a tortoise, a wild boar, a lion, a slip-knot, a garland.[1]

"The second part of the service is no less rich than the first in ablutions and *mantras*. The Brāhman invokes the

[1] It is not known how a slip-knot and a garland are connected with any incarnation of Vishnu. For the incarnations see articles Vaishnava sect.

sun, 'Mitra, who regards all creatures with unchanging gaze,' and the Dawns, 'brilliant children of the sky,' the earliest divinities of our Aryan race. He extols the world of Brahma, that of Siva, that of Vishnu; recites passages from the Mahābhārata, the Purānas, all the first hymn of the Rig-Veda, the first lines of the second, the first words of the principal Vedas, of the Yajur, the Sama, and the Atharva, then fragments of grammar, inspired prosodies, and, in conclusion, the first words of the book of the Laws of Yajnavalkya, the philosophic Sutras: and finally ends the ceremony with three kinds of ablutions, which are called the refreshing of the gods, of the sages and of the ancestors.

"First, placing his sacred cord upon the left shoulder, the Brāhman takes up water in the right hand, and lets it run off his extended fingers. To refresh the sages, the cord must hang about the neck, and the water run over the side of the hand between the thumb and the forefinger, which is bent back. For the ancestors, the cord passes over the right shoulder, and the water falls from the hand in the same way as for the sages. 'Let the fathers be refreshed,' says the prayer, 'may this water serve all those who inhabit the seven worlds, as far as to Brahma's dwelling, even though their number be greater than thousands of millions of families. May this water, consecrated by my cord, be accepted by the men of my race who have left no sons.'

"With this prayer the morning service ends. Now, remember that this worship is daily, that these formulas must be pronounced, these movements of the hands made with mechanical precision; that if the worshipper forgets one of the incarnations of Vishnu which he is to figure with his fingers, if he stop his left nostril when it should be the right, the entire ceremony loses its efficacy; that, not to go astray amid this multitude of words and gestures required for each rite, he is obliged to use mnemotechnic methods; that there are five of these for each series of formulas; that his attention always strained and always directed toward the externals of the cult, does not leave his mind a moment in which to reflect upon the profound meaning of some of these prayers, and you will comprehend the extraordinary scene that the banks of the Ganges at Benāres present every morning;

this anxious and demented multitude, these gestures, eager and yet methodical, this rapid movement of the lips, the fixed gaze of these men and women who, standing in the water, seem not even to see their neighbours, and count mentally like men in the delirium of a fever. Remember that there are ceremonies like these in the afternoon and also in the evening, and that in the intervals, in the street, in the house at meals, when going to bed, similar rites no less minute pursue the Brāhman, all preceded by the exercises of respiration, the enunciation of the syllable OM, and the invocation of the principal gods. It is estimated that between daybreak and noon he has scarcely an hour of rest from the performance of these rites. After the great powers of nature, the Ganges, the Dawn, and the Sun, he goes to worship in their temples the representations of divinity, the sacred trees, finally the cows, to whom he offers flowers. In his own dwelling other divinities await him, five black stones,[1] representing Siva, Ganesa, Surya, Devi and Vishnu, arranged according to the cardinal points: one towards the north, a second to the south-east, a third to the south-west, a fourth to the north-west, and one in the centre, this order changing according as the worshipper regards one god or another as most important; then there is a shell, a bell—to which, kneeling, he offers flowers—and, lastly, a vase, whose mouth contains Vishnu, the neck Rudra, the paunch Brahma, while at the bottom repose the three divine mothers, the Ganges, the Indus, and the Jumna.

"This is the daily cult of the Brāhman of Benāres, and on holidays it is still further complicated. Since the great epoch of Brāhmanism it has remained the same. Some details may alter, but as a whole it has always been thus tyrannical and thus extravagant. As far back as the Upanishads appears the same faith in the power of articulate speech, the same imperative and innumerable prescriptions, the same singular formulas, the same enumeration of grotesque

[1] In the Central Provinces Ganpati is represented by a round red stone, Surya by a rock crystal or the Swastik sign, Devi by an image in brass or by a stone brought from her famous temple at Mahur, and Vishnu by the round black stone or Sāligrām. Besides these every Brāhman will have a special family god, who may be one of the above or another deity, as Rāma or Krishna.

*Bemrose, Collo., Derby.*

BRĀHMAN WORSHIPPING HIS HOUSEHOLD GODS.

gestures. Every day, for more than twenty-five hundred years, since Buddhism was a protest against the tyranny and absurdity of rites, has this race mechanically passed through this machinery, resulting in what mental malformations, what habitual attitudes of mind and will, the race is now too different from ourselves for us to be able to conceive."

Secular Brāhmans now, however, greatly abridge the length of their prayers, and an hour or an hour and a half in the morning suffices for the daily bath and purification, the worship of the household deities and the morning meal.

17. The sacred thread.

Brāhman boys are invested with the sacred thread between the ages of five and nine. The ceremony is called Upanayana or the introduction to knowledge, since by it the boy acquires the right to read the sacred books. Until this ceremony he is not really a Brāhman, and is not bound to observe the caste rules and restrictions. By its performance he becomes Dvija or twice-born, and the highest importance is attached to the change or initiation. He may then begin to acquire divine knowledge, and perhaps in past times it was thought that he obtained the divine character belonging to a Brāhman. The sacred thread is made of three strands of cotton, which should be obtained from the cotton tree growing wild. Sometimes a tree is grown in the yard of the house for the provision of the threads. It has several knots in it, to which great importance is attached, the number of knots being different for a Brāhman, a Kshatriya and a Vaishya, the three twice-born castes. The thread hangs from the left shoulder, falling on to the right hip. Sometimes, when a man is married, he wears a double thread of six strands, the second being for his wife; and after his father dies a treble one of nine strands. At the investiture the boy's nails are cut and his hair is shaved, and he performs the *hom* or fire sacrifice for the first time. He then acquires the status of a Brahmachari or disciple, and in former times he would proceed to some religious centre and begin to study the sacred books. The idea of this is preserved by a symbolic ritual. Some Brāhmans shave the boy's head completely, make a girdle of *kusha* or *munj* grass round his waist, provide him with a begging-bowl and tongs and the skin of an antelope to sit on and make him go and beg

from four houses. Among others the boy gets on to a wooden horse and announces his intention of going off to Benāres to study. His mother then sits on the edge of a well and threatens to throw herself in if he will not change his mind, or the maternal uncle promises to give the boy his daughter in marriage. Then the boy relinquishes his intention and agrees to stay at home. The sacred thread must always be passed through the hand before saying the Gayatri text in praise of the sun, the most sacred Brāhmanical text. The sacred thread is changed once a year on the day of Rakshabandhan; the Brāhman and all his family change it together. The word Rakshabandhan means binding or tying up the devils, and it would thus appear that the sacred thread and the knots in it may have been originally intended to some extent to be a protection against evil spirits. It is also changed on the occasion of a birth or death in the family, or of an eclipse, or if it breaks. The old threads are torn up or sewn into clothes by the very poor in the Marātha districts. It is said that the Brāhmans are afraid that the Kunbis will get hold of their old threads, and if they do get one they will fold it into four strings, holding a lamp in the middle, and wave it over any one who is sick. The Brāhmans think that if this is done all the accumulated virtue which they have obtained by many repetitions of the Gayatri or sacred prayer will be transferred to the sick Kunbi. Many castes now wear the sacred thread who have no proper claim to do so, especially those who have become landholders and aspire to the status of Rājpūts.

18. Social position.

The Brāhman is of course supreme in Hindu society. He never bows his head in salutation to any one who is not a Brāhman, and acknowledges with a benediction the greetings of all other classes. No member of another caste, Dr. Bhattachārya states, can, consistently with Hindu etiquette and religious beliefs, refuse altogether to bow to a Brāhman. "The more orthodox Sūdras carry their veneration for the priestly caste to such an extent that they will not cross the shadow of a Brāhman, and it is not unusual for them to be under a vow not to eat any food in the morning before drinking Brāhman nectar,[1] or water in which the toe of a

[1] *Bipracharanamrita.*

Brāhman has been dipped. On the other hand, the pride of the Brāhman is such that he does not bow even to the images of the gods in a Sūdra's house. When a Brāhman invites a Sūdra the latter is usually asked to partake of the host's *prasāda* or favour in the shape of the leavings of his plate. Orthodox Sūdras actually take offence if invited by the use of any other formula. No Sūdra is allowed to eat in the same room or at the same time with Brāhmans." [1]

A man of low caste meeting a Brāhman says 'Pailagi' or 'I fall at your feet,' and touches the Brāhman's foot with his hand, which he then carries to his own forehead to signify this. A man wishing to ask a favour in a humble manner stands on one leg and folds his cloth round his neck to show that his head is at his benefactor's disposal; and he takes a piece of grass in his mouth by which he means to say, 'I am your cow.' Brāhmans greeting each other clasp the hands and say 'Salaam,' this method of greeting being known as Namaskar. Since most Brāhmans have abandoned the priestly calling and are engaged in Government service and the professions, this exaggerated display of reverence is tending to disappear, nor do the educated members of the caste set any great store by it, preferring the social estimation attaching to such a prominent secular position as they often attain for themselves.

19. Titles.

Any Brāhman is, however, commonly addressed by other castes as Mahārāj, great king, or else as Pandit, a learned man. I had a Brāhman chuprāssie, or orderly, who was regularly addressed by the rest of the household as Pandit, and on inquiring as to the literary attainments of this learned man, I found he had read the first two class-books in a primary school. Other titles of Brāhmans are Dvija, or twice-born, that is, one who has had the thread ceremony performed; Bipra, applied to a Brāhman learned in the Shāstras or scriptures; and Srotriya, a learned Brāhman who is engaged in the performance of Vedic rites.

20. Caste *panchāyat* and offences.

The Brāhmans have a caste *panchāyat*, but among the educated classes the tendency is to drop the *panchāyat* procedure and to refer matters of caste rules and etiquette to the informal decision of a few of the most respected local

[1] *Hindu Castes and Sects*, pp. 19-21.

members. In northern India there is no supreme authority for the caste, but the five southern divisions acknowledge the successor of the great reformer Shankar Achārya as their spiritual head, and important caste questions are referred to him. His headquarters are at the monastery of Sringeri on the Cauvery river in Mysore. Mr. Joshi gives four offences as punishable with permanent exclusion from caste: killing a Brāhman, drinking prohibited wine or spirits, committing incest with a mother or step-mother or with the wife of one's spiritual preceptor, and stealing gold from a priest. Some very important offences, therefore, such as murder of any person other than a Brāhman, adultery with a woman of impure caste and taking food from her, and all offences against property, except those mentioned, do not involve permanent expulsion. Temporary exclusion is inflicted for a variety of offences, among which are teaching the Vedas for hire, receiving gifts from a Sūdra for performing fire-worship, falsely accusing a spiritual preceptor, subsisting by the harlotry of a wife, and defiling a damsel. It is possible that some of the offences against morality are comparatively recent additions. Brāhmans who cross the sea to be educated in England are readmitted into caste on going through various rites of purification; the principal of these is to swallow the five products of the sacred cow, milk, *ghī* or preserved butter, curds, dung and urine. But the small minority who have introduced widow-marriage are still banned by the orthodox.

21. Rules about food.

Brāhmans as a rule should not eat meat nor drink intoxicating liquor. But it is said that the following indulgences have been recognised: for residents in eastern India the eating of flesh and drinking liquor; for those of northern India the eating of flesh; for those in the west the use of water out of leather buckets; and in the south marriage with a first cousin on the mother's side. Hindustāni Brāhmans eat meat, according to Mr. Joshi, and others are now also adopting this custom. The kinds of meat permitted are mutton and venison, scaly, but not scaleless, fish, hares, and even the tortoise, wild boar, wild buffalo and rhinoceros. Brāhmans are said even to eat domestic fowls, though not openly, and wild jungle

*Bemrose, Collo., Derby.*

BRĀHMAN BATHING PARTY.

fowls are preferred, but are seldom obtainable. Marātha Brāhmans will not eat meat openly. Formerly only the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice could be eaten, but this rule is being disregarded and some Brāhmans buy mutton from the butchers. A Brāhman should not eat even *pakki rasoi* or food cooked without water, such as sweetmeats and cakes fried in butter or oil, except when cooked by his own family and in his own home. But these are now partaken of abroad, and also purchased from the Halwai or confectioner on the assumption that he is a Brāhman. A Brāhman should take food cooked with water only from his own relations and in his own home after the place has been purified and spread with cowdung. He bathes before eating, and wears only a yellow silk or woollen cloth round his waist, which is kept specially for this purpose, cotton being regarded as impure. But these rules are tending to become obsolete, as educated Brāhmans recognise more and more what a hindrance they cause to any social enjoyment. Boys especially who receive an English education in high schools and universities are rapidly becoming more liberal. They will drink soda-water or lemonade of which they are very fond, and eat European sweets and sometimes biscuits. The social intercourse of boys of all castes and religions in school and games, and in the latter the frequent association with Europeans, are having a remarkable effect in breaking down caste prejudice, the results of which should become very apparent in a few years. A Brāhman also should not smoke, but many now do so, and when they go to see a friend will take their own huqqa with them as they cannot smoke out of his. Marātha and Khedawāl Brāhmans, however, as a rule do not smoke, but only chew tobacco.

