



were at one time probably slaves and many were recruited to fill up the military ranks—a method of security which had long been prevalent in Asia, the armies of the Parthians having been composed entirely of slaves. A great many Dhānuks, at the time when Buchanan wrote, were still slaves, but some annually procured their liberty by the inability of their masters to maintain them and their unwillingness to sell their fellow-creatures. It may be concluded, therefore, that the Dhānuks were a body of servile soldiery, recruited as was often the case from the subject Dravidian tribes; following the all-powerful tendency of Hindu society they became a caste, and owing to the comparatively respectable nature of their occupation obtained a rise in social position from the outcaste status of the subject Dravidians to the somewhat higher group of castes who were not unclean but from whom a Brāhman would not accept water. They did not advance so far as the Khandāits, another caste formed from military service, who were also, Sir H. Risley shows, originally recruited from a subject tribe, probably because the position of the Dhānuks was always more subordinate and no appreciable number of them came to be officers or leaders. The very debased origin of the caste already mentioned as given in the Padma Purāna may be supposed as in other cases to be an attempt on the part of the priestly chronicler to repress what he considered to be unfounded claims to a rise in rank. But the Dhānuks, not less than the other soldier castes, have advanced a pretension to be Kshatriyas, those of Narsinghpur sometimes calling themselves Dhānkarai Rājapūts, though this claim is of course in their case a pure absurdity. It is not necessary to suppose that the Dhānuks of the Central Provinces are the lineal descendants of the caste whose genealogy is given in the Purānas; they may be a much more recent offshoot from a main caste, formed in a precisely similar manner from military service.¹ Mr. Crooke² surmises that they belonged to the large impure caste of Basors or basket-makers, who took to bow-making and thence to archery; and some connection is traceable between the

¹ Cf. the two perfectly distinct groups of Paiks or foot-soldiers found in Jabulpore and the Uriya country.

² *Tribes and Castes of the N.W.P. and Oudh*, art. Basor.



Dhānuks and Basors in Narsinghpur. Such a separation must probably have occurred in comparatively recent times, inasmuch as some recollection of it still remains. The fact that Lodhis are the only caste besides Brāhmans from whom the Dhānuks of Narsinghpur will take food cooked without water may indicate that they formed the militia of Lodhi chieftains in the Nerbudda valley, a hypothesis which is highly probable on general grounds.

2. Marriage.

In the Central Provinces the Dhānuks have no subcastes.¹ The names of their *gotras* or family groups, though they themselves cannot explain them, are apparently territorial: as Māragaiyān from Māragaon, Benaikawār from Benaika village, Pangarya from Panāgar, Binjharia from Bindhya or Vindhya, Barodhaya from Barodha village, and so on. Marriages within the same *gotra* and between first cousins are prohibited, and child-marriage is usual. The father of the boy always takes the initiative in arranging a match, and if a man wants to find a husband for his daughter he must ask the assistance of his relatives to obtain a proposal, as it would be derogatory to move in the matter himself. The contract for marriages is made at the boy's house and is not inviolable. Before the departure of the bridegroom for the bride's village, he stands at the entrance of the marriage-shed, and his mother comes up and places her breast to his mouth and throws rice balls and ashes over him. The former action signifies the termination of his boyhood, while the latter is meant to protect him on his important journey. The bridegroom in walking away treads on a saucer in which a little rice is placed. Widow-marriage and divorce are permitted.

3. Social rank and customs.

A few members of the caste are tenants and the bulk of them farmservants and field-labourers. They also act as village watchmen. The Dhānuks eat flesh and fish, but not fowls, beef or pork, and they abstain from liquor. They will take food cooked without water from a Brāhman and a Lodhi, but not from a Rājput; but in Nīmār the status of the caste is distinctly lower, and they eat pig's flesh and the leavings of Brāhmans and Rājputs. The mixed nature of

¹ The following particulars are from Gazetteer office belonging to the Educational Department.



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the caste is shown by the fact that they will receive into the community illegitimate children born of a Dhānuk father and a woman of a higher caste such as Lodhi or Kurmi. They rank as already indicated just above the impure castes.



DHANWĀR

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

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r. Origin
and
traditions.

Dhanwār, Dhanuhār.¹—A primitive tribe living in the wild hilly country of the Bilāspur zamindāri estates, adjoining Chota Nāgpur. They numbered only 19,000 persons in 1911. The name Dhanuhār means a bowman, and the bulk of the tribe have until recently been accustomed to obtain their livelihood by hunting with bow and arrows. The name is thus merely a functional term and is analogous to those of Dhāngar, or labourer, and Kisān, or cultivator, which are applied to the Oraons, and perhaps Halba or farmservant, by which another tribe is known. The Dhanwārs are almost certainly not connected with the Dhānuks of northern India, though the names have the same meaning. They are probably an offshoot of either the Gond or the Kawar tribe or a mixture of both. Their own legend of their origin is nearly the same as that of the Gonds, while the bulk of their sept or family names are identical with those of the Kawars. Like the Kawars, the Dhanwārs have no language of their own and speak a corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi Hindi. Mr. Jeorākhan Lāl writes of them:—“The word Dhanuhār is a corrupt form of Dhanusdhār or a holder of a bow. The bow consists of a cleft piece of bamboo

¹ This article is based almost entirely on a monograph by Mr. Jeorākhan Lāl, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Bilāspur.



and the arrow is made of wood of the *dhāman* tree.¹ The pointed end is furnished with a piece or a nail of iron called *phani*, while to the other end are attached feathers of the vulture or peacock with a string of tasar silk. Dhanuhār boys learn the use of the bow at five years of age, and kill birds with it when they are seven or eight years old. At their marriage ceremony the bridegroom carries an arrow with him in place of a dagger as among the Hindus, and each household has a bow which is worshipped at every festival." According to their own legend the ancestors of the Dhanuhārs were two babies whom a tigress unearthed from the ground when scratching a hole in her den, and brought up with her own young. They were named Nāga Lodha and Nāgi Lodhi, *Nāga* meaning naked and *Lodha* being the Chhattisgarhī word for a wild dog. Growing up they lived for some time as brother and sister, until the deity enjoined them to marry. But they had no children until Nāga Lodha, in obedience to the god's instructions, gave his wife the fruit of eleven trees to eat. From these she had eleven sons at a birth, and as she observed a fortnight's impurity for each of them the total period was five and a half months. In memory of this, Dhanuhār women still remain impure for five months after delivery, and do not worship the gods for that period. Afterwards the couple had a twelfth son, who was born with a bow and arrows in his hand, and is now the ancestral hero of the tribe, being named Karankot. One day in the forest when Karankot was not with them, the eleven brothers came upon a wooden palisade, inside which were many deer and antelope tended by twelve Gaoli (herdsmen) brothers with their twelve sisters. The Lodha brothers attacked the place, but were taken prisoners by the Gaolis and forced to remove dung and other refuse from the enclosure. After a time Karankot went in search of his brothers and, coming to the place, defeated the Gaolis and rescued them and carried off the twelve sisters. The twelve brothers subsequently married the twelve Gaoli girls, Karankot himself being wedded to the youngest and most beautiful, whose name was Maswāsi. From each couple is supposed to be descended one of the tribes who live in

¹ *Grewia vestita*.



this country, as the Binjhwār, Bhumia, Korwa, Mājhi, Kol, Kawar and others, the Dhanuhārs themselves being the progeny of Karankot and Maswāsī. The bones of the animals killed by Karankot were thrown into ditches dug round the village and form the pits of *chhui mithi* or white clay now existing in this tract.

2. Exo-
gamous
septs.

The Dhanuhārs, being a small tribe, have no endogamous divisions, but are divided into a number of totemistic exogamous septs. Many of the septs are called after plants or animals, and members of the sept refrain from killing or destroying the animal or plant after which it is named. The names of the septs are generally Chhattīgarhi words, though a few are Gondi. Out of fifty names returned twenty are also found in the Kawar tribe and four among the Gonds. This makes it probable that the Dhanuhārs are mainly an offshoot from the Kawars with an admixture of Gonds and other tribes. A peculiarity worth noticing is that one or two of the septs have been split up into a number of others. The best instance of this is the Sonwāni sept, which is found among several castes and tribes in Chhattīgarh; its name is perhaps derived from *Sona pāni* (Gold water), and its members have the function of readmitting those temporarily expelled from social intercourse by pouring on them a little water into which a piece of gold has been dipped. Among the Dhanuhārs the Sonwāni sept has become divided into the Son-Sonwāni, who pour the gold water over the penitent; the Rakat Sonwāni, who give him to drink a little of the blood of the sacrificial fowl; the Hardi Sonwāni, who give turmeric water to the mourners when they come back from a funeral; the Kāri Sonwāni, who assist at this ceremony; and one or two others. The totem of the Kāri Sonwāni sept is a black cow, and when such an animal dies in the village members of the sept throw away their earthen pots. All these are now separate exogamous septs. The Deswārs are another sept which has been divided in the same manner. They are, perhaps, a more recent accession to the tribe, and are looked down on by the others because they will eat the flesh of bison. The other Dhanwārs refuse to do this because they say that when Sita, Rāma's wife, was exiled in the jungles, she could not find a cow to worship and so revered a bison



in its stead. And they say that the animal's feet are grey because of the turmeric water which Sīta poured on them, and that the depression on its forehead is the mark of her hand when she placed a *tīka* or sign there with coloured rice. The Deswārs are also called Dui Duāria or 'Those having two doors,' because they have a back door to their huts which is used only by women during their monthly period of impurity and kept shut at all other times. One of the septs is named Manakhia, which means 'man-eater,' and it is possible that its members formerly offered human sacrifices. Similarly, the Rakat-bund or 'Drop of blood Deswārs' may be so called because they shed human blood. A member of the Telāsi or 'Oil' sept, when he has killed a deer, will cut off the head and bring it home; placing it in his courtyard, he suspends a burning lamp over the head and places grains of rice on the forehead of the deer; and he then considers that he is revering the oil in the lamp. Members of the Sūraj-goti or sun sept are said to have stood as representatives of the sun in the rite of the purification of an offender.

Marriage within the sept is prohibited, and usually also between first cousins. Girls are commonly married a year or two after they arrive at maturity. The father of the boy looks out for a suitable girl for his son and sends a friend to make the proposal. If this is accepted a feast is given, and is known as Phūl Phulwāri or 'The bursting of the flower.' The betrothal itself is called Phaldān or 'The gift of the fruit'; on this occasion the contract is ratified and the usual presents are exchanged. Yet a third ceremony, prior to the marriage, is that of the Barokhi or inspection, when the bride and bridegroom are taken to see each other. On this occasion they exchange copper rings, placing them on each other's finger, and the boy offers vermilion to the earth, and then rubs it on the bride's forehead. When the girl is mature the date of the wedding is fixed, a small bride-price of six rupees and a piece of cloth being usually paid. If the first signs of puberty appear in the girl during the bright fortnight of the month, the marriage is held during the dark fortnight and vice versa. The marriage-shed is built in the form of a rectangle and must consist of either seven or nine posts in three lines. The bridegroom's party

3. Marriage.



comprises from twenty to forty persons of both sexes. When they arrive at the bride's village her father comes out to meet them and gives them leaf-pipes to smoke. He escorts them inside the village where a lodging has been prepared for them. The ceremony is based on that of the local Hindus with numerous petty variations in points of detail. In the actual ceremony the bride and bridegroom are first supported on the knees of two relatives. A sheet is held between them and each throws seven handfuls of parched rice over the other. They are then made to stand side by side; a knot is made of their cloths containing a piece of turmeric, and the bride's left hand is laid over the bridegroom's right one, and on it a *sendhaura* or wooden box for vermilion is placed. The bride's mother moves seven times round the pair holding a lighted lamp, at which she warms her hand and then touches the marriage-crowns of the bride and bridegroom seven times in succession. And finally the couple walk seven times round the marriage-post, the bridegroom following the bride. The marriage is held during the day, and not, as is usual, at night or in the early morning. Afterwards, the pair are seated in the marriage-shed, the bridegroom's leg being placed over that of the bride, with their feet in a brass dish. The bride's mother then washes their great toes with milk and the rest of their feet with water. The bridegroom applies vermilion seven times to the marriage-post and to his wife's forehead at the parting of her hair. The couple are fed with rice and pulses one after the other out of the same leaf-plates, and the parties have a feast. Next morning, before their departure, the father of the bride asks the bridegroom to do his best to put up with his daughter, who is thievish, gluttonous and so slovenly that she lets her food drop on to the floor; but if he finds he cannot endure her, to send her home. In the same manner the father of the boy apologises for his son, saying that he cares only for mischief and pleasure. The party then returns to the bridegroom's house.