22. Dress.

A Brāhman's dress should be white, and he can have a coloured turban, preferably red. Marātha Brāhmans were very particular about the securing of their *dhoti* or loin-cloth, which always had to have five tucks, three into the waistband at the two sides and in front, while the loose ends were tucked in in front and behind. Buttons had to be avoided as they were made of bone, and shoes were considered to be impure as being of leather. Formerly a

Brāhman never entered a house with his shoes on, as he would consider the house to be defiled. According to the old rule, if a Brāhman touches a man of an impure caste, as a Chamār (tanner) or Basor (basket-maker), he should bathe and change his loin-cloth, and if he touches a sweeper he should change his sacred thread. Now, however, educated Brāhmans usually wear white cotton trousers and black or brown coats of cloth, alpaca or silk with the normal allowance of buttons, and European shoes and boots which they keep on indoors. Boys are even discarding the *choti* or scalp-lock and simply cut their hair short in imitation of the English. For the head small felt caps have become fashionable in lieu of turbans.

23. Tattooing.

Men are never tattooed, but women are freely tattooed on the face and body. One dot is made in the centre of the forehead and three on the left nostril in the form of a triangle. All the limbs and the fingers and toes may also be tattooed, the most common patterns being a peacock with spread wings, a fish, cuckoo, scorpion, a child's doll, a sieve, a pattern of Sīta's cookroom and representations of all female ornaments. Some women think that they will be able to sell the ornaments tattooed on their bodies in the next world and subsist on the proceeds.

24. Occupation.

In former times the Brāhman was supposed to confine himself to priestly duties, learning the Vedas and giving instruction to the laity. His subsistence was to be obtained from gleaning the fields after the crop had been cut and from unsolicited alms, as it was disgraceful for him to beg. But if he could not make a living in this manner he was at liberty to adopt a trade or profession. The majority of Brāhmans have followed the latter course with much success. They were the ministers of Hindu kings, and as these were usually illiterate, most of the power fell into the Brāhmans' hands. In Poona the Marātha Brāhmans became the actual rulers of the State. They have profited much from gifts and bequests of land for charitable purposes and are one of the largest landholding castes. In Mewār it was recorded that a fifth of the State revenue from land was assigned in religious grants,[1] and in the deeds of gift, drawn

[1] *Rājasthān*, i. p. 487.

up no doubt by the Brāhmans themselves, the most terrible penalties were invoked on any one who should interfere with the grant. One of these was that such an impious person would be a caterpillar in hell for sixty thousand years.[1] Plots of land and mango groves are also frequently given to Brāhmans by village proprietors. A Brāhman is forbidden to touch the plough with his own hands, but this rule is falling into abeyance and many Brāhman cultivators plough themselves. Brāhmans are also prohibited from selling a large number of articles, as milk, butter, cows, salt and so on. Formerly a Brāhman village proprietor refused payment for the supplies of milk and butter given to travellers, and some would expend the whole produce of their cattle in feeding religious mendicants and poor Brāhmans. But these scruples, which tended to multiply the number of beggars indefinitely, have happily vanished, and Brāhmans will even sell cows to a butcher. Mr. Joshi relates that a suit was brought by a Brāhman in his court for the hide of a cow sold by him for slaughter. A number of Brāhmans are employed as personal servants, and these are usually cooks, a Brāhman cook being very useful, since all Hindus can eat the food which he prepares. Nor has this calling hitherto been considered derogatory, as food is held to be sacred, and he who prepares it is respected. Many live on charitable contributions, and it is a rule among Hindus that a Brāhman coming into the house and asking for a present must be given something or his curse will ruin the family. Liberality is encouraged by the recitation of legends, such as that of the good king Harischandra who gave away his whole kingdom to the great Brāhman saint Visvamitra, and retired to Benāres with a loin-cloth which the recipient allowed him to retain from his possessions. But Brāhmans who take gifts at the time of a death, and those who take them from pilgrims at the sacred shrines, are despised and considered as out of caste, though not the priests in charge of temples. The rapacity of all these classes is proverbial, and an instance may be given of the conduct of the Pandas or temple-priests of Benāres. These men were so haughty that they never appeared in the temple unless

[1] *Rājasthān*, i. p. 698.

some very important visitor was expected, who would be able to pay largely. It is related that when the ex-Peshwa of Poona came to Benāres after the death of his father he solicited the Panda of the great temple of Viseshwar to assist him in the performance of the ceremonies necessary for the repose of his father's soul. But the priest refused to do so until the Mahārāja had filled with coined silver the *hauz* or font of the temple. The demand was acceded to and Rs. 125,000 were required to fill the font.[1] Those who are very poor adopt the profession of a Mahā-Brāhman or Mahāpātra, who takes gifts for the dead. Respectable Brāhmans will not accept gifts at all, but when asked to a feast the host usually gives them one to four annas or pence with betel-leaf at the time of their departure, and there is no shame in accepting this. A very rich man may give a gold mohar (guinea) to each Brāhman. Other Brāhmans act as astrologers and foretell events. They pretend to be able to produce rain in a drought or stop excessive rainfall when it is injuring the crops. They interpret dreams and omens. In the case of a theft the loser will go to a Brāhman astrologer, and after learning the circumstances the latter will tell him what sort of person stole the property and in what direction the property is concealed. But the large majority of Brāhmans have abandoned all priestly functions, and are employed in all grades of Government service, the professions and agriculture. In 1911 about fifty-three per cent of Brāhmans in the Central Provinces were supported by agriculture as landowners, cultivators and labourers. About twenty-two per cent were engaged in the arts and professions, seven per cent in Government service, including the police which contains many Brāhman constables, and only nineteen per cent were returned under all occupations connected with religion.

25. Character of Brāhmans.

Many hard things have been said about the Brāhman caste and have not been undeserved. The Brāhman priesthood displayed in a marked degree the vices of arrogance, greed, hypocrisy and dissimulation, which would naturally be engendered by their sacerdotal pretensions and the position they claimed at the head of Hindu society. But the priests

[1] At that time £12,500 or more, now about £8000.

and mendicants now, as has been seen, contribute only a comparatively small minority of the whole caste. The majority of the Brāhmans are lawyers, doctors, executive officers of Government and clerks in all kinds of Government, railway and private offices. The defects ascribed to the priesthood apply to these, if at all, only in a very minor degree. The Brāhman official has many virtues. He is, as a rule, honest, industrious and anxious to do his work creditably. He spends very little on his own pleasures, and his chief aim in life is to give his children as good an education as he can afford. A half or more of his income may be devoted to this object. If he is well-to-do he helps his poor relations liberally, having the strong fellow-feeling for them which is a relic of the joint family system. He is a faithful husband and an affectionate father. If his outlook on life is narrow and much of his leisure often devoted to petty quarrels and intrigues, this is largely the result of his imperfect, parrot-like education and lack of opportunity for anything better. In this respect it may be anticipated that the excellent education and training now afforded by Government in secondary schools for very small fees will produce a great improvement; and that the next generation of educated Hindus will be considerably more manly and intelligent, and it may be hoped at the same time not less honest, industrious and loyal than their fathers.

**Brāhman, Ahivāsi.**—A class of persons who claim to be Brāhmans, but are generally engaged in cultivation and pack-carriage. They are looked down upon by other Brāhmans, and permit the remarriage of widows. The name means the abode of the snake or dragon, and the caste are said to be derived from a village Sunrakh in Muttra District, where a dragon once lived. For further information Mr. Crooke's article on the caste,[1] from which the above details are taken, may be consulted.

**Brāhman, Jijhotia.**—This is a local subdivision of the Kanaujia subcaste, belonging to Bundelkhand. They take their name from Jajhoti, the classical term for Bundelkhand,

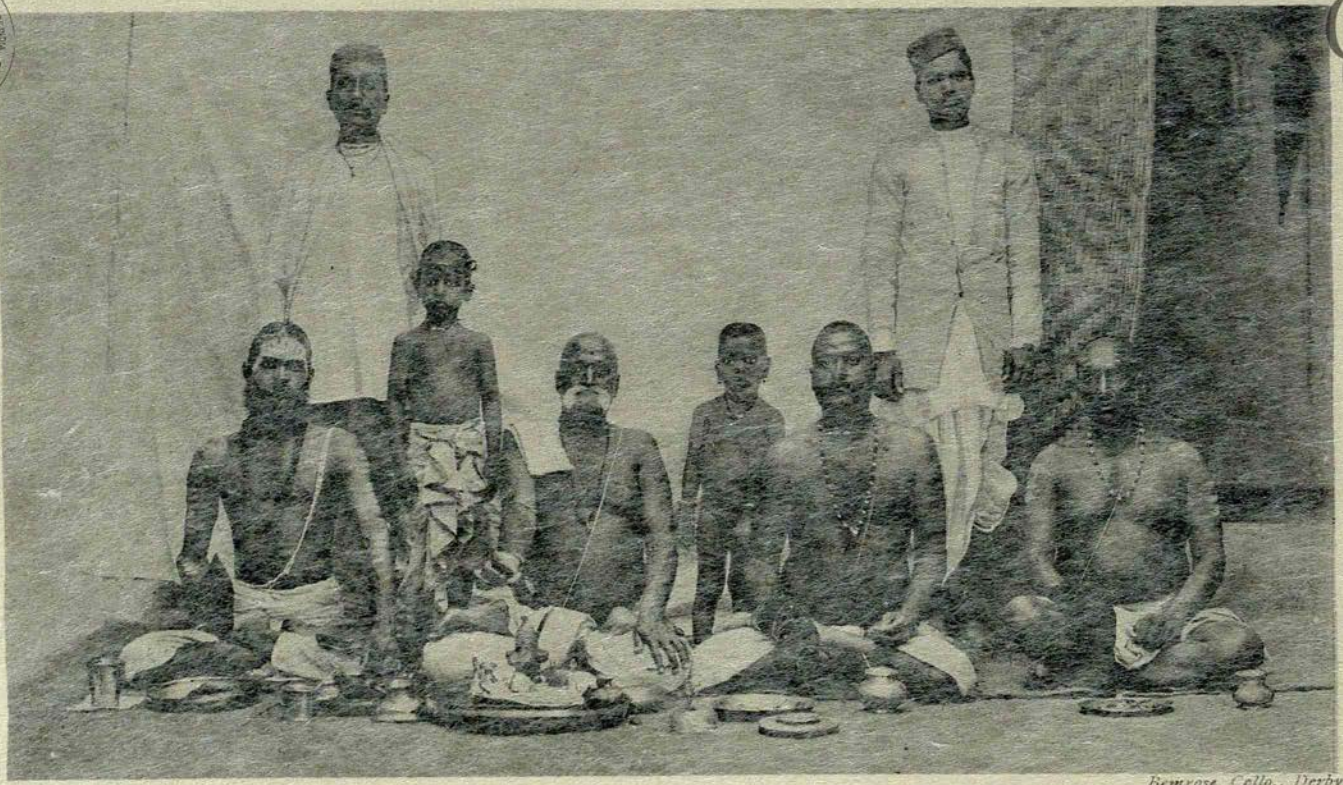
[1] *Tribes and Castes of the North-West Provinces and Oudh*, s.v.

and reside in Saugor and the adjoining Districts, where they usually act as priests to the higher castes. The Jijhotia Brāhmans rank a little below the Kanaujias proper and the Sarwarias, who are also a branch of the Kanaujia division. The two latter classes take daughters in marriage from Jijhotias, but do not give their daughters to them. But these hypergamous marriages are now rare. Jijhotia Brāhmans will plough with their own hands in Saugor.