During the absence of the wedding party the women of the bridegroom's house with others in the village sing songs at night in the marriage-shed constructed at his house. These are known as Dindwa, a term applied to a



man who has no wife, whether widower or bachelor. As they sing, the women dance in two lines with their arms interlaced, clapping their hands as they move backwards and forwards. The songs are of a lewd character, treating of intrigues in love mingled with abuse of their relatives and of other men who may be watching the proceedings by stealth. No offence is taken on such occasions, whatever may be said. In Upper India, Mr. Jeorākhān Lāl states such songs are sung at the time of the marriage and are called *Naktoureki louk* or the ceremony of the useless or shameless ones, because women, however shy and modest, become at this time as bold and shameless as men are at the Holi festival. The following are a few lines from one of these songs :

The wheat-cake is below and the urad-cake is above. Do you see my brother's brother-in-law watching the dance in the narrow lane.¹

A sweetmeat is placed on the wheat-cake ; a handsome young black-guard has climbed on to the top of the wall to see the dance.

When a woman sees a man from afar he looks beautiful and attractive : but when he comes near she sees that he is not worth the trouble. I went to the market and came back with my salt. Oh, I looked more at you than at my husband who is wedded to me.

Several of the ceremonies are repeated at the bridegroom's house after the return of the wedding party. On the day following them the couple are taken to a tank walking under a canopy held up by their friends. Here they throw away their marriage-crowns, and play at hiding a vessel under the water. When they return to the house a goat is sacrificed to Dulha Deo and the bride cooks food in her new house for the first time, her husband helping her, and their relatives and friends in the village are invited to partake of it. After this the conjugal chamber is prepared by the women of the household, and the bride is taken to it and told to consider her husband's house as her own. The couple are then left together and the marriage is consummated.

The remarriage of widows is permitted but it is not considered as a real marriage, according to the

¹ The term brother's brother-in-law is abusive in the same sense as brother-in-law (*sāla*) said by a man.

5. Conclusion of the marriage.

6. Widow-marriage and divorce.



saying: "A woman cannot be anointed twice with the marriage oil, as a wooden cooking-vessel cannot be put twice on the fire." A widow married again is called a *Churiyāhi Dauki* or 'Wife made by bangles,' as the ceremony may be completed by putting bangles on her wrists. When a woman is going to marry again she leaves her late husband's house and goes and lives with her own people or in a house by herself. The second husband makes his proposal to her through some other women. If accepted he comes with a party of his male friends, taking with him a new cloth and some bangles. They are received by the widow's guardian, and they sit in her house smoking and chewing tobacco while some woman friend retires with her and invests her with the new cloth and bangles. She comes out and the new husband and wife bow to all the Dhanwārs, who are subsequently regaled with liquor and goats' flesh, and the marriage is completed. Polygamy is permitted but is not common. A husband may divorce his wife for failing to bear him issue, for being ugly, thievish, shrewish or a witch, or for an intrigue with another man. If a married woman commits adultery with another man of the tribe they are pardoned with the exaction of one feast. If her paramour is a Gond, Rāwat, Binjhār or Kawar, he is allowed to become a Dhanwār and marry her on giving several feasts, the exact number being fixed by the village Baiga or priest in a *panchāyat* or committee. With these exceptions a married woman having an intrigue with a man of another caste is finally expelled. A wife who desires to divorce her husband without his agreement is also turned out of the caste like a common woman.

After the birth of a child the mother receives no food for the first and second, and fourth and fifth days, while on the third she is given only a warm decoction to drink. On the sixth day the men of the house are shaved and their impurity ceases. But the mother cooks no food for two months after bearing a female child and for three months if it is a male. The period has thus been somewhat reduced from the traditional one of five and a half months,¹ but it must still be highly inconvenient. At the expiration of the time of impurity the

¹ See commencement of this article.



earthen pots are changed and the mother prepares a meal for the whole household. During her monthly period of impurity a woman cooks no food for six days. On the seventh day she bathes and cleans her hair with clay, and is then again permitted to touch the drinking water and cook food.

The tribe bury the dead. The corpse is wrapped in an old cloth and carried to the grave on a cot turned upside down. On arrival there it is washed with turmeric and water and wrapped in a new cloth. The bearers carry the corpse seven times round the open grave, saying, 'This is your last marriage,' that is, with the earth. The male relatives and friends fill in the grave with earth, working with their hands only and keep their backs turned to the grave so as to avoid seeing the corpse. It is said that each person should throw only five handfuls. Other people then come up and fill in the grave, trampling down the surface as much as possible. For three days after a death the bereaved family do not cook for themselves but are supplied with food by their friends. These, however, do not give them any salt as it is thought that the craving for salt will divert their minds from dwelling on their loss. The tribe do not perform the *shrāddh* ceremony, but in the month of Kunwār, on the day corresponding to that on which his father died, a man feeds the caste-fellows in memory of him. And at this period he offers libations to his ancestors, pouring a double handful of water on the ground for each one that he can remember and then one for all the others. While doing this he stands facing the east and does not turn to three different directions as the Hindu custom is. The spirit of a man who has been killed by a tiger becomes Baghia Masān or the tiger imp, and that of a woman who dies in childbirth becomes a Churel. Both are very troublesome to the living.

8. Disposal of the dead.

The principal deities of the Dhanwārs are Thākur Deo, the god of agriculture, and Dīlha Deo, the deity of the family and hearth. Twice a year the village Baiga or medicine-man, who is usually a Gond, offers a cocoanut to Thākur Deo. He first consecrates it to the god by placing it in contact with water and the small heap of rice which

9. Religion.

lies in front of his shrine, and then splits it asunder on a stone, saying, 'Jai Thākur Deo,' or 'Victory to Thākur Deo.' When any serious calamity befalls the tribe a goat is offered to the deity. It must also be first consecrated to him by eating his rice; its body is then washed in water and some of the sacred *dūb*¹ grass is placed on it, and the Baiga severs the head from the body with an axe. Dūlha Deo is the god of the family and the marriage-bed, and when a Dhanwār is married or his first son is born, a goat is offered to the deity. Another interesting deity is Maiya Andhiyāri, or the goddess of the dark fortnight of the month. She is worshipped in the house conjointly by husband and wife on any Tuesday in the dark fortnight of Māgh (January-February), all the relatives of the family being invited. On the day of worship the husband and wife observe a fast, and all the water which is required for use in the house during the day and night must be brought into it in the early morning. A circular pit is dug inside the house, about three feet deep and as many wide. A she-goat which has borne no young is sacrificed to the goddess in the house in the same manner as in the sacrifice to Thākur Deo. The goat is skinned and cut up, the skin, bones and other refuse being thrown into the hole. The flesh is cooked and eaten with rice and pulse in the evening, all the family and relatives, men and women, eating together at the same time. After the meal, all the remaining food and the water including that used for cooking, and the new earthen pots used to carry water on that day are thrown into the pit. The mouth of the pit is then covered with wooden boards and plastered over with mud with great care to prevent a child falling into it; as it is held that nothing which has once gone into the pit may be taken out, even if it were a human being. It is said that once in the old days a man who happened to fall into the pit was buried alive, its mouth being covered over with planks of wood; and he was found alive when the pit was reopened next year. This is an instance of the sacrificial meal, common to many primitive peoples, at which the sacred animal was consumed by the worshippers, skin, bones and

¹ *Cynodon dactylon*.



all. But now that such a course has become repugnant to their more civilised digestions, the refuse is considered sacred and disposed of in some such manner as that described. The goddess is also known as Rāt Devi or the goddess of the night; or Rāt Mai, the night mother. The goddess Maswāsi was the mythical ancestress of the Dhanwārs, the wife of Karankot, and also the daughter of Maiya Andhiyāri or Rāt Mai. She too is worshipped every third year in the dark fortnight of the month of Māgh on any Tuesday. Her sacrifice is offered in the morning hours in the forest by men only, and consists also of a black she-goat. A site is chosen under a tree and cleaned with cowdung, the bones of animals being placed upon it in a heap to represent the goddess. The village Baiga kills the goat with an axe and the body is eaten by the worshippers. Maswāsi is invoked by the Dhanwārs before they go hunting, and whenever they kill a wild boar or a deer they offer it to her. She is thus clearly the goddess of hunting. The tribe also worship the spirits of hills and woods and the ghosts of the illustrious dead. The ghosts of dead Baigas or medicine-men are believed to become spirits attending on Thākur Deo, and when he is displeased with the Dhanwārs they intervene to allay his anger. The brothers of Maswāsi, the twelve Gaolis, are believed to be divine hunters and to haunt the forests, where they kill beasts and occasionally men. Six of them take post and the other six drive the beasts or men towards these through the forest, when they are pierced as with an arrow. The victim dies after a few days, but if human he may go to a sorcerer, who can extract the arrow, smaller than a grain of rice, from his body. In the month of Aghan (November), when the grass of the forests is to be cut, the members of the village collectively offer a goat to the grass deity, in order that none of the grass-cutters may be killed by a tiger or bitten by a snake or other wild animal.

The Dhanwārs are fervent believers in all kinds of magic and witchcraft. Magic is practised both by the Baiga, the village priest or medicine-man, who is always a man and who conducts the worship of the deities mentioned above, and by the *tonhi*, the regular witch, who may be a

ro. Magic
and witch-
craft.



man or woman. Little difference appears to exist in the methods of the two classes of magicians, but the Baiga's magic is usually exercised for the good of his fellow-creatures, which indeed might be expected as he gets his livelihood from them, and he is also less powerful than the *tonhi*. The Baiga cures ordinary maladies and the bites of snakes and scorpions by mesmeric passes fortified by the utterance of charms. He raises the dead in much the same manner as a witch does, but employs the spirit of the dead person in casting out other evil spirits by which his clients may be possessed. One of the miracles performed by the Baiga is to make his wet cloth stand in the air stiff and straight, holding only the two lower ends. He can cross a river walking on leaves, and change men into beasts. Witches are not very common among the Dhanwārs. A witch, male or female, may be detected by a sunken and gloomy appearance of the eyes, a passionate temperament, or by being found naked in a graveyard at night, as only a witch would go there to raise a corpse from the dead. The Dhanwārs eat nearly all kinds of food except beef and the leavings of others. They will take cooked food from the hands of Kawars, and the men also from Gonds, but not the women. In some places they will accept food from Brāhmans, but not everywhere. They are not an impure caste, but usually live in a separate hamlet of their own, and are lower than the Gonds and Kawars, who will take water from them but not food. They are a very primitive people, and it is stated that at the census several of them left their huts and fled into the jungle, and were with difficulty induced to return. When an elder man dies his family usually abandon their hut, as it is believed that his spirit haunts it and causes death to any one who lives there.

11. Social
rules.

A Kawar is always permitted to become a Dhanwār, and a woman of the Gond, Binjhwar and Rāwat tribes, if such a one is living with a Dhanwār, may be married to him with the approval of the tribe. She does not enjoy the full status of membership herself, but it is accorded to her children. When an outsider is to be admitted a *panchayat* of five Dhanwārs is assembled, one of whom must be of the Mājhi sept. The members of the *panchayat* hold out their



right hands, palm upwards, one below the other, and beneath them the candidate and his wife place their hands. The Mājhi pours water from a brass vessel on to the topmost hand, and it trickles down from one to the other on to those of the candidate and his wife. The blood of a slaughtered goat is mixed with the water in their palms and they sip it, and after giving a feast to the caste are considered as Dhanwārs. Permanent exclusion from caste is imposed only for living with a man or woman of another caste other than those who may become Dhanwārs, or for taking food from a member of an impure caste, the only ones which are lower than the Dhanwārs. Temporary exclusion for an indefinite period is awarded for an irregular connection between a Dhanwār man and woman, or of a Dhanwār with a Kawar, Binjhwar, Rāwat or Gond ; on a family which harbours any one of its members who has been permanently expelled ; and on a woman who cuts the navel-cord of a newly-born child, whether of her own caste or not. Irregular sexual intimacies are usually kept secret and condoned by marriage whenever possible. A person expelled for any of the above offences cannot claim readmission as a right. He must first please the members of the caste, and to do this he attends every caste feast without being invited, removes their leaf-plates with the leavings of food, and waits on them generally, and continually proffers his prayer for readmission. When the other Dhanwārs are satisfied with his long and faithful service they take him back into the community. Temporary exclusion from caste, with the penalty of one or more feasts for readmission, is imposed for killing a cow or a cat accidentally, or in the course of giving it a beating ; for having a cow or bullock in one's possession whose nostrils or ears get split ; for getting maggots in a wound ; for being beaten except by a Government official ; for taking food from any higher caste other than those from whom food is accepted ; and in the case of a woman for saying her husband's name aloud. This list of offences shows that the Dhanwārs have almost completely adopted the Hindu code in social matters, while retaining their tribal religion. A person guilty of one of the above offences must have his or her head shaved by a barber, and make a pilgrimage to



the shrine of Narsingh Nāth in Bodāsāmar zamindāri; after having accomplished this he is purified by one of the Sonwāni sept, being given water in which gold has been dipped to drink through a bamboo tube, and he provides usually three feasts for the caste-fellows.

12. Dress
and
tattooing.

The tribe dress in the somewhat primitive fashion prevalent in Chhattīsgarh, and there is nothing distinctive about their clothing. Women are tattooed at their parents' house before or just after marriage. It is said that the tattoo marks remain on the soul after death, and that she shows them to God, probably for purposes of identification. There is a saying, 'All other pleasures are transient, but the tattoo marks are my companions through life.' A Dhanwār will not take water from a woman who is not tattooed.

13. Names
of children.

Children are named on the *chathi* or sixth day after birth, and the parents always ascertain from a wise man whether the soul of any dead relative has been born again in the child so that they may name it after him. It is also thought that the sex may change in transmigration, for male children are sometimes named after women relatives and female after men. Mr. Hīra Lāl notes the following instance of the names of four children in a family. The eldest was named after his grandfather; the second was called Bhālu or bear, as his maternal uncle who had been eaten by a bear was reborn in him; the third was called Ghāsi, the name of a low caste of grass-cutters, because the two children born before him had died; and the fourth was called Kausi, because the sorcerer could not identify the spirit of any relative as having been born again in him. The name Kausi is given to any one who cannot remember his sept, as in the saying, '*Bhūle bisāre kausi got,*' or 'A man who has got no *got* belongs to the Kausi *got.*' Kausi is said to mean a stranger. Bad names are commonly given to avert ill-luck or premature death, as Boya, a liar; Labdu, one smeared with ashes; Marha, a corpse; or after some physical defect as Lati, one with clotted hair; Petwa, a stammerer; Lendra, shy; Ghundu, one who cannot walk; Ghunari, stunted; or from the place of birth, as Dongariha or Pahāru, born on a hill; Banjariha, born in brushwood, and so on. A man will not mention the names of his wife, his son's wife or his



sister's son's wife, and a woman will not name her husband or his elder brother or parents. As already stated, a woman saying her husband's name aloud is temporarily put out of caste, the Hindu custom being thus carried to extremes, as is often the case among the lower castes.

The tribe consider hunting to have been their proper calling, but many of them are now cultivators and labourers. They also make bamboo matting and large baskets for storing grain, but they will not make small bamboo baskets or fans, because this is the calling of the Turis, on whom the Dhanwār looks down. The women collect the leaves of *sāl*¹ trees and sell them at the rate of about ten bundles for a pice (farthing) for use as *chongis* or leaf-pipes. As already stated, the tribe have no language of their own, but speak a corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi.

14. Occupation.

¹ *Shorea robusta*.

DHĪMAR¹

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. *General notice.*
2. *Subcastes.*
3. *Exogamous groups.*
4. *Marriage.*
5. *Childbirth.*
6. *Disposal of the dead.*
7. *Religion.*
8. *Occupation: fisherman.*
9. *Water-carrier.*
10. *Palanquin-bearer and personal servant.*
11. *Other occupations.*
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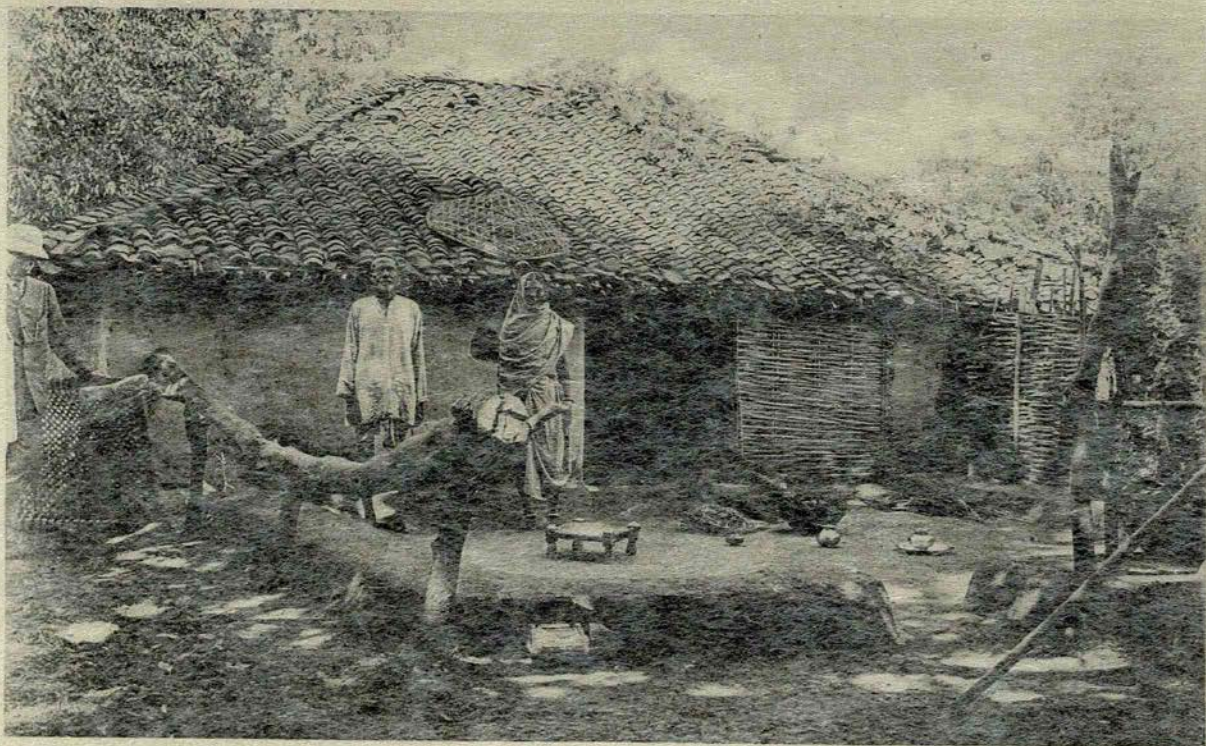
1. General notice.

Dhīmar, Kahār, Bhoi, Pālewār, Baraua, Machhandar.—

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The caste of fishermen and palanquin-bearers. In 1911 the Dhīmars numbered 284,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār, being most numerous in the Marātha Districts. In the north of the Province we find in place of the Dhīmars the Kahārs and Mullāhs, and in the east or Chhattisgarh country the Kewats. But the distinction between these castes is no more than nominal, for in some localities both Kahār and Kewat are returned as subcastes of Dhīmar. In some parts of India the Bhois and Dhīmars are considered as separate castes, but in the Central Provinces they are not to be distinguished, both names being applied indiscriminately to the same persons. The name of Bhoi perhaps belongs more particularly to those who carry litters or palanquins, and that of Dhīmar to the fishermen. The word Dhīmar is a corruption of the Sanskrit Dhīvara, a fisherman. Bhoi is a South Indian word (Telugu and Malayalam *bovi*, Tamil *bovi*), and in the Konkan people of this class are known as Kahār Bhui. Among the Gonds Bhoi is con-

¹ This article is based partly on the interesting information about the occupations of the caste was given to the writer by Bābu Kāli Prasanna Mukerji, Pleader, Saugor. papers by Mr. Govind Moreshwar, Head Clerk, Mandla, and Mr. Pancham Lal, Naib-Tahsildār, Sihora. Much of



DHĪMAR OR FISHERMAN'S HUT.

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sidered as an honorific name or title ; and this indicates that a large number of Gonds have become enrolled in the Dhīmar or Kahār caste, and consider it a rise in status. Pālewār is the name of the Telugu fishermen of Chānda. Māchhandar signifies one who catches fish.

The caste has a large number of subdivisions of a local or occupational nature ; among occupational names may be mentioned the Singaria or those who cultivate the *singāra* nut, the Nadha or those who live on the banks of streams, the Tānkiwālas or sharpeners of grindstones, the Jhīngas or prawn-catchers, the Bansias and Saraias or anglers (from *bansi* or *sarai*, a bamboo fishing-rod), the Bandhaiyas or those who make ropes and sacking of hemp and fibre, and the Dhurias who sell parched rice. These last say that their original ancestors were created by Mahādeo out of a handful of dust (*dhūr*) for carrying the palanquin of Pārvati when she was tired. They are probably the same people as the Dhuris who also parch grain, and in Chhattīsgarh are considered as a separate caste. Similarly the Sonjhara Dhīmars wash for gold, the calling of the separate Sonjhara caste. The Kasdhonia Dhīmars wash the sands of the sacred rivers to find the coins which pious pilgrims frequently drop or throw into the river as an offering when they bathe in it. The Gondia subcaste is clearly an offshoot from the Gond tribe, but a large proportion of the whole caste in the Central Provinces is probably derived from the Gonds or Kols, members of this latter tribe being especially proficient as palanquin-bearers. The Suvarha subcaste is named after the *suar* or pig, because members of this subcaste breed and eat the unclean animal ; they are looked down on by the others. Similarly the Gadhwāle Dhīmars keep donkeys, and are despised by the other subcastes who will not take food from them. They use donkeys for carrying loads of wood, and the bridegroom rides to his wedding on this animal ; and among them a donkey is the only animal the corpse of which can be touched without conveying pollution. The Bhanāre Dhīmars appear to be named after the town of Bhandāra.