**Brāhman, Kanaujia, Kanyakubja.**—This, the most important division of the northern Brāhmans, takes its name from the ancient city of Kanauj in the Farukhābād District on the Ganges, which was on two occasions the capital of India. The great king Harsha Vardhana, who ruled the whole of northern India in the seventh century, had his headquarters here, and when the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang stayed at Kanauj in A.D. 638 and 643 he found upwards of a hundred monasteries crowded by more than 10,000 Buddhist monks. "Hinduism flourished as well as Buddhism, and could show more than two hundred temples with thousands of worshippers. The city, which was strongly fortified, extended along the east bank of the Ganges for about four miles, and was adorned with lovely gardens and clear tanks. The inhabitants were well-to-do, including some families of great wealth; they dressed in silk, and were skilled in learning and the arts."[1] When Mahmūd of Ghazni appeared before Kanauj in A.D. 1018 the number of temples is said to have risen to 10,000. The Sultan destroyed the temples, but seems to have spared the city. Thereafter Kanauj declined in importance, though still the capital of a Rājpūt dynasty, and the final sack by Shihāb-ud-Dīn in A.D. 1194 reduced it to desolation and insignificance for ever.[2]

The Kanaujia Brāhmans include the principal body of the caste in Bengal and in the Hindi Districts of the Central Provinces. They are here divided into four subgroups, the Kanaujia proper, Sarwaria, Jijhotia and Sanādhya, which are separately noticed. The Sarwarias are sometimes considered to rank a little higher than the proper Kanaujias. It is said that the two classes are the

[1] *Early History of India*, 3rd ed. p. 376. [2] *Ibidem*, p. 385.



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BRĀHMAN PUJĀRIS OR PRIESTS.

descendants of two brothers, Kanya and Kubja, of whom the former accepted a present from the divine king Rāma of Ayodhya when he celebrated a sacrifice on his return from Ceylon, while the latter refused it. The Sarwarias are descended from Kubja who refused the present and therefore are purer than the Kanaujias, whose ancestor, Kanya, accepted it. Kanya and Kubja are simply the two parts of Kanyakubja, the old name for Kanauj. It may be noted that Kanya means a maiden and also the constellation Virgo, while Kubja is a name of the planet Mars; but it is not known whether the words in this sense are connected with the name of the city. The Kanaujia Brāhmans of the Central Provinces practise hypergamy, as described in the general article on Brāhman. Mr. Crooke states that in the United Provinces the children of a man's second wife can intermarry with those of his first wife, provided that they are not otherwise related or of the same section. The practice of exchanging girls between families is also permitted there.[1] In the Central Provinces the Kanaujias eat meat and sometimes plough with their own hands. The Chhattīsgarhi Kanaujias form a separate group, who have been long separated from their brethren elsewhere. As a consequence other Kanaujias will neither eat nor intermarry with them. Similarly in Saugor those who have come recently from the United Provinces will not marry with the older settlers. A Kanaujia Brāhman is very strict in the matter of taking food, and will scarcely eat it unless cooked by his own relations, according to the saying, '*Ath Kanaujia, nau chulha*,' or 'Eight Kanaujias will want nine places to cook their food.'

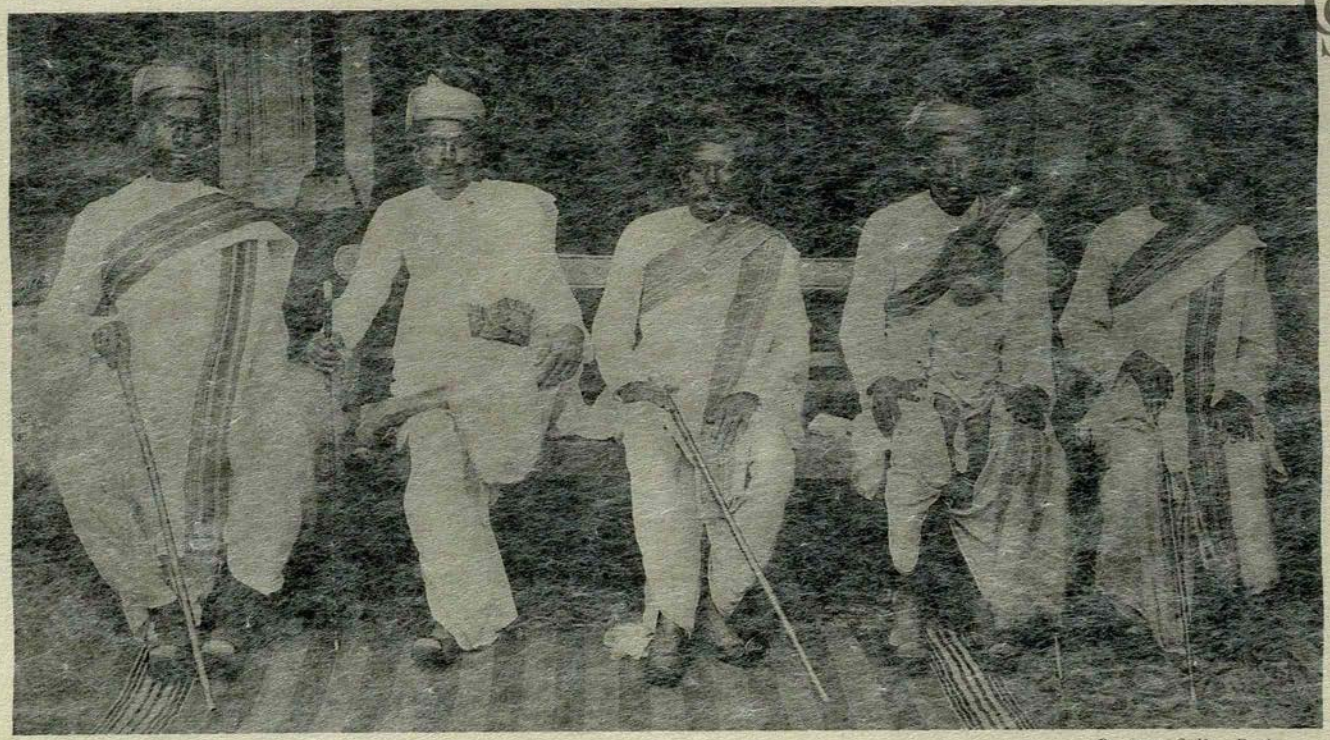
**Brāhman, Khedāwāl.**—The Khedāwāls are a class of Gujarāti Brāhmans, who take their name from Kheda or Kaira, the headquarters of the Kaira District, where they principally reside. They have two divisions, known as Inside and Outside. It is said that once the Kaira chief was anxious to have a son and offered them gifts. The majority refused the gifts, and leaving Kaira settled in villages outside the town; while a small number accepted the gifts and

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

remained inside, and hence two separate divisions arose, the outside group being the higher.[1] It is said that the first Khedāwāl who came to the Central Provinces was on a journey from Gujarāt to Benāres when, on passing through Panna State, he saw some diamonds lying in a field. He stopped and picked up as many as he could and presented them to the Rāja of Panna, who made him a grant of an estate, and from this time other Khedāwāls came and settled. A considerable colony of them now exists in Saugor and Damoh. The Khedāwāls are clever and astute, and many of them are the agents of landowners and moneylenders, while a large proportion are in the service of the Government. They do not as a rule perform priestly functions in the Central Provinces. Their caste observances are strict. Formerly it is said that a Khedāwāl who was sent to jail was permanently expelled from caste, and though the rule has been relaxed the penalties for readmission are still very heavy. They do not smoke, but only chew tobacco. Widows must dress in white, and their heads are sometimes shaved. They are said to consider a camel as impure as a donkey, and will not touch either animal. One of their common titles is Mehta, meaning great. The Khedāwāls of the Central Provinces formerly married only among themselves, but since the railway has been opened intermarriage with their caste-fellows in Gujarāt has been resumed.

**Brāhman, Mahārāshtra, Marātha.**—The Marātha Brāhmans, or those of the Bombay country, are numerous and important in the Central Provinces. The northern Districts were for a period governed by Marātha Brāhmans on behalf of the Peshwa of Poona, and under the Bhonsla dynasty of Nāgpur in the south they took a large part in the administration. The Marātha Brāhmans have three main subcastes, the Deshasth, Konkonasth and Karhāda. The Deshasth Brāhmans belong to the country of Poona above the Western Ghats, which is known as the *desh* or home country. They are numerous in Berār and Nāgpur. The Konkonasth are so called because they reside in the Konkan country along the Bombay coast. They have noticeably fair complexions,

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Hindus of Gujarāt*, p. 11.



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GROUP OF MARĀTHA BRĀHMAN MEN.

good features and often grey eyes. According to a legend they were sprung from the corpses of a party of shipwrecked foreigners, who were raised to life by Parasurāma.[1] This story and their fine appearance have given rise to the hypothesis that their ancestors were shipwrecked sailors from some European country, or from Arabia or Persia. They are also known as Chitpāvan, which is said to mean the pure in heart, but a derivation suggested in the *Bombay Gazetteer* is from Chiplun or Chitāpolan, a place in the Konkan which was their headquarters. The Peshwa of Poona was a Konkonasth Brāhman, and there are a number of them in Saugor. The Karhāda Brāhmans take their name from the town of Karhād in the Satāra District. They show little difference from the Deshasths in customs and appearance.

Formerly the above three subcastes were endogamous and married only among themselves. But since the railway has been opened they have begun to intermarry with each other to a limited extent, having obtained sanction to this from the successor of Shankar Achārya, whom they acknowledge as their spiritual head.

The Marātha Brāhmans are also divided into sects, according to the Veda which they follow. Most of them are either Rigvedis or Yajurvedis, and these two sects marry among themselves. These Brāhmans are strict in the observance of caste rules. They do not take water from any but other Brāhmans, and abstain from flesh and liquor. They will, however, eat with any of the Pānch-Drāvid or southern divisions of Brāhmans except those of Gujarāt. They usually abstain from smoking, and until recently have made widows shave their heads; but this rule is perhaps now relaxed. As a rule they are well educated, and the majority of them look to Government service for a career, either as clerks in the public offices or as officers of the executive and judicial services. They are intelligent and generally reliable workers. The full name of a Marātha or Gujarāti Brāhman consists of his own name, his father's name and a surname. But he is commonly addressed by his own name, followed by the honorific termination Rao for Rāja, a king, or Pant for Pandit, a wise man.

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Satāra*, p. 54.

**Brāhman, Maithil.**—One of the five Pānch-Gaur or northern divisions, comprising the Brāhmans of Bihār or Tirhūt. There are some Maithil Brāhman families settled in Mandla, who were formerly in the service of the Gond kings. They have the surname of Ojha, which is one of those borne by the caste and signifies a soothsayer. The Maithil Brāhmans are said to have at one time practised magic. Mithila or Bihār has also, from the earliest times, been famous for the cultivation of Sanskrit, and the great lawgiver Yajnavalkya is described as a native of this country.[1] The head of the subcaste is the Mahārāja of Darbhanga, to whom family disputes are sometimes referred for decision. The Maithil Brāhmans are said to be mainly Sakti worshippers. They eat flesh and fish, but do not drink liquor or smoke tobacco.[2]

**Brāhman, Mālwi.**—This is a local class of Brāhmans from Mālwa in Central India, who are found in the Hoshangābād and Betūl Districts. They are said to have been invited here by the Gond kings of Kherla in Betūl six or more centuries ago, and are probably of impure descent. Mālwa is north of the Nerbudda, and they should therefore properly belong to the Pānch-Gaur division, but they speak Marāthi and their customs resemble those of Marātha Brāhmans, who will take food cooked without water from them. The Mālwi Brāhmans usually belong to the Madhyandina branch of the Yajurvedi sect. They work as village accountants (*patwāris*) and village priests, and also cultivate land.

**Brāhman, Nāgar.**—A class of Gujarāti Brāhmans found in the Nimār District. The name is said to be derived from the town of Vadnagar of Gujarāt, now in Baroda State. According to one account they accepted grants of land from a Rājpūt king, and hence were put out of caste by their fellows. Another story is that the Nāgar Brāhman women were renowned for their personal beauty and also for their skill in music. The emperor Jahāngir, hearing of their fame, wished to see them and sent for them, but they refused

[1] Bhattachārya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, p. 47.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 48.

to go. The emperor then ordered that all the men should be killed and the women be taken to his Court. A terrible struggle ensued, and many women threw themselves into tanks and rivers and were drowned, rather than lose their modesty by appearing before the emperor. A body of Brāhmans numbering 7450 (or $74\frac{1}{2}$ hundred) threw away their sacred threads and became Sūdras in order to save their lives. Since this occurrence the figure $74\frac{1}{2}$ is considered very unlucky. Banias write $74\frac{1}{2}$ in the beginning of their account-books, by which they are held to take a vow that if they make a false entry in the book they will be guilty of the sin of having killed this number of Brāhmans. The same figure is also written on letters, so that none but the person to whom they are addressed may dare to open them.[1]

The above stories seem to show that the Nāgar Brāhmans are partly of impure descent. In Gujarāt it is said that one section of them called Bārud are the descendants of Nāgar Brāhman fathers who were unable to get wives in their own caste and took them from others. The Bārud section also formerly permitted the remarriage of widows.[2] This seems a further indication of mixed descent. The Nāgars settled in the Central Provinces have for a long time ceased to marry with those of Gujarāt owing to difficulties in communication. But now that the railway has been opened they have petitioned the Rao of Bhaunagar, who is the head of the caste, and a Nāgar Brāhman, to introduce intermarriage again between the two sections of the caste. Many Nāgar Brāhmans have taken to secular occupations and are land-agents and cultivators.