A large number of exogamous groups are also returned, either of a titular or totemistic nature : such are Bāghmār, a

2. Sub-castes.

3. Exogamous groups.



tiger-slayer ; Ojhwa, from Ojha, or sorcerer ; Guru pahchān, one who knows his teacher ; Midoia, a guardian of boundaries, from *med*, a boundary or border ; Gidhwe, a vulture ; Kolhe, or jackal ; Gadhekhāya, a donkey-eater ; and Kastūre, musk ; a few names are from towns or villages, as Tumsare from Tumsar, Nāgpurkar from Nāgpur ; and a few from other castes as Mādgi, Bhojar, Pindāria from Pindāri, a freebooter ; Gondia (Gond) and Gondhali ; and Kachhwāha, a sept of Rājput̄s.

4. Marriage.

Marriage is prohibited between members of the same sept and also between first cousins. In many localities families do not intermarry so long as they remember any relationship to have existed between them. In Mandla, Mr. Govind Moreshwar states, the Nadha and Kehera subcastes do not intermarry ; but if a man desires a girl of the other subcaste he can be admitted into it on giving a feast to the caste-fellows according to his means, and thus marry her. Two families may exchange daughters in marriage. A maiden who goes wrong with a man of the caste or of any higher caste may be readmitted to the community under penalty of a feast to the caste and of having a lock of her hair cut off. In the Hindustāni Districts women do not accompany the marriage procession, but in the Marātha Districts they do. Among the Bhanāra Dhīmars of Chānda the wedding may be held either at the bride's or the bridegroom's house. In the former case a bride-price of Rs. 16 is paid, and in the latter one of Rs. 20, because the expenses of the bride's family are increased if the wedding is held at her house. A custom exists among the poorer Dhīmars in Chānda of postponing the marriage ceremony to avoid expense ; a man will thus simply take a girl for his wife, making a payment of Rs. 1-4 or twenty pence to her father and giving a feast to the community. She will then live in his house as his wife, and at some subsequent date, perhaps in old age, the religious ceremony will be held so that the couple may have been properly married before they die. In this fashion the weddings of grandparents, parents and children have all been celebrated simultaneously. The Singaria Dhīmars of Chhindwāra grow *singāra* or water-nut in tanks, and at their weddings a crocodile must be killed



and eaten. The Sonjharas or gold-washers must also have a crocodile, but they keep it alive and worship it, and when the ceremony is concluded let it go back again to the river. It is natural that castes whose avocations are connected with rivers and tanks should in a manner deify the most prominent or most ferocious animal contained in their waters. And the ceremonial eating of a sacred animal has been recorded among divers peoples all over the world. At a Dhimar marriage in Bhandāra a net is given to the bridegroom, and *sidori* or cooked food, tied in a piece of cloth, to the bride, and they walk out together as if going to a river to fish, but the bride's brother comes up and stops them. After a wedding in Mandla they kill a pig and bury it before the door of the bridegroom's house, covering it with earth, and the bride and bridegroom step over its body into the house. Widow-marriage is freely permitted; in Mandla the marriage of a widow may be held on the night of any day except Sunday, Tuesday and Saturday. Divorce is allowed, but is of rare occurrence. Adultery on the part of a wife will be frequently overlooked, and the extreme step of divorcing her is only taken if she creates a public scandal. In such a case the parties appear before a meeting of the caste, and the headman asks them whether they have determined to separate. He then breaks a straw in token of the disruption of the union, and the husband and wife must pronounce each other's names in an audible voice.¹ A fee of Rs. 1-4 is paid to the headman, and the divorce is completed.² In some localities the woman's bangles are also broken. In Jhānsi the fine for keeping a widow is ten rupees and for living with the wife of another man sixty rupees.

Children are named either on the day of birth or the twelfth day afterwards. The women place the child in a cradle, spreading boiled wheat and gram over its body, and after swinging it to and fro the name is given. Sweets or boiled wheat and gram are distributed to those present. In Berār on the third day after a birth cakes of juāri flour and buttermilk are distributed to other children; on the fifth

5. Child-birth.

¹ As a rule a husband and wife never address each other by name.

² Among Hindus it is customary to

give a little more than the proper sum on ceremonial occasions in order to show that there is no stint. Thus Rs. 1-4 is paid instead of a rupee.



day the slab and roller used for grinding the household corn are washed, anointed and worshipped; on the twelfth day the child is named and shortly after this its head is shaved.¹

6. Disposal
of the
dead.

The bodies of the dead are usually buried, cremation being beyond the means of Dhīmars. Children whose ears have not been pierced are mourned only for one day, and others for ten days. When a body has been burnt the ashes are consigned to a tank or river on the third day, or if the third day be a Sunday or a Wednesday, then on the fifth day. In Berār, Mr. Kitts remarks,² the funeral ceremony of the Dhīmars resembles that of the Gonds. After a burial the mourners repair to the deceased's house to drink; and subsequently each fetches his own dinner and dines with the chief mourner. At this time he and his family are impure and the others cannot take food prepared by him; but ten days afterwards when the mourning is over and the chief mourner has bathed and shaved they again dine with him, and on the next day the caste is feasted. During the period of mourning a lighted lamp is daily placed outside the house. When the period of mourning expires all the clothes of the family are washed and their house is newly whitewashed. There is no subsequent annual performance of funeral rites as among the higher Hindus; but at the Akshayatrītiya or commencement of the agricultural year the head of the household throws at each meal a little food into the fire, in honour of his dead ancestors.

7. Reli-
gion.

One of the principal deities of the Dhīmars³ as of other low castes is Dulha Deo, the deified bridegroom. They fashion his image of *kadamb*⁴ wood and besmear it with red lead. In Berār they also pray to Anna Pūrna, the Corn-giving goddess of Madras corresponding to Durga or Devi, whose form with that of her horse is engraved on a brass plate and anointed with yellow and red turmeric. When about to enter a river or tank for fishing or other purposes they pray to the water-god to save them from being drowned or molested by its denizens. They address a river as Ganga Mai or 'Mother Ganges' in order to

¹ *Berār Census Report* (1881), p. 133.

² *Ibidem*, l.c.

³ *Ibidem*, l.c.

⁴ *Anthocephalus kadamba*.



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propitiate it by this flattery. Those who are employed on ferry-boats especially venerate Ghatoia¹ Deo, the god of ferries and river-crossings. His shrine is near the place where the boats are tied up, and ferry contractors keep a live chicken in their boat to be offered to Ghatoia on the first occasion when the river is sufficiently in flood to be crossed by ferry after the breaking of the rains. Other local godlings are the Barē Purakh or Great men, a collective term for their deceased ancestors, of whom they make silver images; Parihār, the soul of the village priest; Baram Deo, the spirit of the banyan tree; and Gosain Deo, a deified ascetic. To the goddess Devi they offer a black she-goat which is eaten ceremonially, and when they have finished, the bones, skin and all the other remains of the animal are placed in a pit inside the house. If anything should fall into this pit it must be buried with the remains of the offering and not taken out. And they relate that on one occasion a child fell into the pit, and the parents, setting obedience to the law of the goddess above the life of their child, buried it alive. But next year when the sacrifice was again made and the pit was opened, the child was found in it alive and playing. So they say that the goddess will save the life of any one who is buried in the pit with her offering. When a widower marries a second time his wife sometimes wears a *tāviz* or amulet in the shape of a silver box containing charms round her neck in order to ward off the evil machinations of her predecessor's spirit.

The occupations of the Dhīmar are many and various. He is primarily a fisherman and boatman, and has various kinds of nets for taking fish. One of these is of triangular shape about 150 feet wide at the base and 80 feet in height to the apex. The meshes vary from an inch wide at the top to three inches at the bottom. The ends of the base are weighted with stones and the net is then sunk into a river so that the base rests on its bed and the top is held by men in boats at the surface. Then other Dhīmars beat the surface of the water for some distance with long bamboos on both sides of the net, driving the fish towards it. They

8. Occupation:
fisherman.

¹ From *ghāt*, a steep hillside or slope; hence a river-crossing because of the banks sloping down to it.

call this a *kheda*, the term used for a beat of the forest for game.

Another method is to stretch a long rope or cord across the river, secured on either bank, with baited hooks attached to it at short intervals. It is left for some hours and then drawn in. When the river is shallow one wide-bottomed boat will be paddled up the stream and a line of men will wade on each side beating the water with bamboos so as to make the small fish jump into the boat. Or they put a little cotton-seed on a stone in shallow water, and when the fish collect to eat the seed a long circular net weighted with pieces of iron is let down over the stone. Then the upper end is drawn tight and the fishermen put their hands inside and seize the little fish. The Dhīmar is also regularly employed as a worker on ferries. His primitive boat made from the hollowed trunk of a tree and sometimes lashed in couples for greater stability may still be seen on all rivers. He makes his own fishing-nets, knitting them on a stick at his leisure while he is walking along or sitting down to smoke and talk. He worships his fishing-nets at the Diwāli festival, and his reverence for the knitted thread is such that he will not touch or wear a shoe made of thread, because he thinks that the sacred article is debased by being sewn into leather. When engaged in road-work the Dhīmars have unsewn sandals secured to the feet with strips of leather. It is a special degradation to a Dhīmar to be struck with a shoe. He has a monopoly of growing *singāra*¹ or water-nuts in tanks. The fruit of this plant has a taste somewhat between a cocoanut and a potato, with a flavour of soap. It can be taken raw and is therefore a favourite comestible for fast days when cooked food is forbidden. It is also sold at railway stations and the fresh fruit is prescribed by village doctors as easy of digestion. The Dhīmar grows melons, cucumbers and other vegetables on the sandy stretches along the banks of streams, but at agriculture proper he does not excel.

9. Water-carrier.

The Dhīmar's connection with water has led to his becoming the water-carrier for Hindus, or that section of the community which can afford to employ one. This is

¹ *Trapa bispinosa*.



more especially the case in the Hindustāni Districts where women are frequently secluded and therefore cannot draw water for the household, while in the Marātha Districts where the women go to the well no water-bearer is required. In this capacity the Dhīmar is usually the personal servant of the village proprietor, but in large villages every house has a *ghinochi*, either an earthen platform or wooden stand just outside the house, on which four or five earthen water-pots are kept. These the Dhīmar fills up morning and evening and receives two or three annas or pence a month for doing so. He also brings water for Government servants when they come to the village, and cleans their cooking-vessels and prepares the hearth with fresh cowdung and water in order to cleanse it.

If he cleans the mālguzār's vessels he gets his food for doing so. When the tenants have marriages he performs the same duties for the whole wedding party and receives a present of one or two rupees and some clothes if the families are well off, and also his food every day while the marriage is in progress. In his capacity of waterman the title Baraua is used to him as an honorific method of address; and to his wife Baroni. In a hot country like India water is revered as the source of relief, comfort and life itself, like fire in cold countries, and the waterman participates in the regard paid to his element.

Another business of the Dhīmar's is to take sweet potatoes and boiled plums to the fields at harvest-time and sell them. He supplies water for drinking to the reapers and receives three sheaves a day in payment. On the fifteenth of Jeshth (May) the Dhīmar goes round to the cultivators, throwing his fishing-net over their heads and receives a small present.