Formerly the Nāgar Brāhmans observed very strict rules about defilement when in the state called *Nuven*, that is, having bathed and purified themselves prior to taking food. A Brāhman in this condition was defiled if he touched an earthen vessel unless it was quite new and had never held water. If he sat down on a piece of cotton cloth or a scrap of leather or paper he became impure unless Hindu letters had been written on the paper; these, as being the goddess

[1] From Mr. Gopal Datta Joshi's paper.
[2] *Rāsmāla*, ii. p. 233.

Sāraswati, would preserve it from defilement. But cloth or leather could not be purified through being written on. Thus if the Brāhman wished to read any book before or at his meal it had to be bound with silk and not with cotton; leather could not be used, and instead of paste of flour and water the binder had to employ paste of pounded tamarind seed. A printed book could not be read, because printing-ink contained impure matter. Raw cotton did not render the Brāhman impure, but if it had been twisted into the wick of a lamp by any one not in a state of purity he became impure. Bones defiled, but women's ivory armlets did not, except in those parts of the country where they were not usually worn, and then they did. The touch of a child of the same caste who had not learned to eat grain did not defile, but if the child ate grain it did. The touch of a donkey, a dog or a pig defiled; some said that the touch of a cat also defiled, but others were inclined to think it did not, because in truth it was not easy to keep the cat out.[1]

If a Brāhman was defiled and rendered impure by any of the above means he could not proceed with his meal.

**Brāhman, Nāramdeo.**—A class of Brāhmans who live in the Hoshangābād and Nimār Districts near the banks of the Nerbudda, from which river their name is derived. According to their own account they belong to the Gurjara or Gujarāti division, and were expelled from Gujarāt by a Rāja who had cut up a golden cow and wished them to accept pieces of it as presents. This they refused to do on account of the sin involved, and hence were exiled and came to the Central Provinces. A local legend about them is to the effect that they are the descendants of a famous Rishi or saint, who dwelt beside the Nerbudda, and of a Naoda or Dhīmar woman who was one of his disciples. The Nāramdeo Brāhmans have for the most part adopted secular occupations, though they act as village priests or astrologers. They are largely employed as village accountants (*patwāris*), clerks in Government offices, and agents to landowners, that is, in very much the same capacity

[1] *Rāsmāla*, ii. p. 259.

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GROUP OF NÂRAMDEO BRÂHMAN WOMEN.

as the Kāyasths. As land-agents they show much astuteness, and are reputed to have enriched themselves in many cases at the expense of their masters. Hence they are unpopular with the cultivators just as the Kāyasths are, and very uncomplimentary proverbs are current about them.

**Brāhman, Sanādhya, Sanaurhia.**—The Sanādhyas are considered in the Central Provinces to be a branch of the Kanaujia division. Their home is in the Ganges-Jumna Doāb and Rohilkhand, between the Gaur Brāhmans to the north-west and the Kanaujias to the east. Mr. Crooke states that in some localities the Sanādhyas intermarry with both the Kanaujia and Gaur divisions. But formerly both Kanaujias and Gaurs practised hypergamy with the Sanādhyas, taking daughters from them in marriage but not giving their daughters to them.[1] This fact indicates the inferiority of the Sanādhya group, but marriage is now becoming reciprocal. In Bengal the Sanādhyas account for their inferiority to the other Kanaujias by saying that their ancestors on one occasion at the bidding of a Rāja partook of a sacrificial feast with all their clothes on, instead of only their loin-cloths according to the rule among Brāhmans, and were hence degraded. The Sanādhyas themselves have two divisions, the *Sārhe-tīn ghar* and *Dasghar*, or Three-and-a-half houses and Ten houses, of whom the former are superior, and practise hypergamy with the latter. Further, it is said that the Three-and-a-half group were once made to intermarry with the degraded Kataha or Mahā-Brāhmans, who are funeral priests.[2] This further indicates the inferior status of the Sanādhyas. The Sanaurhia criminal caste of pickpockets are supposed to be made up of a nucleus of Sanādhya Brāhmans with recruits from all other castes, but this is not certain. In the Central Provinces a number of Sanādhyas took to carrying grain and merchandise on pack-bullocks, and are hence known as Belwār. They form a separate subcaste, ranking below the other Sanādhyas and marrying among themselves. Mr. Crooke notes that at their weddings the Sanādhyas worship a potter's wheel. Some make an image of it on the wall of the house, while

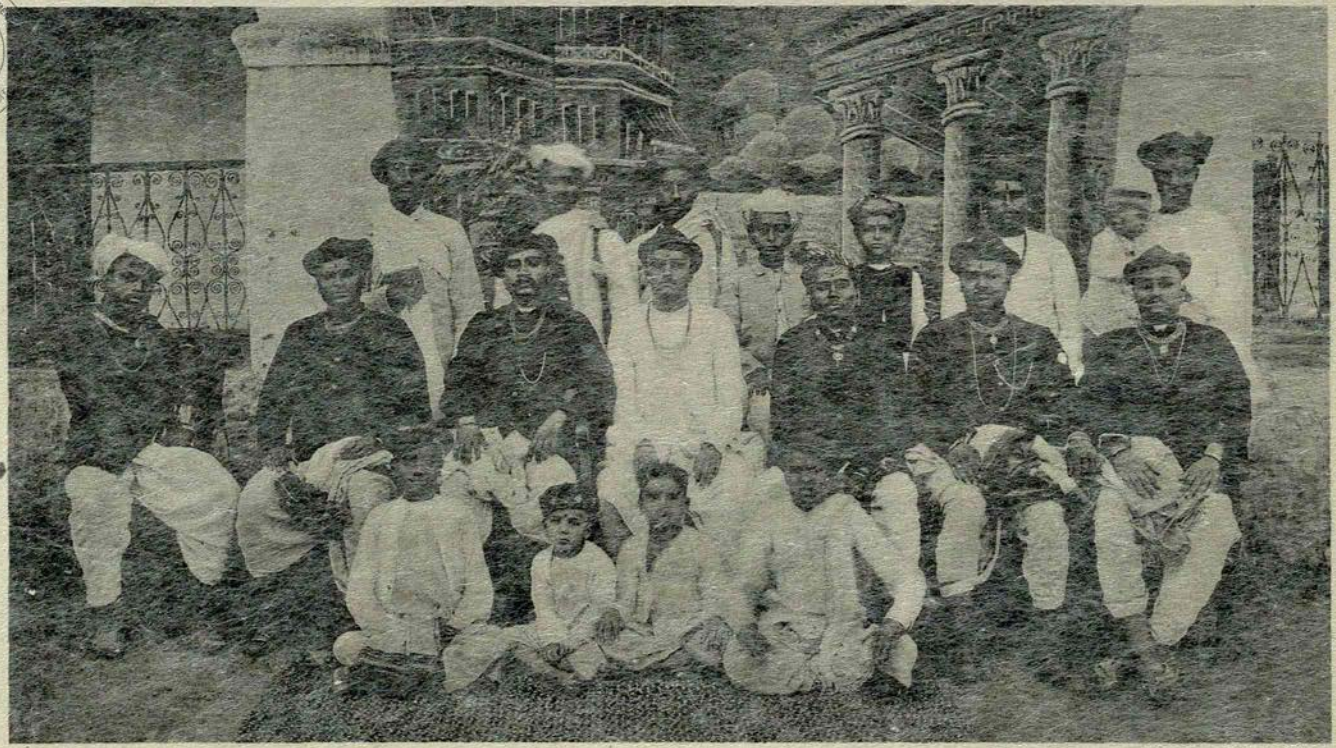
[1] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Sanādhya. [2] Crooke, *ibidem*, paras. 3 and 6.

others go to the potter's house and worship his wheel there. In the Central Provinces after the wedding they get a bed newly made with *newār* tape and seat the bride and bridegroom on it, and put a large plate at their feet, in which presents are placed. The Sanādhyas differ from the Kanaujias in that they smoke tobacco but do not eat meat, while the Kanaujias eat meat but do not smoke. They greet each other with the word Dandāwat, adding Mahārāj to an equal or superior.

**Brāhman, Sarwaria.**—This is the highest class of the Kanaujia Brāhmans, who take their name from the river Sarju or Gogra in Oudh, where they have their home. They observe strict rules of ceremonial purity, and do not smoke tobacco nor plough with their own hands. An orthodox Sarwaria Brāhman will not give his daughter in marriage in a village from which his family has received a girl, and sometimes will not even drink the water of that village. The Sarwarias make widows dress in white and sometimes shave their heads. In some tracts they intermarry with the Kanaujia Brāhmans, and in others take daughters in marriage but do not give their own daughters to them. In Dr. Buchanan's time, a century ago, the Sarwaria Brāhmans would not eat rice sold in the bazār which had been cleaned in boiling water, as they considered that it had thereby become food cooked with water; and they carried their own grain to the grain-parcher to be prepared for them. When they ate either parched grain or sweetmeats from a confectioner in public they must purify the place on which they sat down with cowdung and water.[1] This may be compared with a practice observed by very strict Brāhmans even now, of adding water to the medicine which they obtain from a Government dispensary, to purify it before drinking it.

**Brāhman, Utkal.**—These are the Brāhmans of Orissa and one of the Pānch-Gaur divisions. They are divided into two groups, the Dākshinatya or southern and the Jajpuria or northern clan. The Utkal Brāhmans, who first settled in Sambalpur, are known as Jharia or jungly, and form a

[1] *Eastern India*, ii. 472, quoted in Mr. Crooke's art. Sarwaria.



*Bemrose, Collo., Derby.*

GROUP OF NĀRAMDEO BRĀHMAN MEN.

separate subcaste, marrying among themselves, as the later immigrants refuse to intermarry with them. Another group of Orissa Brāhmans have taken to cultivation, and are known as Halia, from *hal*, a plough. They grow the betel-vine, and in Orissa the areca and cocoanuts, besides doing ordinary cultivation. They have entirely lost their sacerdotal character, but glory in their occupation, and affect to despise the Bed or Veda Brāhmans, who live upon alms.[1] A third class of Orissa Brāhmans are the Pandas, who serve as priests and cooks in the public temples and also in private houses, and travel about India touting for pilgrims to visit the temple at Jagannāth. Dr. Bhattachārya describes the procedure of the temple-touts as follows:[2]

"Their tours are so organised that during their campaigning season, which commences in November and is finished by the car-festival at the beginning of the rains, very few villages of the adjoining Provinces escape their visits and taxation. Their appearance causes a disturbance in every household. Those who have already visited 'The Lord of the World' at Puri are called upon to pay an instalment towards the debt contracted by them while at the sacred shrine, which, though paid many times over, is never completely satisfied. That, however, is a small matter compared with the misery and distraction caused by the 'Jagannāth mania,' which is excited by the preachings and pictures of the Panda. A fresh batch of old ladies become determined to visit the shrine, and neither the wailings and protestations of the children nor the prospect of a long and toilsome journey can dissuade them. The arrangements of the family are for the time being altogether upset, and the grief of those left behind is heightened by the fact that they look upon the pilgrims as going to meet almost certain death. . . ."

This vivid statement of the objections to the habit of pilgrimage from a Brāhman writer is very interesting. Since the opening of the railway to Puri the danger and expense as well as the period of absence have been greatly reduced; but the pilgrimages are still responsible for a large

[1] Stirling's description of Orissa in *As. Res.* vol, xv. p. 199, quoted in *Hindu Castes and Sects.*

[2] *Hindu Castes and Sects*, p. 63.

mortality, as cholera frequently breaks out among the vast assembly at the temple, and the pilgrims, hastily returning to all parts of India, carry the disease with them, and cause epidemics in many localities. All castes now eat the rice cooked at the temple of Jagannāth together without defilement, and friendships are cemented by eating a little of this rice together as a sacred bond.

**Chadār,**[1] **Kotwar.**—A small caste of weavers and village watchmen resident in the Districts of Saugor, Damoh, Jubbulpore and Narsinghpur. They numbered 28,000 persons in 1911. The caste is not found outside the northern Districts of the Central Provinces. The name is derived from the Sanskrit *chirkar*, a weaver, and belongs to Bundelkhand, but beyond this the Chadārs have no knowledge or traditions of their origin. They are probably an occupational group formed from members of the Dravidian tribes and others who took to the profession of village watchmen. A number of other occupational castes of low status are found in the northern Districts, and their existence is probably to be accounted for by the fact that the forest tribes were subjected and their tribal organisation destroyed by the invading Bundelas and other Hindus some centuries ago. They were deprived of the land and relegated to the performance of menial and servile duties in the village, and they have formed a new set of divisions into castes arising from the occupations they adopted. The Chadārs have two subcastes based on differences of religious practice, the Parmesuria or worshippers of Vishnu, and Athia or devotees of Devi. It is doubtful, however, whether these are strictly endogamous. They have a large number of exogamous septs or *bainks*, which are named after all sorts of animals, plants and natural objects. Instances of these names are Dhāna (a leaf of the rice plant), Kāsia (bell-metal), Gohia (a kind of lizard), Bachhulia (a calf), Gujaria (a milkmaid), Moria (a peacock), Laraiya (a jackal), Khatkīra (a bug), Sugaria (a pig), Barraiya (a wasp), Neora (a mongoose), Bhartu Chiraiya (a sparrow), and so on. Thirty-nine names

[1] This article is compiled from papers by Mr. Wali Muhammad, Tahsīldār of Khurai, and Kanhya Lāl, clerk in the Gazetteer office.

in all are reported. Members of each sept draw the figure of the animal or plant after which it is named on the wall at marriages and worship it. They usually refuse to kill the totem animal, and the members of the Sugaria or pig sept throw away their earthen vessels if a pig should be killed in their sight, and clean their houses as if on the death of a member of the family. Marriage between members of the same sept is forbidden and also between first cousins and other near relations. The Chadārs say that the marriages of persons nearly related by blood are unhappy, and occasion serious consequences to the parties and their families. Girls are usually wedded in the fifth, seventh, ninth, or eleventh year of their age and boys between the ages of eight and sixteen. If an unmarried girl is seduced by a member of the caste she is married to him by the simple form adopted for the wedding of a widow. But if she goes wrong with an outsider of low caste she is permanently expelled. The remarriage of widows is permitted and divorce is also allowed, a deed being executed on stamped paper before the *panchāyat* or caste committee. If a woman runs away from her husband to another man he must repay to the husband the amount expended on her wedding and give a feast to the caste. A Brāhman is employed to fix the date of a wedding and sometimes for the naming of children, but he is only consulted and is never present at the ceremony. The caste venerate the goddess Devi, offering her a virgin she-goat in the month of Asārh (June-July). They worship their weaving implements at the Diwāli and Holi festivals, and feed the crows in Kunwār (September-October) as representing the spirits of their ancestors. This custom is based on the superstition that a crow does not die of old age or disease, but only when it is killed. To cure a patient of fever they tie a blue thread, irregularly knotted, round his wrist. They believe that thunder-bolts are the arrows shot by Indra to kill his enemies in the lower world, and that the rainbow is Indra's bow ; any one pointing at it will feel pain in his finger. The dead are mourned for ten days, and during that time a burning lamp is placed on the ground at some distance from the house, while on the tenth day a tooth-stick and water and food are set out for the

soul of the dead. They will not throw the first teeth of a child on to a tiled roof, because they believe that if this is done his next teeth will be wide and ugly like the tiles. But it is a common practice to throw the first teeth on to the thatched roof of the house. The Chadārs will admit members of most castes of good standing into the community, and they eat flesh, including pork and fowls, and drink liquor, and will take cooked food from most of the good castes and from Kalārs, Khangārs and Kumhārs. The social status of the caste is very low, but they rank above the impure castes and are of cleanly habits, bathing daily and cleaning their kitchens before taking food. They are employed as village watchmen and as farmservants and field-labourers, and also weave coarse country cloth.

# CHAMĀR

## LIST OF PARAGRAPHS



**Chamār, Chambhār.**[1]—The caste of tanners and menial labourers of northern India. In the Central Provinces the Chamārs numbered about 900,000 persons in 1911. They are the third caste in the Province in numerical strength, being exceeded by the Gonds and Kunbis. About 600,000 persons, or two-thirds of the total strength of the caste in the Province, belong to the Chhattīsgarh Division and adjacent Feudatory States. Here the Chamārs have to some extent emancipated themselves from their servile status and have become cultivators, and occasionally even mālguzārs or landed proprietors; and between them and

1. General notice of the caste.

[1] This article is based on the Rev. E. M. Gordon's *Indian Folk-Tales* (London, Elliott & Stock, 1908), and the Central Provinces *Monograph on the Leather Industry*, by Mr. C. G. Chenevix Trench, C.S.; with extracts from Sir H. H. Risley's and Mr. Crooke's descriptions of the caste, and from the *Berār Census Report* (1881); on information collected for the District Gazetteers; and papers by Messrs. Durga Prasād Pānde, Tahsīldār, Raipur; Rām Lāl, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Saugor; Govind Vithal Kāne, Naib-Tahsīldār, Wardha; Bālkrishna Rāmchandra Bakhle, Tahsīldār, Mandla; Sitārām, schoolmaster, Bālāghāt; and Kanhya Lāl of the Gazetteer office. Some of the material found in Mr. Gordon's book was obtained independently by the writer in Bilāspur before its publication and is therefore not specially acknowledged.

the Hindus a bitter and long-standing feud is in progress. Outside Chhattīsgarh the Chamārs are found in most of the Hindi-speaking Districts whose population has been recruited from northern and central India, and here they are perhaps the most debased class of the community, consigned to the lowest of menial tasks, and their spirit broken by generations of servitude. In the Marātha country the place of the Chamārs is taken by the Mehras or Mahārs. In the whole of India the Chamārs are about eleven millions strong, and are the largest caste with the exception of the Brāhmans. The name is derived from the Sanskrit Charmakāra, a worker in leather; and, according to classical tradition, the Chamār is the offspring of a Chandāl or sweeper woman by a man of the fisher caste.[1] The superior physical type of the Chamār has been noticed in several localities. Thus in the Kanara District of Bombay[2] the Chamār women are said to be famed for their beauty of face and figure, and there it is stated that the Padminis or perfect type of women, middle-sized with fine features, black lustrous hair and eyes, full breasts and slim waists,[3] are all Chamārins. Sir D. Ibbetson writes[4] that their women are celebrated for beauty, and loss of caste is often attributed to too great a partiality for a Chamārin. In Chhattīsgarh the Chamārs are generally of fine stature and fair complexion; some of them are lighter in colour than the Chhattīsgarhi Brāhmans, and it is on record that a European officer mistook a Chamār for a Eurasian and addressed him in English. This, however, is by no means universally the case, and Sir H. Risley considers[5] that "The average Chamār is hardly distinguishable in point of features, stature or complexion from the members of those non-Aryan races from whose ranks we should primarily expect the profession of leather-dressers to be recruited." Again, Sir Henry Elliot, writing of the Chamārs of the North-Western Provinces, says: "Chamārs

[1] There are other genealogies showing the Chamār as the offspring of various mixed unions.

[2] *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. xv. Kanara, p. 355.

[3] The Hindus say that there are five classes of women, Padmini, Hastini, Chitrani and Shunkhini being the first four, and of these Padmini is the most perfect. No details of the other classes are given. *Rāsmāla*, i. p. 160.

[4] *Punjab Census Report* (1881), p. 320.

[5] *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Chamār.

are reputed to be a dark race, and a fair Chamār is said to be as rare an object as a black Brāhman :

*Karia Brāhman, gor Chamār,*
*Inke sāth nā utariye pār,*

that is, 'Do not cross a river in the same boat with a black Brāhman or a fair Chamār,' both being of evil omen." The latter description would certainly apply to the Chamārs of the Central Provinces outside the Chhattīsgarh Districts, but hardly to the caste as a whole within that area. No satisfactory explanation has been offered of this distinction of appearance of some groups of Chamārs. It is possible that the Chamārs of certain localities may be the descendants of a race from the north-west, conquered and enslaved by a later wave of immigrants ; or that their physical development may owe something to adult marriage and a flesh diet, even though consisting largely of carrion. It may be noticed that the sweepers, who eat the broken food from the tables of the Europeans and wealthy natives, are sometimes stronger and better built than the average Hindu. Similarly, the Kasais or Muhammadan butchers are proverbially strong and lusty. But no evidence is forthcoming in support of such conjectures, and the problem is likely to remain insoluble.

"The Chamārs," Sir H. Risley states,[1] "trace their own pedigree to Ravi or Rai Dās, the famous disciple of Rāmānand at the end of the fourteenth century, and whenever a Chamār is asked what he is, he replies a Ravi Dās. Another tradition current among them alleges that their original ancestor was the youngest of four Brāhman brethren who went to bathe in a river and found a cow struggling in a quicksand. They sent the youngest brother in to rescue the animal, but before he could get to the spot it had been drowned. He was compelled, therefore, by his brothers to remove the carcase, and after he had done this they turned him out of their caste and gave him the name of Chamār." Other legends are related by Mr. Crooke in his article on the caste.

2. Endogamous divisions.

The Chamārs are broken up into a number of endogamous subcastes. Of these the largest now consists of the

[1] *Loc. cit.*

members of the Satnāmi sect in Chhattīsgarh, who do not intermarry with other Chamārs. They are described in the article on that sect. The other Chamārs call the Satnāmis Jharia or 'jungly,' which implies that they are the oldest residents in Chhattīsgarh. The Satnāmis are all cultivators, and have given up working in leather. The Chungias (from *chungi*, a leaf-pipe) are a branch of the Satnāmis who have taken to smoking, a practice which is forbidden by the rules of the sect. In Chhattīsgarh those Chamārs who still cure hides and work in leather belong either to the Kanaujia or Ahirwār subcastes, the former of whom take their name from the well-known classical town of Kanauj in northern India, while the latter are said to be the descendants of unions between Chamār fathers and Ahīr mothers. The Kanaujias are much addicted to drink, and though they eat pork they do not rear pigs. The Ahirwārs, or Erwārs as they are called outside Chhattīsgarh, occupy a somewhat higher position than the Kanaujias. They consider themselves to be the direct descendants of the prophet Raidās or Rohidās, who, they say, had seven wives of different castes; one of them was an Ahīr woman, and her offspring were the ancestors of the Ahirwār subcaste. Both the Kanaujias and Ahirwārs of Chhattīsgarh are generally known to outsiders as Paikaha, a term which indicates that they still follow their ancestral calling of curing hides, as opposed to the Satnāmis, who have generally eschewed it. Those Chamārs who are curriers have, as a rule, the right to receive the hides of the village cattle in return for removing the carcases, each family of Chamārs having allotted to them a certain number of tenants whose dead cattle they take, while their women are the hereditary midwives of the village. Such Chamārs have the designation of Meher. The Kanaujias make shoes out of a single piece of leather, while the Ahirwārs cut the front separately. The latter also ornament their shoes with fancy work consisting of patterns of silver thread on red cloth. No Ahirwār girl is married until she has shown herself proficient in this kind of needlework.[1] Another well-known group, found both in Chhattīsgarh and elsewhere, are the Jaiswāras, who take their name from the

[1] From Mr. Gordon's paper.

old town of Jais in the United Provinces. Many of them serve as grooms, and are accustomed to state their caste as Jaiswāra, considering it a more respectable designation than Chamār. The Jaiswāras must carry burdens on their heads only and not on their shoulders, and they must not tie up a dog with a halter or neck-rope, this article being venerated by them as an implement of their calling. A breach of either of these rules entails temporary excommunication from caste and a fine for readmission. Among a number of territorial groups may be mentioned the Bundelkhandi or immigrants from Bundelkhand; the Bhadoria from the Bhadāwar State; the Antarvedi from Antarved or the Doāb, the country lying between the Ganges and Jumna; the Gangāpāri or those from the north of the Ganges; and the Pardeshi (foreigners) and Desha or Deswār (belonging to the country), both of which groups come from Hindustān. The Deswār Chamārs of Narsinghpur[1] are now all agriculturists and have totally abjured the business of working in leather. The Mahobia and Khaijrāha take their names from the towns of Mahoba and Khaijra in Central India. The Lādse or Lādvi come from south Gujarāt, which in classical times was known as Lāt; while the Marātha, Berāria and Dakhini subdivisions belong to southern India. There are a number of other territorial groups of less importance.