At the period prior to the introduction of wheeled transport when palanquins or litters were largely used for travelling, the carriers belonged to the Kāhār caste in northern India and to the Dhīmars or Bhois in the south. Though litters are now practically not used for travelling except occasionally by high-caste women, a survival of the old custom is retained in the marriage ceremony, the bride and bridegroom being always carried back from the marriage-shed to the temporary lodging of the bridegroom in a *pālki*,

ro. Palanquin-bearer and personal servant.



though for the longer journey to the bridegroom's village some less cumbrous conveyance is utilised. Four Dhīmars carry the *pālki* and receive Rs. 1-4. Well-to-do people will be carried in procession round the town. When employed by the village proprietor the Dhīmar accompanies him on his journey, carrying his cooking-vessels and other necessaries in a *banhgi* or wooden cross-bar slung across the shoulders, from which two baskets are suspended by loops of rope. Water he will always carry in a *banhgi* and never on his head or shoulders. From waterman and litter-carrier the Dhīmar has become a personal servant; it is he to whom the term 'bearer' as designating a body-servant was first applied because he bears or carries his master in a *pālki* and his clothes in a *banhgi*. He is commonly so employed in native houses, but rarely by Europeans, whether because he is too stupid or on account of caste objections of his own. When employed as a cook the Dhīmar or his wife is permitted to knead flour with water and make it into a cake which the Brāhman will then take and put on to the girdle with his own hands. He can also boil water and pour pulse into the cooking-pot from above so long as he does not touch the vessel after the food has been placed in it. He or she will also take any remains of food which is left in the cooking-pot as this is not considered to be polluted, food only becoming polluted when the hand touches it on the dish after having touched the mouth. When this has happened all the food on the dish becomes *jūtha* or leavings of food, and as a general rule no caste except the sweepers will eat the leavings of food of another caste or of another person of their own. Only the wife, whose meal follows her husband's, will eat his leavings. As a servant the Dhīmar is very familiar with his master; he may enter any part of the house, including the cooking-place and the women's rooms, and he addresses his mistress as 'Mother.' In northern India Mr. Crooke states that the Kahārs are sometimes known as Mahra, from the Sanskrit Mahila, a woman, because they have the entry of the female apartments. When he lights his master's pipe he takes the first pull himself to show that it has not been tampered with, and then presents it to him with his left hand placed under his



right elbow in token of respect. Maid-servants also frequently belong to the Dhīmar caste, and it often happens that the master of the household has illicit intercourse with them. Hence there is a proverb, 'The king's son draws water and the water-bearer's son sits on the throne,' similar intrigues on the part of high-born women with their servants being not unknown. The Dhīmar often acts as a pimp, this being an incident of his profession of indoor servant.

Another occupation of the Dhīmar's is to sell parched grain and rice to travellers in markets and railway stations like the Bharbhūnja and Dhuri. This he can do because of his comparative social purity, as all castes will take water and cakes and sweetmeats from his hands. Some Dhīmars and Kewats also weave hemp-matting and gunny-bags, but such members of the caste rank lower than the others and Brāhmans will not take water from them. Another calling by which a few Dhīmars find support is that of breeding pigs. One would think it a difficult matter to make a living out of the village pig, an animal abhorred by both Hindus and Muhammadans as the most unclean of the brute creation, and equally abjured by Europeans as unfit for food. But the pig is in considerable demand by the forest tribes for sacrifice to their deities. The Dhīmar participates in the sacrifice to Nārāyan Deo described in the article on Mahār, when a pig is eaten in concert by several of the lower castes. Lastly, the business of rearing the cocoons of the tasar silk-worm is usually in the hands of Dhīmars and Kewats. While the caterpillars are feeding on leaves and spinning their cocoons these men live in the forests for two months together and watch the *kosa-bāris* or silk-gardens, that is the blocks of trees which are set apart for the purpose of rearing the caterpillars. During this period they eat only once a day, abstain from meat and lentils, do not get shaved and do not visit their wives. When the eggs of the caterpillars are to be placed on the trees they tie a silk thread round the first tree to be used and worship it as Pāt Deo or the god of silk thread. On this subject Mr. Ball writes:¹ "The trees which it is intended to stock are carefully pollarded before the rains, and in early spring the leaves are stocked

II. Other occupations.

¹ *Jungle Life in India*, p. 137.

with young caterpillars which have been hatched in the houses. The men in charge erect wigwams and remain on the spot, isolated from their families, who regard them for the time being as unclean. During the daytime they have full occupation in guarding the large green caterpillars from the attacks of kites and other birds. The cocoons are collected soon after they are spun and boiled in a lye of wood-ash, and the extracted chrysalids must then be eaten by the caretakers, who have to undergo certain ceremonial rites before they are readmitted into the society of their fellows. The effect of the boiling in the lye is the removal of the glutinous matter, which renders it possible to wind off the silk." The eating of the caterpillars is no doubt a ceremonial observance like that of the crocodile at weddings. They are killed by the boiling of the cocoons and on this account members of good castes will not engage in the business of rearing them. The abstention from conjugal intimacy while engaged in some important business is a very common phenomenon.

The social status of the Dhīmar is somewhat peculiar. Owing to his employment as palanquin-bearer, cook and household servant he has been promoted to the group of castes who are ceremonially clean, so that Brāhmins in northern India will take water and food cooked in butter from his hands. But by origin he no doubt belongs to the primitive or non-Aryan tribes, a fact which he shows by his appearance and also by his customs. In diet he is the reverse of fastidious, eating crocodiles, tortoises and crabs, and also pork in the Marātha Districts, though in the north where he is employed by Brāhmins as a personal servant he abstains from this food. With all this, however, the Dhīmars practise in some social matters a pharasaical strictness. In Jubbulpore Mr. Pancham Lāl records that among the four subcastes of Rekwār, Bant, Barmaian and Pabeha a woman of one subcaste will not partake of any food cooked by one of another division. A man will take any kind of food cooked by a man of another subcaste, but from a woman only such as is not mixed with water. A woman will drink the water held in the metal vessel of a woman of another division, but not in an earthen vessel; and in a metal vessel only provided



that it is brought straight from the well and not taken from the *ghinochi* or water-stand of such woman's house. A man will take water to drink from the metal or earthen vessel of any other Dhīmar, male or female. In Berār again Mr. Kitts states¹ that a Bhoi considers it pollution to eat or drink at the house of a Lohār (blacksmith), a Sutār (carpenter), a Bhāt (bard), a washerman or a barber; he will not even carry their palanquins at a marriage.

Once a year at the Muharram festival the Dhīmars will eat at the hands of Muhammadans. They go round and beg for offerings of food and take them to the Fakīr, who places a little before the *tāsia* or tomb of Husain and distributes the remainder to the Dhīmars and other Hindus and Muhammadans who have been begging. Except on this occasion they will eat nothing touched by a Muhammadan. The Dhīmar, the Nai or barber, and the Bāri or indoor servant are the three household menials of the northern Districts, and are known as Pauni Parja. Sometimes the Ahīr or grazier is an indoor servant and takes the place of the Dhīmar or the Bāri. These menials are admitted to the wedding and other family feasts and allowed to eat at them. They sit in a line apart from the members of the caste and one member of the family is deputed to wait on them. Their food is brought to them in separate dishes and no food from these dishes is served to guests of the caste.

Permanent expulsion² from caste is inflicted only for marrying, or eating regularly, with a man or woman of some other low caste; but in the case of unmarried persons the latter offence may also be expiated. Temporary exclusion is imposed for killing a cat, dog or squirrel, getting maggots in a wound, being sentenced to imprisonment³ or committing adultery with a person of any low caste. One who has

¹ *Berār Census Report* (1881), p. 132.

² The following notice of caste offences is from Mr. Govind Moreshwar's paper.

³ Not probably on account of the commission of a crime, but because being sentenced to imprisonment involves the eating of ceremonially impure food. These rules are common to most

Hindu castes, and the Dhīmars are taken only as a typical example. They seem to have little or no connection with ordinary morality. But in Jhānsi Mr. Crooke remarks that a Kahār is put out of caste for theft in his master's house. This again, however, might be considered as an offence against the community, tending to lower their corporate character in their business, and as such deserving of social punishment.



committed any of the above offences must be purified by the Batta of the caste, that is a person who takes the sins of others upon himself. The Batta conducts the culprit to a river and then causes him to bathe, cuts off a lock of his hair, breaks a cocoanut as a sacrifice, and gives him a little cowdung and milk to eat. Then they proceed to eat together; the Batta eats five mouthfuls first and declares that he has taken the sin of the offender on himself; the latter gives the Batta Rs. 1-4 as his fee, and is once more a proper member of the community. In Berār a Bhoi who has been put out of caste is received back by his fellows when he has drunk the water touched by a Brāhman's toe, and has feasted them with a bout of liquor. In towns the caste are generally addicted to drink, and no marriage or other social function is held without a sufficient supply of liquor. They also smoke *gānja* (Indian hemp).

13. Legend
of the
caste.

The Dhīmars are proverbially of a cheerful disposition, though simple and easily cheated. When carrying *pālkis* or litters at night they talk continually or sing monotonous songs to lighten the tedium of the way. In illustration of these qualities the following story is told: One day when Mahādeo and Pārvati were travelling the goddess became very tired, so Mahādeo created four men from the dust, who bore her in a litter. On the way they talked and laughed, and Pārvati was very pleased with them, so when she got home she told them to wait while she sent them out a reward. The Bhois found that they could get plenty of liquor, so they went on drinking it and forgot all about going for the reward. In the meantime a Mār wāri Bania who had heard what the goddess said, waited at the door of the palace, and when the servants brought out a bag of money he pretended that he was one of the Bhois and got them to give him the money, with which he made off. After a time the Bhois remembered about the reward and went to the door of the palace to get it, when the goddess came out and found out what had happened. The Bhois then wept and asked for another reward, but the goddess refused and said that as they had been so stupid their caste would always be poor, but at the same time they would be cheerful and happy.



DHOBA

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. *General notice.*
2. *Exogamous divisions.*
3. *Marriage customs.*
4. *Funeral rites.*
5. *Caste panchayat and social penalties.*
6. *Occupation and social customs.*

Dhoba.¹—A small caste belonging to the Mandla District and apparently an offshoot from one of the primitive tribes. They have never been separately classified at the census but always amalgamated with the Dhobi or washerman caste. But the Mandla Dhobas acknowledge no connection with Dhobis, nor has any been detected. One Dhoba has indeed furnished a story to the Rev. E. Price that the first ancestor of the caste was a foundling boy, by appearance of good lineage, who was brought up by some Dhobis, and, marrying a Dhobi girl, made a new caste. But this is not sufficient to demonstrate the common origin of the Dhobas and Dhobis. The Dhobas reside principally in a few villages in the upper valley of the Burhner River, and members of the caste own two or three villages. They are dark in complexion and have, though in a less degree, the flat features, coarse nose and receding forehead of the Gond; but they are taller in stature and not so strongly built, and are much less capable of exertion.

The caste has twelve exogamous septs, though the list is probably not complete. These appear to be derived from the names of villages. Marriage is forbidden between the Bāghmār and Bāghcharia septs, the Marātha and Khatnāgar and Marālwati septs and the Sonwāni and

¹ This article is partly based on an account of the caste furnished by Mr. H. F. E. Bell and drawn up by Mr. F. R. R. Rudman in the *Mandla District Gazetteer*.