3. Subcastes continued.

Certain subcastes are of an occupational nature, and among these may be mentioned the Budalgirs of Chhindwāra, who derive their name from the *budla*, or leather bag made for the transport and storage of oil and *ghī*. The *budla*, Mr. Trench remarks,[2] has been ousted by the kerosene oil tin, and the industry of the Budalgirs has consequently almost disappeared; but the *budlas* are still used by barbers to hold oil for the torches which they carry in wedding processions. The Daijanya subcaste are so named because their women act as midwives (*dai*), but this business is by no means confined to one particular group, being undertaken generally by Chamār women. The Kataua or Katwa are leather-cutters, the name being derived from *kātna*, to cut. And the Gobardhua (from *gobar*, cowdung) collect the

[1] *Monograph on Leather Industries*, p. 9. [2] *Ibidem.*

droppings of cattle on the threshing-floors and wash out and eat the undigested grain. The Mochis or shoemakers and Jīngars [1] or saddlemakers and bookbinders have obtained a better position than the ordinary Chamārs, and have now practically become separate castes; while, on the other hand, the Dohar subcaste of Narsinghpur have sunk to the very lowest stage of casual labour, grass-cutting and the like, and are looked down on by the rest of the caste.[2] The Korchamārs are said to be the descendants of alliances between Chamārs and Koris or weavers, and the Turkanyas probably have Turk or Musalmān blood in their veins. In Berār the Romya or Haralya subcaste claim the highest rank and say that their ancestor Harlya was the primeval Chamār who stripped off a piece of his own skin to make a pair of shoes for Mahādeo.[3] The Māngya[4] Chamārs of Chānda and the Nona Chamārs of Damoh are groups of beggars, who are the lowest of the caste and will take food from the hands of any other Chamār. The Nona group take their name from Nona or Lona Chamārin, a well-known witch about whom Mr. Crooke relates the following story:[5] "Her legend tells how Dhanwantari, the physician of the gods, was bitten by Takshaka, the king of the snakes, and knowing that death approached he ordered his sons to cook and eat his body after his death, so that they might thereby inherit his skill in medicine. They accordingly cooked his body in a cauldron, and were about to eat it when Takshaka appeared to them in the form of a Brāhman and warned them against this act of cannibalism. So they let the cauldron float down the Ganges, and as it floated down, Lona the Chamārin, who was washing on the bank of the river, took the vessel out in ignorance of its contents, and partook of the ghastly food. She at once obtained power to cure diseases, and especially snake-bite. One day all the women were transplanting rice, and it was found that Lona could do as much work as all her companions put together. So they watched her, and when she thought she was alone she stripped off her clothes (nudity being an

[1] See articles on these castes.

[2] *Monograph on Leather Industries*, p. 3.

[3] *Berār Census Report* (1881), p. 149.

[4] From *māngna*, to beg.

[5] *Tribes and Castes*, art. Chamār.

essential element in magic), muttered some spells, and threw the plants into the air, when they all settled down in their proper places. Finding she was observed, she tried to escape, and as she ran the earth opened, and all the water of the rice-fields followed her and thus was formed the channel of the Loni River in the Unao District." This Lona or Nona has obtained the position of a nursery bogey, and throughout Hindustān, Sir H. Risley states, parents frighten naughty children by telling them that Nona Chamārin will carry them off. The Chamārs say that she was the mother or grandmother of the prophet Ravi Dās, or Rai Dās already referred to.

4. Exogamous divisions.

The caste is also divided into a large number of exogamous groups or sections, whose names, as might be expected, present a great diversity of character. Some are borrowed from Rājpūt clans, as Sūrajvansi, Gaharwār and Rāthor; while others, as Marai, are taken from the Gonds. Instances of sections named after other castes are Banjar (Banjāra), Jogi, Chhipia (Chhipi, a tailor) and Khairwār (a forest tribe). The Chhipia section preserve the memory of their comparatively illustrious descent by refusing to eat pork. Instances of sections called after a title or nickname of the reputed founder are Mālādhāri, one who wears a garland; Māchhi-Mundia or fly-headed, perhaps the equivalent of feather-brained; Hathīla, obstinate; Bāghmār, a tiger-killer; Māngaya, a beggar; Dhuliya, a drummer; Jadkodiha, one who digs for roots, and so on. There are numerous territorial groups named after the town or village where the ancestor of the clan may be supposed to have lived; and many names also are of a totemistic nature, being taken from plants, animals or natural objects. Among these are Khunti, a peg; Chandaniha, sandalwood; Tarwāria, a sword; Borbans, plums; Miri, chillies; Chauria, a whisk; Baraiya, a wasp; Khalaria, a hide or skin; Kosni, *kosa* or tasar silk; and Purain, the lotus plant. Totemistic observances survive only in one or two isolated instances.

5. Marriage.

A man must not take a wife from his own section, nor in some localities from that of his mother or either of his grandmothers. Generally the union of first cousins is prohibited. Adult marriage is the rule, but those who wish to improve

their social position have taken to disposing of their daughters at an early age. Matches are always arranged by the parents, and it is the business of the boy's father to find a bride for his son. A bride-price is paid which may vary from two pice (farthings) to a hundred rupees, but usually averages about twenty rupees. In Chānda the amount is fixed at Rs. 13 and it is known as *hunda*, but if the bride's grandmother is alive it is increased to Rs. 15-8, and the extra money is given to her. The marriage ceremony follows the standard type prevalent in the locality. On his journey to the girl's house the boy rides on a bullock and is wrapped up in a blanket. In Bilāspur a kind of sham fight takes place between the parties, which is a reminiscence of the former practice of marriage by capture and is thus described as an eye-witness by the Rev. E. M. Gordon of Mungeli:[1]

"As the bridegroom's party approached the home of the bride the boy's friends lifted him up on their shoulders, and, surrounding him on every side, they made their way to the bride's house, swinging round their sticks in a threatening manner. On coming near the house they crossed sticks with the bride's friends, who gradually fell back and allowed the bridegroom's friends to advance in their direction. The women of the house gathered with baskets and fans and some threw about rice in pretence of self-defence. When the sticks of the bridegroom's party struck the roof of the bride's house or of the marriage-shed her friends considered themselves defeated and the sham fight was at an end." Among the Marātha Chamārs of Betūl two earthen pots full of water are half buried in the ground and worship is paid to them. The bride and bridegroom then stand together and their relatives take out water from the pots and pour it on to their heads from above. The idea is that the pouring of the sacred water on to them will make them grow, and if the bride is much smaller than the bridegroom more water is poured on to her in order that she may grow faster. The practice may symbolise the fertilising influence of rain. Among the Dohar Chamārs of Narsinghpur the bride and bridegroom are seated on a plough-yoke while the marriage

[1] *Indian Folk-Tales.*

ceremony is performed. Before the wedding the bride's party take a goat's leg in a basket with other articles to the *janwāsa* or bridegroom's lodging and present it to his father. The bride and bridegroom take the goat's leg and beat each other with it alternately. Another ceremony, known as Pendpūja, consists in placing pieces of stick with cotton stuck to the ends in an oven and burning them in the name of the deceased ancestors; but the significance, if there be any, of this rite is obscure. Some time after the wedding the bride is taken to her husband's house to live with him, and on this occasion a simple ceremony known as Chauk or Pathoni is performed.

6. Widow-marriage and divorce.

Widows commonly remarry, and may take for their second husband anybody they please, except their own relatives and their late husband's elder brother and ascendant relations. In Chhattīsgarh widows are known either as *barandi* or *randi*, the *randi* being a widow in the ordinary sense of the term and the *barandi* a girl who has been married but has not lived with her husband. Such a girl is not required to break her bangles on her husband's death, and, being more in demand as a second wife, her father naturally obtains a good price for her. To marry a woman whose husband is alive is known as *chhandwe banāna*, the term *chhandwe* implying that the woman has discarded, or has been discarded by, her husband. The second husband must in this case repay to the first husband the expenses incurred by him on his wedding. The marriage ceremony for a widow is of the simplest character, and consists generally of the presentation to her by her new husband of those articles which a married woman may use, but which should be forsworn by a widow, as representing the useless vanities of the world. Thus in Saugor the bridegroom presents his bride with new clothes, vermilion for the parting of her hair, a spangle for her forehead, lac dye for her feet, antimony for the eyes, a comb, glass bangles and betel-leaves. In Mandla and Seoni the bridegroom gives a ring, according to the English custom, instead of bangles. When a widow marries a second time her first husband's property remains with his family and also the children, unless they are very young, when the mother may keep them for a few years and subsequently send them

back to their father's relatives. Divorce is permitted for a variety of causes, and is usually effected in the presence of the caste *panchāyat* or committee by the husband and wife breaking a straw as a symbol of the rupture of the union. In Chānda an image of the divorced wife is made of grass and burnt to indicate that to her husband she is as good as dead; if she has children their heads and faces are shaved in token of mourning, and in the absence of children the husband's younger brother has this rite performed; while the husband gives a funeral feast known as *Marti Jīti kā Bhāt*, or 'The feast of the living dead woman.' In Chhattīsgarh marriage ties are of the loosest description, and adultery is scarcely recognised as an offence. A woman may go and live openly with other men and her husband will take her back afterwards. Sometimes, when two men are in the relation of Mahāprasād or nearest friend to each other, that is, when they have vowed friendship on rice from the temple of Jagannāth, they will each place his wife at the other's disposal. The Chamārs justify this carelessness of the fidelity of their wives by the saying, 'If my cow wanders and comes home again, shall I not let her into her stall?' In Seoni, if a Chamār woman is detected in a misdemeanour with a man of the caste, both parties are taken to the bank of a tank or river, where their heads are shaved in the presence of the caste *panchāyat* or committee. They are then made to bathe, and the shoes of all the assembled Chamārs made up into two bundles and placed on their heads, while they are required to promise that they will not repeat the offence.

7. Funeral customs.

The caste usually bury the dead with the feet to the north, like the Gonds and other aboriginal tribes. They say that heaven is situated towards the north, and the dead man should be placed in a position to start for that direction. Another explanation is that the head of the earth lies towards the north, and yet another that in the Satyug or beginning of time the sun rose in the north; and in each succeeding Yug or era it has veered round the compass until now in the Kali Yug or Iron Age it rises in the east. In Chhattīsgarh, before burying a corpse, they often make a mark on the body with butter, oil or soot; and when a child is

subsequently born into the same family they look for any kind of mark on the corresponding place on its body. If any such be found they consider the child as a reincarnation of the deceased person. Still-born children, and those who die before the Chathi or sixth-day ceremony of purification, are not taken to the burial-ground, but their bodies are placed in an earthen pot and interred below the doorway or in the courtyard of the house. In such cases no funeral feast is demanded from the family, and some people believe that the custom tends in favour of the mother bearing another child ; others say, however, that its object is to prevent the *tonhi* or witch from getting hold of the body of the child and rousing its spirit to life to do her bidding as Matia Deo.[1] In Seoni a curious rule obtains to the effect that the bodies of those who eat carrion or the flesh of animals dying a natural death should be cremated. In the northern Districts a bier painted white is used for a man and a red one for a woman.

8. Childbirth.

Among the better-class Chamārs it is customary to place a newborn child in a winnowing-fan on a bed of rice. The nurse receives the rice and she also goes round to the houses of the headman of the village and the relatives of the family and makes a mark with cowdung on their doors as an announcement of the birth, for which she receives a small present. In Chhattīsgarh a woman is given nothing to eat or drink on the day that a child is born and for two days afterwards. On the fourth day she receives a liquid decoction of ginger, the roots of the *orai* or *khaskhas* grass, areca-nut, coriander and turmeric and other hot substances, and in some places a cake of linseed or sesamum. She sometimes goes on drinking this mixture for as long as a month, and usually receives solid food for the first time on the sixth day after the birth, when she bathes and her impurity is removed. The child is not permitted to suckle its mother until the third day after it is born, but before this it receives a small quantity of a mixture made by boiling the urine of a calf with some medicinal root. In Chhattīsgarh it is a common practice to brand a child on the stomach on the name-day or sixth day after its birth ; twenty or more small burns may be made with the point of a *hansia* or sickle on the

[1] *Indian Folk-Tales*, pp. 49, 50.

stomach, and it is supposed that this operation will prevent it from catching cold. Another preventive for convulsions and diseases of the lungs is the rubbing of the limbs and body with castor-oil; the nurse wets her hands with the oil and then warms them before a fire and rubs the child. It is also held in the smoke of burning *ajwāin* plants (*Carum copticum*). Infants are named on the Chathi or sixth day, or sometimes on the twelfth day after birth. The child's head is shaved, and the hair, known as Jhālar, thrown away, the mother and child are washed and the males of the family are shaved. The mother is given her first regular meal of grain and pulse cooked with pumpkins. A pregnant woman who is afraid that her child will die will sometimes sell it to a neighbour before its birth for five or six cowries.[1] The baby will then be named Pachkouri or Chhekouri, and it is thought that the gods, who are jealous of the lives of children, will overlook one whose name shows it to be valueless. Children are often nicknamed after some peculiarity as Kānwa (one-eyed), Behra (deaf), Konda (dumb), Khurwa (lame), Kāri (black), Bhūri (fair). It does not follow that a child called Konda is actually dumb, but it may simply have been late in learning to speak. Parents are jealous of exposing their children to the gaze of strangers and especially of a crowd, in which there will almost certainly be some malignant person to cast the evil eye upon them. Young children are therefore not infrequently secluded in the house and deprived of light and air to an extent which is highly injurious to them.