Sonsonwāni septs. These septs are said to have been subdivided and to be still related. The names Bāghmār and Bāghcharia are both derived from the tiger; Sonwāni is from Sona-pāni or gold-water, and the Sonsonwāni sept seems therefore to be the aristocratic branch or *crème de la crème* of the Sonwānis. The children of brothers and sisters may marry but not those of two sisters, because a man's maternal aunt or *mausi* is considered as equivalent to his mother. A man may also marry his step-sister on the mother's side, that is the daughter of his own mother by another husband either prior to or subsequent to his father, the step-sister being of a different sept. This relaxation may have been permitted on account of the small numbers of the caste and the consequent difficulty of arranging marriages.

3. Marriage customs.

The bridegroom goes to the bride's house for the wedding, which is conducted according to the Hindu ritual of walking round the sacred post. The cost of a marriage in a fairly well-to-do family, including the betrothal, may be about Rs. 140, of which a quarter falls on the bride's people. Divorce and the remarriage of widows are permitted. A pregnant woman stops working after six months and goes into retirement. After a birth the woman is impure for five or six days. She does not appear in public for a month, and takes no part in outdoor occupations or field-work until the child is weaned, that is six months after its birth.

4. Funeral rites.

The dead are usually buried, and all members of the dead man's sept are considered to be impure. After the funeral they bathe and come home and have their food cooked for them by other Dhobas, partaking of it in the dead man's house. On the ninth, eleventh or thirteenth day, when the impurity ends, the male members of the sept are shaved on the bank of a river and the hair is left lying there. When they start home they spread some thorns and two stones across the path. Then, as the first man steps over the thorns, he takes up one of the stones in his hand and passes it behind him to the second, and each man successively passes it back as he steps over the thorns, the last man throwing the stone behind the thorns. Thus the dead man's spirit in the shape of the stone is separated from



the living and prevented from accompanying them home. Then a feast is held, all the men of the dead man's sept sitting opposite to the *pañchāyat* at a distance of three feet. Next day water in which gold has been dipped is thrown over the dead man's house and each member of the sept drinks a little and is pure.

The head of the caste is always a member of the Sonwāni sept and is known as Rāja. It is his business to administer water in which gold has been dipped (*sona-pāni*) to offenders as a means of purification, and from this the name of the sept is derived. The Rāja has no deputy, and officiates in all ceremonies of the caste; he receives no contribution from the caste, but a double share of food and sweetmeats when they are distributed. The other members of the Panch he is at liberty to choose from any *got* or sept he likes. When a man has been put out of caste for a serious offence he has to give three feasts for readmission. The first meal consists of a goat with rice and pulse, and is eaten on the bank of a stream; on this occasion the head of the offender is shaved clean and all the hair thrown into the stream. The second meal is eaten in the yard of his house, and consists of cakes fried in butter with rice and pulse. The offender is not allowed to partake of either the first or second meal. On the third day the Rāja gives the offender gold-water, and he is then considered to be purified and cooks food himself, which the caste-people eat with him in his house. A man is not put out of caste when he is sent to jail, as this is considered to be an order of the Government. A man keeping a woman of another caste is expelled and not reinstated until he has put her away, and even then it is said that they will consider his character before taking him back. A man who gets maggots in a wound may be readmitted to caste only during the months of Chait and Pūs.

5. Caste
pañchāyat
and social
penalties.

The Dhobas act as priests of the Gonds and are also cultivators. Their social position is distinctly higher than that of the Gonds and some of them have begun to employ Brāhmans for their ceremonies. They will eat the flesh of most animals, except those of the cow-tribe, and also field-mice, and most of them drink liquor, though the more prominent

6. Occupa-
tion and
social
customs.



DHOBA

CSL
PART II

members have begun to abstain. The origin of the caste is very obscure, but it would appear that they must be an offshoot of one of the Dravidian tribes. In this connection it is interesting to note that Chhattisgarh contains a large number of Dhobis, though the people of this tract have until recently worn little in the way of clothing, and usually wash it themselves when this operation is judged necessary. Many of the Dhobis of Chhattisgarh are cultivators, and it seems possible that a proportion of them may also really belong to this Dhoba caste.



DHObI

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. *Character and structure of the caste.*
2. *Marriage customs.*
3. *Other social customs.*
4. *Religion.*
5. *Occupation: washing clothes.*
6. *Social position.*
7. *Proverbs about the Dhobi.*
8. *Wearing and lending the clothes of customers.*

Dhobi, Wārthi, Baretha, Chakla, Rajak, Parit.— The professional caste of washermen. The name is derived from the Hindi *dhona*, and the Sanskrit *dhav*, to wash. Wārthi is the Marātha name for the caste, and Bareth or Baretha is an honorific or complimentary term of address. Rajak and Parit are synonyms, the latter being used in the Marātha Districts. The Chakla caste of Madras are leather-workers, but in Chānda a community of persons is found who are known as Chakla and are professional washermen. In 1911 the Dhobis numbered 165,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berār, or one to every hundred inhabitants. They are numerous in the Districts with large towns and also in Chhattisgarh, where, like the Dhobas of Bengal, they have to a considerable extent abandoned their hereditary profession and taken to cultivation and other callings. No account worth reproduction has been obtained of the origin of the caste. In the Central Provinces it is purely functional, as is shown by its subdivisions; these are generally of a territorial nature, and indicate that the Dhobis like the other professional castes have come here from all parts of the country. Instances of the subcastes are: Baonia and Berāria from Berār; Mālwi, Bundelkhandi, Nimāria, Kanaujia, Udaipuria from Udaipur; Madrasī, Dharampuria from Dharampur, and so on. A separate subcaste is formed of

r. Character and structure of the caste.



Muhammadan Dhobis. The exogamous groups known as *khero* are of the usual low-caste type, taking their names from villages or titular or professional terms.

2. Marriage customs.

Marriage within the *khero* is prohibited and also the union of first cousins. It is considered disgraceful to accept a price for a bride, and it is said that this is not done even by the parents of poor girls, but the caste will in such cases raise a subscription to defray the expenses of her marriage. In the northern Districts the marriages of Dhobis are characterised by continuous singing and dancing at the houses of the bridegroom and bride, these performances being known as *sajnai* and *birha*. Some man also puts on a long coat, tight down to the waist and loose round the hips, to have the appearance of a dancing-girl, and dances before the party, while two or three other men play. Mr. Crooke considers that this ritual, which is found also among other low castes, resembles the European custom of the False Bride and is intended to divert the evil eye from the real bride. He writes:¹ "Now there are numerous customs which have been grouped in Europe under the name of the False Bride. Thus among the Esthonians the false bride is enacted by the bride's brother dressed in woman's clothes; in Polonia by a bearded man called the Wilde Braut; in Poland by an old woman veiled in white and lame; again among the Esthonians by an old woman with a brickwork crown; in Brittany, where the substitutes are first a little girl, then the mistress of the house, and lastly the grandmother.

"The supposition may then be hazarded in the light of the Indian examples that some one assumes on this occasion the part of the bride in order to divert on himself from her the envious glance of the evil eye." Any further information on this interesting custom would be welcome.

The remarriage of widows is allowed, and in Betül the bridegroom goes to the widow's house on a dark night wrapped up in a black blanket, and presents the widow with new clothes and bangles, and spangles and red lead for the forehead. Divorce is permitted with the approval of the caste headman by the execution of a deed on stamped paper.

¹ *Folklore of Northern India*, vol. ii. p. 8.



After a birth the mother is allowed no food for some days except country sugar and dates. The child is given some honey and castor-oil for the first two days and is then allowed to suckle the mother. A pit is dug inside the lying-in room, and in this are deposited water and the first cuttings of the nails and hair of the child. It is filled up and on her recovery the mother bows before it, praying for similar safe deliveries in future and for the immunity of the child from physical ailments. After the birth of a male child the mother is impure for seven days and for five days after that of a female.

The principal deity of the Dhobis is Ghatoia, the god of the *ghāt* or landing-place on the river to which they go to wash their clothes. Libations of liquor are made to him in the month of *Asārh* (June), when the rains break and the rivers begin to be flooded. Before entering the water to wash the clothes they bow to the stone on which these are beaten out, asking that their work may be quickly finished; and they also pray to the river deity to protect them from snakes and crocodiles. They worship the stone on the Dasahra festival, making an offering to it of flowers, turmeric and cooked food. The Dhobi's washing-stone is believed to be haunted by the ghosts of departed Dhobis when revisiting the glimpses of the moon, and is held to have magical powers. If a man requires a love-charm he should steal a *supāri* or areca-nut from the bazār at night or on the occasion of an eclipse. The same night he goes to the Dhobi's stone and sets the nut upon it. He breaks an egg and a cocoanut over the stone and burns incense before it. Then he takes the nut away and gives it to the woman of his fancy, wrapped up in betel-leaf, and she will love him. Their chief festivals are the Holi and Diwāli, at which they drink a great deal. The dead are buried or burnt as may be convenient, and mourning is observed for three days only, the family being purified on the Sunday or Wednesday following the death. They have a caste committee whose president is known as Mehtar, while other officials are the Chaudhri or vice-president, and the Badkur, who appoints dates for the penal feasts and issues the summons to the caste-fellows. These posts are hereditary and their holders



receive presents of a rupee and a cloth when members of the caste have to give expiatory feasts.

5. Occupa-
tion :
washing
clothes.

Before washing his clothes the Dhobi steams them,¹ hanging them in a bundle for a time over a cauldron of boiling water. After this he takes them to a stream or pond and washes them roughly with fuller's earth. The washerman steps nearly knee-deep into the water, and taking a quantity of clothes by one end in his two hands he raises them aloft in the air and brings them down heavily upon a huge stone slab, grooved, at his feet. This threshing operation he repeats until his clothes are perfectly clean. In Saugor the clothes are rubbed with wood-ashes at night and beaten out in water with a stick in the morning. Silk clothes are washed with the nut of the *ritha* tree (*Sapindus emarginatus*) which gives a lather like soap. Sir H. Risley writes of the Dacca washermen :² "For washing muslins and other coloured garments well or spring water is alone used ; but if the articles are the property of a poor man or are commonplace, the water of the nearest tank or river is accounted sufficiently good. Indigo is in as general use as in England for removing the yellowish tinge and whitening the material. The water of the wells and springs bordering on the red laterite formation on the north of the city has been for centuries celebrated, and the old bleaching fields of the European factories were all situated in this neighbourhood. Various plants are used by the Dhobis to clarify water such as the *nirmali* (*Strychnos potatorum*), the *piu* (*Basella*), the *nāgphani* (*Cactus indicus*) and several plants of the mallow family. Alum, though not much valued, is sometimes used." In most Districts of the Central Provinces the Dhobi is employed as a village servant and is paid by annual contributions of grain from the cultivators. For ordinary washing he gets half as much as the blacksmith or carpenter, or 13 to 20 lbs. of grain annually from each householder, with about another 10 lbs. at seedtime or harvest. When he brings the clothes home he also receives a meal or a *chapāti*, and well-to-do persons give him their old clothes as a present. In return for this he washes all the clothes of the family two or three times a month, except the loin-cloths

¹ Sherring's *Hindu Castes*, i. 342-3.

² *Tribes and Castes*, art. Dhobi.



and women's bodices which they themselves wash daily. The Dhobi is also employed on the occasion of a birth or a death. These events cause impurity and hence all the clothes of all the members of the family must be washed when the impurity ceases. In Saugor when a man dies the Dhobi receives eight annas and for a woman four annas, and similar rates in the case of the birth of a male or female child. When the first son is born in a family the Dhobi and barber place a brass vessel on the top of a pole and tie a flag to it as a cloth and take it round to all the friends and relations of the family, announcing the event. They receive presents of grain and money which they expend on a drinking-bout.

The Dhobi is considered to be impure, and he is not allowed to come into the houses of the better castes nor to touch their water-vessels. In Saugor he may come as far as the veranda but not into the house. His status would in any case be low as a village menial, but he is specially degraded, Mr. Crooke states, by his task of washing the clothes of women after child-birth and his consequent association with puerperal blood, which is particularly abhorred. Formerly a Brāhman did not let the Dhobi wash his clothes, or, if he did, they were again steeped in water in the house as a means of purification. Now he contents himself with sprinkling the clean clothes with water in which a piece of gold has been dipped. The Dhobi is not so impure as the Chamār and Basor, and if a member of the higher castes touches him inadvertently it is considered sufficient to wash the face and hands only and not the clothes.

6. Social position.

Colonel Tod writes¹ that in Rājputāna the washermen's wells dug at the sides of streams are deemed the most impure of all receptacles. And one of the most binding oaths is that a man as he swears should drop a pebble into one of these wells, saying, "If I break this oath may all the good deeds of my forefathers fall into the washerman's well like this pebble." Nevertheless the Dhobi refuses to wash the clothes of some of the lowest castes as the Māng, Mahār and Chamār. Like the Teli the Dhobi is unlucky, and it is a bad omen to see him when starting on a journey or going out in the morning. But among some of the

¹ *Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthān.*



higher castes on the occasion of a marriage the elder members of the bridegroom's family go with the bride to the Dhobi's house. His wife presents the bride with betel-leaf and in return is given clothes with a rupee. This ceremony is called *sohāg* or good fortune, and the present from the Dhobin is supposed to be lucky. In Berār the Dhobi is also a Balūtedār or village servant. Mr. Kitts writes of him:¹ "At a wedding he is called upon to spread the clothes on which the bridegroom and his party alight on coming to the bride's house; he also provides the cloth on which the bride and bridegroom are to sit and fastens the *kankan* (bracelet) on the girl's hand. In the Yeotmāl District the barber and the washerman sometimes take the place of the maternal uncle in the *jhenda* dance; and when the bridegroom, assisted by five married women, has thrown the necklace of black beads round the bride's neck and has tied it with five knots, the barber and the washerman advance, and lifting the young couple on their thighs dance to the music of the *wājantri*, while the bystanders besprinkle them with red powder."

In Chhattīsgarh the Dhobis appear to have partly abandoned their hereditary profession and taken to agriculture and other callings. Sir Benjamin Robertson writes of them:² "The caste largely preponderates in Chhattīsgarh, a part of the country where, at least to the superficial observer, it would hardly seem as if its services were much availed of; the number of Dhobis in Raipur and Bilāspur is nearly 40,000. In both Districts the washerman is one of the recognised village servants, but as a rule he gets no fixed payment, and the great body of cultivators dispense with his services altogether. According to the *Raipur Settlement Report* (Mr. Hewett), he is employed by the ryots only to wash the clothes of the dead, and he is never found among a population of Satnāmīs. It may therefore be assumed that in Chhattīsgarh the Bareth caste has largely taken to cultivation." In Bengal Sir H. Risley states³ that "the Dhobi often gives up his caste trade and follows the profession of a writer, messenger or collector of rent (*tahsildār*), and it is

¹ *Berār Census Report* (1881), p. 155.

² *Central Provinces Census Report* (1891), p. 202.

³ *Loc. cit.*



an old native tradition that a Bengali Dhobi was the first interpreter the English factory at Calcutta had, while it is further stated that our early commercial transactions were carried on solely through the agency of low-caste natives. The Dhobi, however, will never engage himself as an indoor servant in the house of a European."

Like the other castes who supply the primary needs of the people, the Dhobi is not regarded with much favour by his customers, and they revenge themselves in various sarcasms at his expense for the injury caused to their clothes by his drastic measures. The following are mentioned by Sir G. Grierson :¹ '*Dhobi par Dhobi base, tab kapre par sâbun pare,*' or 'When many Dhobis compete, then some soap gets to the clothes,' and 'It is only the clothes of the Dhobi's father that never get torn.' The Dhobi's donkey is a familiar sight as one meets him on the road still toiling as in the time of Issachar between two bundles of clothes each larger than himself, and he has also become proverbial, '*Dhobi ka gadha neh ghar ka neh ghât ka,*' 'The Dhobi's donkey is always on the move'; and 'The ass has only one master (a washerman), and the washerman has only one steed (an ass).' The resentment felt for the Dhobi by his customers is not confined to his Indian clients, as may be seen from Eha's excellent description of the Dhobi in *Behind the Bungalow*; and it may perhaps be permissible to introduce here the following short excerpt, though it necessarily loses in force by being detached from the context: "Day after day he has stood before that great black stone and wreaked his rage upon shirt and trouser and coat, and coat and trouser and shirt. Then he has wrung them as if he were wringing the necks of poultry, and fixed them on his drying line with thorns and spikes, and finally he has taken the battered garments to his torture chamber and ploughed them with his iron, longwise and crosswise and slantwise, and dropped glowing cinders on their tenderest places. Son has followed father through countless generations in cultivating this passion for destruction, until it has become the monstrous growth which we see and shudder at in the Dhobi."

7. Proverbs about the Dhobi.

¹ *Bihâr Peasant Life, s.v. Dhobi.*



8. Wear-
ing and
lending the
clothes of
customers.

It is also currently believed that the Dhobi wears the clothes of his customers himself. Thus, 'The Dhobi looks smart in other people's clothes'; and '*Rājāche shiri, Paritāche tiri*,' or 'The king's headscarf is the washerman's loin-cloth.' On this point Mr. Thurston writes of the Madras washerman: "It is an unpleasant reflection that the Vannāns or washermen add to their income by hiring out the clothes of their customers for funeral parties, who lay them on the path before the pall-bearers, so that they may not step upon the ground. On one occasion a party of Europeans, when out shooting near the village of a hill tribe, met a funeral procession on its way to the burial-ground. The bier was draped in many folds of clean cloth, which one of the party recognised by the initials as one of his bed-sheets. Another identified as his sheet the cloth on which the corpse was lying. He cut off the corner with the initial, and a few days later the sheet was returned by the Dhobi, who pretended ignorance of the mutilation, and gave as an explanation that it must have been done in his absence by one of his assistants."¹ And Eha describes the same custom in the following amusing manner: "Did you ever open your handkerchief with the suspicion that you had got a duster into your pocket by mistake, till the name of De Souza blazoned on the corner showed you that you were wearing some one else's property? An accident of this kind reveals a beneficent branch of the Dhobi's business, one in which he comes to the relief of needy respectability. Suppose yourself (if you can) to be Mr. Lobo, enjoying the position of first violinist in a string band which performs at Parsi weddings and on other festive occasions. *Noblesse oblige*; you cannot evade the necessity for clean shirt-fronts, ill able as your precarious income may be to meet it. In these circumstances a Dhobi with good connections is what you require. He finds you in shirts of the best quality at so much an evening, and you are saved all risk and outlay of capital; you need keep no clothes except a greenish-black surtout and pants and an effective necktie. In this way the wealth of the rich helps the want of the poor without their feeling it or knowing it—an excellent arrange-

¹ *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, p. 226.



ment. Sometimes, unfortunately, Mr. Lobo has a few clothes of his own, and then, as I have hinted, the Dhobi may exchange them by mistake, for he is uneducated and has much to remember; but if you occasionally suffer in this way you gain in another, for Mr. Lobo's family are skilful with the needle, and I have sent a torn garment to the wash which returned carefully repaired."¹

Dhuri.²—A caste belonging exclusively to Chhattisgarh, which numbered 3000 persons in 1911. Dhuri is an honorific abbreviation from Dhuriya as Bāni from Bania. The special occupation of the caste is rice-parching, and they are an offshoot from Kahārs, though in Chhattisgarh the Dhuris now consider the Kahārs as a subcaste of their own. In Bengal the Dhuriyas are a subcaste of the Kāndus or Bharbhūnjas. Sir H. Risley states that "the Dhurias rank lowest of all the subcastes of Kāndus, owing either to their having taken up the comparatively menial profession of palanquin-bearing, or to their being a branch of the Kahār caste who went in for grain-parching and thus came to be associated with the Kāndus."³ The caste have immigrated to Chhattisgarh from the United Provinces. In Kawardha they believe that the Rāja of that State brought them back with him on his return from a pilgrimage. In Bilāspur and Raipur they say they came from Badhār, a pargana in the Mirzāpur District, adjoining Rewah. Badhār is mentioned in one of the Rājim inscriptions, and is a place remembered by other castes of Chhattisgarh as their ancestral home. The Dhuris of Chhattisgarh relate their origin as follows: Mahādeo went once to the jungle and the damp earth stuck to his feet. He scraped it off and made it into a man, and asked him what caste he would like to belong to. The man said he would leave it to Mahādeo, who decided that he should be called Dhuri from *dhūr*, dust. The man then asked Mahādeo to assign him an occupation, and Mahādeo said that as he was made from dust, which is pounded earth, his work should

1. Origin and subdivisions.

¹ *Behind the Bungalow.*

² This article is mainly compiled from papers by Mr. Gokul Prasād, Naib-Tahsildār, Dhamtari, and Pyāre

Lāl Misra, a clerk in the Gazetteer office.

³ *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Kāndu.



be to prepare *cheora* or pounded rice, and added as a special distinction that all castes including Brāhmans should eat the pounded rice prepared by him. All castes do eat *cheora* because it is not boiled with water. The Dhuris have two subcastes, a higher and a lower, but they are known by different names in different tracts. In Kawardha they are called Rāj Dhuri and Cheorākūta, the Rāj Dhuris being the descendants of personal servants in the Rāja's family and ranking above the Cheorākūtas or rice-pounders. In Bilāspur they are called Badhāria and Khawās, and in Raipur Badhāria and Desha. The Khawās and Desha subcastes do menial household service and rank below the Badhārias, who are perhaps later immigrants and refuse to engage in this occupation. The names of their exogamous sections are nearly all territorial, as Naugahia from Naogaon in Bilāspur District, Agoria from Agori, a pargana in Mirzāpur District, Kāshi or Benāres, and a number of other names derived from villages in Bilāspur. But the caste do not strictly enforce the rule forbidding marriage within the *gotra* or section, and are content with avoiding three generations both on the father's and mother's side. They have probably been driven to modify the rule on account of the paucity of their numbers and the difficulty of arranging marriages. For the same reason perhaps they look with indulgence on the practice, as a rule strictly prohibited, of marriage with a woman of another caste of lower social rank, and will admit the children of such a marriage into the caste, though not the woman herself.

2. Marriage.

Infant-marriage is in vogue, and polygamy is permitted only if the first wife be barren. The betrothal is cemented by an exchange of betel-leaves and areca-nuts between the fathers of the engaged couple. A bride-price of from ten to twenty rupees is usually paid. Some rice, a pice coin, 21 cowries and 21 pieces of turmeric are placed in the hole in which the marriage post is erected. When the wedding procession arrives at the girl's house the bridegroom goes to the marriage-shed and pulls out the festoons of mango leaves, the bride's family trying to prevent him by offering him a winnowing-fan. He then approaches the door of the house, behind which his future mother-in-law is standing,



and slips a piece of cloth through the door for her. She takes this and retires without being seen. The wedding consists of the *bhānvar* ceremony or walking round the sacred pole. During the proceedings the women tie a new thread round the bridegroom's neck to avert the evil eye. After the wedding the bride and bridegroom, in opposition to the usual custom, must return to the latter's house on foot. In explanation of this they tell a story to the effect that the married couple were formerly carried in a palanquin. But on one occasion when a wedding procession came to a river, everybody began to catch fish, leaving the bride deserted, and the palanquin-bearers, seeing this, carried her off. To prevent the recurrence of such a mischance the couple now have to walk. Widow-marriage is permitted, and the widow usually marries her late husband's younger brother. Divorce is only permitted for misconduct on the part of the wife.