9. Religion.

The caste worship the ordinary Hindu and village deities of the localities in which they reside, and observe the principal festivals. In Saugor the Chamārs have a family god, known as Marri, who is represented by a lump of clay kept in the cooking-room of the house. He is supposed to represent the ancestors of the family. The Seoni Chamārs especially worship the castor-oil plant. Generally the caste revere the *rāmpi* or skinning-knife with offerings of flour-cakes and cocoanuts on festival days. In Chhattīsgarh more than half the Chamārs belong to the reformed Satnāmi sect, by which the worship of images is at least nominally abolished. This

[1] Shells which were formerly used as money.

is separately treated. Mr. Gordon states[1] that it is impossible to form a clear conception of the beliefs of the village Chamārs as to the hereafter: "That they have the idea of hell as a place of punishment may be gathered from the belief that if salt is spilt the one who does this will in Patāl—or the infernal region—have to gather up each grain of salt with his eyelids. Salt is for this reason handed round with great care, and it is considered unlucky to receive it in the palm of the hand; it is therefore invariably taken in a cloth or in a vessel. There is a belief that the spirit of the deceased hovers round familiar scenes and places, and on this account, whenever it is possible, it is customary to destroy or desert the house in which any one has died. If a house is deserted the custom is to sweep and plaster the place, and then, after lighting a lamp, to leave it in the house and withdraw altogether. After the spirit of the dead has wandered around restlessly for a certain time it is said that it will again become incarnate and take the form of man or of one of the lower animals."

10. Occupation.

The curing and tanning of hides is the primary occupation of the Chamār, but in 1911 only 80,000 persons, or about a seventh of the actual workers of the caste, were engaged in it, and by Satnāmis the trade has been entirely eschewed. The majority of the Chhattīsgarhi Chamārs are cultivators with tenant right, and a number of them have obtained villages. In the northern Districts, however, the caste are as a rule miserably poor, and none of them own villages. A very few are tenants, and the vast majority despised and bullied helots. The condition of the leather-working Chamārs is described by Mr. Trench as lamentable.[2] Chief among the causes of their ruin has been the recently established trade in raw hides. Formerly the bodies of all cattle dying within the precincts of the village necessarily became the property of the Chamārs, as the Hindu owners could not touch them without loss of caste. But since the rise of the cattle-slaughtering industry the cultivator has put his religious scruples in his pocket, and sells his old and worn-out animals to the butchers for a respectable sum. "For a mere walking skeleton of a cow or bullock from

[1] *Indian Folk-Tales*, pp. 49, 50.

[2] *Monograph*, p. 3.

two to four rupees may be had for the asking, and so long as he does not actually see or stipulate for the slaughter of the sacred animal, the cultivator's scruples remain dormant. No one laments this lapse from orthodoxy more sincerely than the outcaste Chamār. His situation may be compared with that of the Cornish pilchard-fishers, for whom the growing laxity on the part of continental Roman Catholic countries in the observance of Lent is already more than an omen of coming disaster."[1]

11. The tanning process.

When a hide is to be cured the inside is first cleaned with the *rāmpi*, a chisel-like implement with a short blade four inches broad and a thick short handle. It is then soaked in a mixture of water and lime for ten or twelve days, and at intervals scraped clean of flesh and hair with the *rāmpi*. "The skill of a good tanner appears in the absence of superfluous inner skin, fat or flesh, remaining to be removed after the hide is finally taken out of the lime-pit. Next the hard berries of the *ghont*[2] tree are poured into a large earthen vessel sunk in the ground, and water added till the mixture is so thick as to become barely liquid. In this the folded hide is dipped three or four times a day, undergoing meanwhile a vigorous rubbing and kneading. The average duration of this process is eight days, and it is followed by what is according to European ideas the real tanning. Using as thread the roots of the ubiquitous *palās*[3] tree, the Chamār sews the hide up into a mussack-shaped bag open at the neck. The sewing is admirably executed, and when drawn tight the seams are nearly, but purposely not quite, water-tight. The hide is then hung on low stout scaffolding over a pit and filled with a decoction of the dried and semi-powdered leaves of the *dhaura*[4] tree mixed with water. As the decoction trickles slowly through the seams below, more is poured on from above, and from time to time the position of the hide is reversed in such a way that the tanning permeates each part in turn. Sometimes only one reversal of the hide takes place half-way through the process, which occupies as a rule some

[1] *Monograph on Leather Industries*, p. 5.

[2] *Zizyphus xylopera.* [3] *Butea frondosa.* [4] *Anogeissus latifolia.*

*Bemrose, Collo., Derby.*

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eight days. But energetic Chamārs continually turn and refill the skin until satisfied that it is thoroughly saturated with the tanning. After a washing in clean water the hide is now considered to be tanned."[1]

12. Shoes. In return for receiving the hides of the village cattle the Chamār had to supply the village proprietor and his family with a pair of shoes each free of payment once a year, and sometimes also the village accountant and watchman; but the cultivators had usually to pay for them, though nowadays they also often insist on shoes in exchange for their hides. Shoes are usually worn in the wheat and cotton growing areas, but are less common in the rice country, where they would continually stick in the mud of the fields. The Saugor or Bundelkhandi shoe is a striking specimen of footgear. The sole is formed of as many as three layers of stout hide, and may be nearly an inch thick. The uppers in a typical shoe are of black soft leather, inlaid with a simple pattern in silver thread. These are covered by flaps of stamped yellow goat-skin cut in triangular and half-moon patterns, the interstices between the flaps being filled with red cloth. The heel-piece is continued more than half-way up the calf behind. The toe is pointed, curled tightly over backwards and surmounted by a brass knob. The high frontal shield protects the instep from mud and spear-grass, and the heel-piece ensures the retention of the shoe in the deepest quagmire. Such shoes cost one or two rupees a pair.[2] In the rice Districts sandals are often worn on the road, and laid aside when the cultivator enters his fields. Women go bare-footed as a rule, but sometimes have sandals. Up till recently only prostitutes wore shoes in public, and no respectable woman would dare to do so. In towns boots and shoes made in the English fashion at Cawnpore and other centres have now been generally adopted, and with these socks are worn. The Mochis and Jīngars, who are offshoots from the Chamār caste, have adopted the distinctive occupations of making shoes and horse furniture with prepared leather, and no longer cure hides. They have

[1] The above is an abridgment of the description in Mr. Trench's *Monograph*, to which reference may be made for further details.

[2] *Monograph on the Leather Industries*, pp. 10, 11.

thus developed into a separate caste, and consider themselves greatly superior to the Chamārs.

13. Other articles made of leather.

Other articles made of leather are the thongs and nose-strings for bullocks, the buckets for irrigation wells, rude country saddlery, and *mussacks* and *pakhāls* for carrying water. These last are simply hides sewn into a bag and provided with an orifice. To make a pair of bellows a goat-skin is taken with all four legs attached, and wetted and filled with sand. It is then dried in the sun, the sand shaken out, the sticks fitted at the hind-quarters for blowing, and the pair of bellows is complete.

14. Customs connected with shoes.

The shoe, as everybody in India knows, is a symbol of the greatest degradation and impurity. This is partly on account of its manufacture from the impure leather or hide, and also perhaps because it is worn and trodden under foot. All the hides of tame animals are polluted and impure, but those of certain wild animals, such as the deer and tiger, are not so, being on the contrary to some extent sacred. This last feeling may be due to the fact that the old anchorites of the forests were accustomed to cover themselves with the skins of wild animals, and to use them for sitting and kneeling to pray. A Bairāgi or Vaishnava religious mendicant much likes to carry a tiger-skin on his body if he can afford one; and a Brāhman will have the skin of a black-buck spread in the room where he performs his devotions. Possibly the sin involved in killing tame animals has been partly responsible for the impurity attaching to their hides, to the obtaining of which the death of the animal must be a preliminary. Every Hindu removes his shoes before entering a house, though with the adoption of English boots a breach is being made in this custom. So far as the houses of Europeans are concerned, the retention of shoes is not, as might be imagined, of recent origin, but was noticed by Buchanan a hundred years ago: "Men of rank and their attendants continue to wear their shoes loose for the purpose of throwing them off whenever they enter a room, which they still continue to do everywhere except in the houses of Europeans, in which all natives of rank now imitate our example." In this connection it must be remembered that a Hindu house is always sacred as the shrine of the

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household god, and shoes are removed before stepping across the threshold on to the hallowed ground. This consideration does not apply to European houses, and affords ground for dispensing with the removal of laced shoes and boots.

To be beaten or sometimes even touched with a shoe by a man of low caste entails temporary social excommunication to most Hindus, and must be expiated by a formal purification and caste feast. The outcaste Mahārs punish a member of their community in the same manner even if somebody should throw a shoe on to the roof of his house, and the Pharasaical absurdities of the caste system surely find their culminating point in this rule. Similarly if a man touches his shoe with his hand and says 'I have beaten you,' to a member of any of the lower castes in Seoni, the person so addressed is considered as temporarily out of caste. If he then immediately goes and informs his caste-fellows he is reinstated with a nominal fine of grain worth one or two pice. But if he goes back to his house and takes food, and the incident is subsequently discovered, a penalty of a goat is levied. A curious exception recognised is that of the *Sirkāri jūta*, or shoe belonging to a Government servant, and to be beaten with this shoe does not entail social punishment.

15. The Chamār as general village drudge.

In return for his perquisite of the hides of cattle the Chamār has to act as the general village drudge in the northern Districts and is always selected for the performance of *bigār* or forced labour. When a Government officer visits the village the Chamār must look after him, fetch what grass or fuel he requires, and accompany him as far as the next village to point out the road. He is also the bearer of official letters and messages sent to the village. The special Chamār on whom these duties are imposed usually receives a plot of land rent-free from the village proprietor. Another of the functions of the Chamār is the castration of the young bullocks, which task the cultivators will not do for themselves. His method is most primitive, the scrotum being held in a cleft bamboo or a pair of iron pincers, while the testicles are bruised and rubbed to pulp with a stone. The animal remains ill for a week or a fortnight and is not

worked for two months, but the operation is rarely or never fatal. In the northern Districts the Chamārs are said to be very strong and to make the best farmservants and coolies for earthwork. It is a proverb that 'The Chamār has half a rib more than other men.' Notwithstanding his strength, however, he is a great coward, this characteristic having probably been acquired through centuries of oppression. Many Chamār women act as midwives. In Raipur the cultivators give her five annas at the birth of a boy and four annas for a girl, while well-to-do people pay a rupee. When the first child of a rich man is born, the midwife, barber and washerman go round to all his friends and relations to announce the event and obtain presents. It is a regular function of the Chamārs to remove the carcases of dead cattle, which they eat without regard to the disease from which the animal may have died. But a Chamār will not touch the corpse of a pony, camel, cat, dog, squirrel or monkey, and to remove the bodies of such animals a Mehtar (sweeper) or a Gond must be requisitioned. In Raipur it is said that the Chamārs will eat only the flesh of four-legged animals, avoiding presumably birds and fish. When acting as a porter the Chamār usually carries a load on his head, whereas the Kahār bears it on his shoulders, and this distinction is proverbial. In Raipur the Chamārs have become retail cattle-dealers and are known as Kochias. They purchase cattle at the large central markets of Baloda and Bamnidih and retail them at the small village bazārs. It is said that this trade could only flourish in Chhattīsgarh, where the cultivators are too lazy to go and buy their cattle for themselves. Many Chamārs have emigrated from Chhattīsgarh to the Assam tea-gardens, and others have gone to Calcutta and to the railway workshops at Kharagpur and Chakardharpur. Many of them work as porters on the railway. It is probable that their taste for emigration is due to the resentment felt at their despised position in Chhattīsgarh.

16. Social status.

The Chamār ranks at the very bottom of the social scale, and contact with his person is considered to be a defilement to high-caste Hindus. He cannot draw water from the common well and usually lives in a hamlet somewhat removed

from the main village. But in several localities the rule is not so strict, and in Saugor a Chamār may go into all parts of the house except the cooking and eating rooms. This is almost necessary when he is so commonly employed as a farm-servant. Here the village barber will shave Chamārs and the washerman will wash their clothes. And the Chamār himself will not touch the corpse of a horse, a dog or any animal whose feet are uncloven; and he will not kill a cow though he eats its flesh. It is stated indeed that a Chamār who once killed a calf accidentally had to go to the Ganges to purify himself. The crime of cattle-poisoning is thus rare in Saugor and the other northern Districts, but in the east of the Provinces it is a common practice of the Chamārs. As is usual with the low castes, many Chamārs are in some repute as Gunias or sorcerers, and in this capacity they are frequently invited to enter the houses of Hindus to heal persons possessed of evil spirits. When children fall ill one of them is called in and he waves a branch of the *nīm*[1] tree over the child and taking ashes in his hand blows them at it; he is also consulted for hysterical women. When a Chamār has had something stolen and wishes to detect the thief, he takes the wooden-handled needle used for stitching leather and sticks the spike into the sole of a shoe. Then two persons standing in the relation of maternal uncle and nephew hold the needle and shoe up by placing their forefingers under the wooden handle. The names of all suspected persons are pronounced, and he at whose name the shoe turns on the needle is taken to be the thief.

The caste do not employ Brāhmans for their ceremonies, but consult them for the selection of auspicious days, as this business can be performed by the Brāhman at home and he need not enter the Chamār's house. But poor and despised as the Chamārs are they have a pride of their own. When the Dohar and Marātha Chamārs sell shoes to a Mahār they will only allow him to try on one of them and not both, and this, too, he must do in a sitting posture, as an indication of humility. The Harale or Marātha Chamārs of Berār[2] do not eat beef nor work with untanned leather, and they will not work for the lowest castes, as Mahārs, Māngs, Basors and

[1] *Melia indica.* [2] *Berār Census Report* (1881), p. 149.

Kolis. If one of these buys a pair of shoes from the Chamār the seller asks no indiscreet questions; but he will not mend the pair as he would for a man of higher caste. The Satnāmis of Chhattīsgarh have openly revolted against the degraded position to which they are relegated by Hinduism and are at permanent feud with the Hindus; some of them have even adopted the sacred thread. But this interesting movement is separately discussed in the article on Satnāmi.

17. Character.

In Chhattīsgarh the Chamārs are the most criminal class of the population, and have made a regular practice of poisoning cattle with arsenic in order to obtain the hides and flesh. They either mix the poison with mahua flowers strewn on the grazing-ground, or make it into a ball with butter and insert it into the anus of the animal when the herdsman is absent. They also commit cattle-theft and frequently appear at the whipping-post before the court-house. The estimation in which they are held by their neighbours is reflected in the proverb, 'Hemp, rice and a Chamār; the more they are pounded the better they are.' "The caste," Mr. Trench writes, "are illiterate to a man, and their intellectual development is reflected in their style of living. A visit to a hamlet of tanning Chamārs induces doubt as to whence the appalling smells of the place proceed—from the hides or from the tanners. Were this squalor invariably, as it is occasionally, accompanied by a sufficiency of the necessaries of life, victuals and clothing, the Chamār would not be badly off, but the truth is that in the northern Districts at all events the Chamār, except in years of good harvest, does not get enough to eat. This fact is sufficiently indicated by a glance at the perquisites of the village Chamār, who is almost invariably the shoemaker and leather-worker for his little community. In one District the undigested grain left by the gorged bullocks on the threshing-floor is his portion, and a portion for which he will sometimes fight. Everywhere he is a carrion-eater, paying little or no regard to the disease from which the animal may have died." The custom above mentioned of washing grain from the dung of cattle is not so repugnant to the Hindus, owing to the sacred character of the cow, as it is to us. It is even sometimes

considered holy food :—"The zamīndār of Idar, who is named Naron Dās, lives with such austerity that his only food is grain which has passed through oxen and has been separated from their dung; and this kind of aliment the Brāhmans consider pure in the highest degree."[1] Old-fashioned cultivators do not muzzle the bullocks treading out the corn, and the animals eat it the whole time, so that much passes through their bodies undigested. The Chamār will make several maunds (80 lbs.) of grain in this way, and to a cultivator who does not muzzle his bullocks he will give a pair of shoes and a plough-rein and yoke-string. Another duty of the Chamār is to look after the *banda* or large underground masonry chamber in which grain is kept. After the grain has been stored, a conical roof is built and plastered over with mud to keep out water. The Chamār looks after the repairs of the mud plaster and in return receives a small quantity of grain, which usually goes bad on the floor of the store-chamber. They prepare the threshing-floors for the cultivators, making the surface of the soil level and beating it down to a smooth and hard surface. In return for this they receive the grain mixed with earth which remains on the threshing-floor after the crop is removed.

Like all other village artisans the Chamār is considered by the cultivators to be faithless and dilatory in his dealings with them; and they vent their spleen in sayings such as the following :—"The Kori, the Chamār and the Ahīr, these are the three biggest liars that ever were known. For if you ask the Chamār whether he has mended your shoes he says, 'I am at the last stitch,' when he has not begun them; if you ask the Ahīr whether he has brought back your cow from the jungle he says, 'It has come, it has come,' without knowing or caring whether it has come or not; and if you ask the Kori whether he has made your cloth he says, 'It is on the loom,' when he has not so much as bought the thread." Another proverb conveying the same sense is, 'The Mochi's to-morrow never comes.' But no doubt the uncertainty and delay in payment account for much of this conduct.

[1] *Rāsmāla*, i. 395, quoting from the *Ain-i-Akbarī*.

1. Origin and traditions.

**Chasa,**[1] **Tasa** (also called **Alia** in the Sonpur and Patna States).—The chief cultivating caste of Orissa. In 1901 more than 21,000 Chasas were enumerated in Sambalpur and the adjoining Feudatory States, but nearly all these passed in 1905 to Bengal. The Chasas are said[2] by Sir H. Risley to be for the most part of non-Aryan descent, the loose organisation of the caste system among the Uriyas making it possible on the one hand for outsiders to be admitted into the caste, and on the other for wealthy Chasas who gave up ploughing with their own hands and assumed the respectable title of Mahanti to raise themselves to membership among the lower classes of Kāyasths. This passage indicates that the term Mahanti is or was a broader one than Karan or Uriya Kāyasth, and was applied to educated persons of other castes who apparently aspired to admission among the Karans, in the same manner as leading members of the warlike and landholding castes lay claim to rank as Rājpūts. For this reason probably the Uriya Kāyasths prefer the name of Karan to that of Mahanti, and the Uriya saying, 'He who has no caste is called a Mahanti,' supports this view. The word Chasa has the generic meaning of 'a cultivator,' and the Chasas may in Sambalpur be merely an occupational group recruited from other castes. This theory is supported by the names of their subdivisions, three of which, Kolta, Khandait and Ud or Orh are the names of distinct castes, while the fourth, Benatia, is found as a subdivision of several other castes.

2. Exogamous divisions.

Each family has a *got* or sept and a *varga* or family name. The *vargas* are much more numerous than the *gots*, and marriages are arranged according to them, unions of members of the same *varga* only being forbidden. The sept names are totemistic and the family names territorial or titular. Among the former are *bachhās* (calf), *nāgas* (cobra), *hasti* or *gaj* (elephant), *harin* (deer), *mahumāchhi* (bee), *dīpas* (lamp), and others; while instances of the *varga* names are Pitmundia, Hulbulsingia, Giringia and Dumania,

[1] From papers by Mr. Parmeshwar Misra, Settlement Superintendent, Rairakhol, and Mr. Rasānand, Sireshtedār, Bāmra.

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

all names of villages in Angul State ; and Nāyak (headman), Mahanti (writer), Dehri (worshipper), Behera (cook), Kandra (bamboo-worker), and others. The different *gots* or septs revere their totems by drawing figures of them on their houses, and abstaining from injuring them in any way. If they find the footprints of the animal which they worship, they bow to the marks and obliterate them with the hand, perhaps with the view of affording protection to the totem animal from hunters or of preventing the marks from being trampled on by others. They believe that if they injured the totem animal they would be attacked by leprosy and their line would die out. Members of the *dīpas* sept will not eat if a lamp is put out at night, and will not touch a lamp with unclean hands. Those of the *mahumāchhi* or bee sept will not take honey from a comb or eat it. Those of the *gaj* sept will not join an elephant kheddah. Some of the septs have an Ishta Devata or tutelary Hindu deity to whom worship is paid. Thus the elephant sept worship Ganesh, the elephant-headed god, and also do not kill rats because Ganesh rides on this animal. Similarly the *harin* or deer sept have Pāwan, the god of the wind, as their Ishta Devata, because a deer is considered to be as swift as the wind. It would appear then that the septs, each having its totem, were the original divisions for the restriction of marriage, but as these increased in size they were felt to debar the union of persons who had no real relationship and hence the smaller family groups were substituted for them ; while in the case of the old septs, the substitution of the Hindu god representing the animal worshipped by the sept for the animal itself as the object of veneration is an instance of the process of abandoning totem or animal worship and conforming to Hinduism. In one or two cases the *vargas* themselves have been further subdivided for the purpose of marriage. Thus certain families of the Padhān (leader, chief) *varga* were entrusted with the duty of re-admitting persons temporarily put out of caste to social intercourse, for which they received the remuneration of a rupee and a piece of cloth in each case. These families were called the Parichha or 'Scrutinisers' and have now become a separate *varga*, so that a Parichha Padhān may

marry another Padhān. This is a further instance of the process of subdivision of exogamous groups which must take place as the groups increase in size and numbers, and the original idea of the common ancestry of the group vanishes. Until finally the primitive system of exogamy disappears and is replaced by the modern and convenient method of prohibition of marriage within certain degrees of relationship.

3. Status and customs of the caste.

The Chasas do not marry within the same *varga*, but a man may usually take a wife from his mother's *varga*. A girl must always be wedded before arriving at adolescence, the penalty for breach of this rule being the driving out of the girl to seclusion in the forest for a day and a half, and a feast to the caste-fellows. If no husband is available she may be married to an arrow or a flower, or she goes through the form of marriage with any man in the caste, and when a suitable partner is subsequently found, is united with him by the form of widow-marriage. Widows may marry again and divorce is also allowed. The dead are usually buried if unmarried, and burnt when married. The Chasas worship the Hindu deities and also the village god Grāmsiri, who is represented by a stone outside the village. At festivals they offer animal sacrifices to their agricultural implements, as hoes and hatchets. They employ Brāhmans for religious ceremonies. They have an aversion to objects of a black colour, and will not use black umbrellas or clothes woven with black thread. They do not usually wear shoes or ride horses, even when they can afford these latter. Cultivation is the traditional occupation of the caste, and they are tenants, farmservants and field-labourers. They take food from Rājpūts and Brāhmans, and sometimes from Koltas and Sudhs. They eat flesh and fish, but abjure liquor, beef, pork and fowls. Their social position is a little below that of the good agricultural castes, and they are considered somewhat stupid, as shown by the proverb:

*Chasa, ki jāne pasār katha,*
*Padili bolai dons;*

or 'What does the Chasa know of the dice? At every throw he calls out "twenty."'

**Chauhān.**[1]—A small caste of village watchmen and labourers in the Chhattīsgarh Division. They are also known as Chandel by outsiders. In 1911 the Chauhāns numbered 7000 persons in the Raipur and Bilāspur Districts, and the adjoining Feudatory States. The caste claim themselves to be of Rājpūt origin, and say that their ancestors came from Mainpuri, which is the home of the Chauhān clan of Rājpūts. A few of their section names are taken from those of Rājpūt clans, but the majority are of a totemistic nature, being called after animals and plants, as Nāg the cobra, Neora the mongoose, Kolhia the jackal, Kamal the lotus, Pat silk, Chānwar rice, Khānda a sword, and so on. Members of each sept worship the object after which it is named at the time of marriage, and if the tree or animal itself is not readily available, they make a representation of it in flour and pay their respects to that. Thus members of the Bedna or sugarcane sept make a stick of flour and worship it. They will not kill or eat their sept totem, but in some cases, as in that of the Chānwar or rice sept, this rule is impossible of observance, so the members of this sept content themselves with abstaining from a single variety of rice, the kind called Nāgkesar. Families who belong to septs named after heroic ancestors make an image in flour of the ancestral saint or hero and worship it. The caste employ Brāhmans for their marriage and other ceremonies, and will not take food from any caste except Brāhmans and their Bairāgi *gurus* or spiritual preceptors. But their social position is very low, as none except the most debased castes will take food or water from their hands, and their hereditary calling of village watchman would not be practised by any respectable caste. By outsiders they are considered little, if at all, superior to the Pankas and Gāndas, and the most probable theory of their origin is that they are the descendants of irregular alliances between immigrant Rājpūt adventurers and the women of the country. Their social customs resemble those of other low castes in Chhattīsgarh. Before the bridegroom starts for a wedding, they have a peculiar ceremony known as Naodori. Seven small earthen cups full of water are placed on the boy's head, and

[1] This article is based principally on notes taken by Mr. Hīra Lāl at Bhatgaon.