The Dhuris principally worship the goddess Devi. Nearly all members of the caste belong to the Kabirpanthi sect. They believe that the sun on setting goes through the earth, and that the milky way is the path by which the elephant of the heavens passes from south to north to feed on the young bamboo shoots, of which he is very fond. They think that the constellation of the Great Bear is a cot with three thieves tied to it. The thieves came to steal the cot, which belonged to an old woman, but God caught them and tied them down there for ever. Orion is the plough left by one of the Pāndava brothers after he had finished tilling the heavens. The dead are burnt. They observe mourning during nine or ten days for an adult and make libations to the dead at the usual period in the month of Kunwār (September-October).

3. Religious beliefs.

The proper occupation of the caste is to parch rice. The rice is husked and then parched in an earthen pan, and subsequently bruised with a mallet in a wooden mortar. When prepared in this manner it is called *cheora*. The Dhuris also act as *khidmatgārs* or household servants, but the members of the Badharia subcaste refuse to do this work. Some members of the caste are fishermen, and others grow melons and sweet potatoes. Considering that they

4. Occupation and social status.



live in Chhattisgarh, the caste are somewhat scrupulous in the matter of food, neither eating fowls nor drinking liquor. The Kawardha Dhuris, however, who are later immigrants than the others, do not observe these restrictions, the reason for which may be that the Dhuris think it necessary to be strict in the matter of food, so that no one may object to take parched rice from them. Rāwats and Gonds take food from their hands in some places, and their social status in Chhattisgarh is about equivalent to that of the Rāwats or Ahirs. A man of the caste who kills a cow or gets vermin in a wound must go to Amārkantak to bathe in the Nerbudda.

1. Origin
and
traditions.

Dumāl.¹— An agricultural caste found in the Uriya country and principally in the Sonpur State, recently transferred to Bihār and Orissa. In 1901, 41,000 Dumāls were enumerated in the Central Provinces, but only a few persons now remain. The caste originally came from Orissa. They themselves say that they were formerly a branch of the Gaurs, with whom they now have no special connection. They derive their name from a village called Dumba Hadap in the Athmālik State, where they say that they lived. Another story is that Dumāl is derived from Duma, the name of a gateway in Baud town, near which they dwelt. Sir H. Risley says: "The Dumāls or Jādupuria Gaura seem to be a group of local formation. They cherish the tradition that their ancestors came to Orissa from Jādupur, but this appears to be nothing more than the name of the Jādavas or Yādavas, the mythical progenitors of the Goala caste transformed into the name of an imaginary town."

2. Sub-
divisions.

The Dumāls have no subcastes, but they have a complicated system of exogamy. This includes three kinds of divisions or sections, the *got* or sept, the *barga* or family title and the *mitti* or earth from which they sprang, that is, the name of the original village of the clan. Marriage is prohibited only between persons who have the same *got*, *barga* and *mitti*; if any one of these is different it is allowed. Thus a man of the Nāg *got*, Padhān *barga* and Hindolsai *mitti* may marry a girl of the Nāg *got*, Padhān *barga* and

¹ This article is taken almost entirely from a paper drawn up by Mr. Hira Lāl, Extra Assistant Commissioner.



Kandhpadā *mitti*; or one of the Nāg *got*, Karmi *barga* and Hindolsai *mitti*; or one of the Bud *got*, Padhān *barga* and Hindolsai *mitti*. The *bargas* are very numerous, but the *gots* and *mittis* are few and common to many *bargas*; and many people have forgotten the name of their *mitti* altogether. Marriage therefore usually depends on the *bargas* being different. The following table shows the *got*, *barga* and *mitti* of a few families:

Got.	Barga.	Mitti.
Nāg (cobra)	Padhān (chief)	Hindolsai
Nāg	Karmi (manager)	Unda (a village in Athmalik)
Nāg	Behra (Palki-bearer)	Kandhpada (a village in Athmalik)
Nāg	Mahākul (great family)	Do. do.
Nāg	Mesua (shepherd)	Dalpur (a village in Baud)
Nāg	Karan (writer)	Kandhpada (a village in Athmalik)
Nāg or Nāgesh	Mahākul (great family)	Bāmada (a village in Baud)
Bud (a fish)	Kolta (caste)	Kandhpada (a village in Athmalik)
Bud (a fish)	Baghār (buffalo)	Do do.
Bichhū (scorpion)	Mahākul (great family)	Bāmada (a village in Baud)

The only other *gots* besides those given above are Kachhap (tortoise), Ulūk (owl) and Limb (*nim*-tree). The *gots* are thus totemistic, and the animal or plant giving its name to the *got* is venerated and worshipped. The names of *bargas* are diverse. Some are titles indicating the position of the founder of the family in life, as Nāik (leader), Padhān (chief), Karmi (manager), Mahākul (great family) and so on. Others are derived from functions performed in sacrifices, as Amāyat (one who kills the animal in the sacrifice), Gurandi (one who makes a preparation of sugar for it), Dehri (priest), Bārik (one who carries the god's umbrella), Kamp (one who is in charge of the baskets containing the sacred articles of the temple). Another set of *bargas* are names signifying the performance of menial functions in household service, as Gejo (kitchen-cleaner), Chaulia (rice-cleaner), Gadua (*lotā*-bearer), Dāng (spoon-bearer), Ghusri (cleaner of the dining-place with cowdung). Other names of *bargas* are derived from the caste's traditional occupation of grazing cattle, as Mesua or Mendli (shepherd), Gaigariya (milkman), Chhānd (one who ties a rope to the legs of a cow when milking her). These names are interesting as showing that the Dumāls



before taking to their present occupation of agriculture were temple servants, household menials and cattle-herds, thus fulfilling the functions now performed by the Rāwat or Gaur caste of graziers in Sambalpur. The names of the *mittis* or villages show that their original home was in the Orissa Tributary Mahāls, while the totemistic names of *gots* indicate their Dravidian origin. The marriage of first cousins is prohibited.

3. Marriage.

Girls must be married before adolescence, and in the event of the parents failing to accomplish this, the following heavy penalty is imposed on the girl herself. She is taken to the forest and tied to a tree with thread, this proceeding signifying her permanent exclusion from the caste. Any one belonging to another caste can then take her away and marry her if he chooses to do so. In practice, however, this penalty is very rarely imposed, as the parents can get out of it by marrying her to an old man, whether he is already married or not, the parents bearing all the expenses, while the husband gives two to four annas as a nominal contribution. After the marriage the old man can either keep the girl as his wife or divorce her for a further nominal payment of eight annas to a rupee. She then becomes a widow and can marry again, while her parents will get ten or twenty rupees for her.

The boy's father makes the proposal for the marriage according to the following curious formula. Taking some fried grain he goes to the house of the father of the bride and addresses him as follows in the presence of the neighbours and the relatives of both parties: "I hear that the tree has budded and a blossom has come out; I intend to pluck it." To which the girl's father replies: "The flower is delicate; it is in the midst of an ocean and very difficult to approach: how will you pluck it?" To which the reply is: 'I shall bring ships and *dongas* (boats) and ply them in the ocean and fetch the flower.' And again: "If you do pluck it, can you support it? Many difficulties may stand in the way, and the flower may wither or get lost; will it be possible for you to steer the flower's boat in the ocean of time, as long as it is destined to be in this world?" To which the answer is: 'Yes, I shall, and it is with that



intention that I have come to you.' On which the girl's father finally says: 'Very well then, I have given you the flower.' The question of the bride's price is then discussed. There are three recognised scales—Rs. 7 and 7² pieces of cloth, Rs. 9 and 9 pieces of cloth, and Rs. 18 and 18 pieces of cloth. The rupees in question are those of Orissa, and each of them is worth only two-thirds of a Government rupee. In cases of extreme poverty Rs. 2 and 2 pieces of cloth are accepted. The price being fixed, the boy's father goes to pay it after an interval; and on this occasion he holds out his cloth, and a cocoanut is placed on it and broken by the girl's father, which confirms the betrothal. Before the marriage seven married girls go out and dig earth after worshipping the ground, and on their return let it all fall on to the head of the bridegroom's mother, which is protected only by a cloth. On the next day offerings are made to the ancestors, who are invited to attend the ceremony as village gods. The bridegroom is shaved clean and bathed, and the Brāhman then ties an iron ring to his wrist, and the barber puts the turban and marriage-crown on his head. The procession then starts, but any barber who meets it on the way may put a fresh marriage-crown on the bridegroom's head and receive eight annas or a rupee for it, so that he sometimes arrives at his destination wearing four or five of them. The usual ceremonies attend the arrival. At the marriage the couple are blindfolded and seated in the shed, while the Brāhman priest repeats *mantras* or verses, and during this time the parents and the parties must continue placing nuts and pice all over the shed. These are the perquisites of the Brāhman. The hands of the couple are then tied together with *kusha* grass (*Eragrostis cynosuroides*), and water is poured over them. After the ceremony the couple gamble with seven cowries and seven pieces of turmeric. The boy then presses a cowrie on the ground with his little finger, and the girl has to take it away, which she easily does. The girl in her turn holds a cowrie inside her clenched hand, and the boy has to remove it with his little finger, which he finds it impossible to do. Thus the boy always loses and has to promise the girl something, either to give her an ornament or to take her on a pilgrimage, or to

make her the mistress of his house. On the fifth or last day of the ceremony some curds are placed in a small pot, and the couple are made to churn them ; this is probably symbolical of the caste's original occupation of tending cattle. The bride goes to her husband's house for three days, and then returns home. When she is to be finally brought to her husband's house, his father with some relatives goes to the parents of the girl and asks for her. It is now strict etiquette for her father to refuse to send her on the first occasion, and they usually have to call on him three or four times at intervals of some days, and selecting the days given by the astrologer as auspicious. Occasionally they have to go as many as ten times ; but finally, if the girl's father proves very troublesome, they send an old woman who drags away the girl by force. If the father sends her away willingly he gives her presents of several basket-loads of grain, oil, turmeric, cooking-pots, cloth, and if he is well off a cow and bullocks, the value of the presents amounting to about Rs. 50. The girl's brother takes her to her husband's house, where a repetition of the marriage ceremony on a small scale is performed. Twice again after the consummation of the marriage she visits her parents for periods of one and six months, but after this she never again goes to their house unaccompanied by her husband. Widow-marriage is allowed, and the widow may marry the younger brother of her late husband or not as she pleases. But if she marries another man he must pay a sum of Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 for her, of which Rs. 5 go to the Panua or headman of the caste, and Rs. 2 to their tutelary goddess Parmeshwari. The children by the first husband are kept either by his relatives or the widow's parents, and do not go to the new husband. When a bachelor marries a widow, he is first married to a flower or *sahara* tree. A widow who has remarried cannot take part in any worship or marriage ceremony in her house, not even in the marriage of her own sons. Divorce is allowed, and is effected in the presence of the caste *panchāyat* or committee. A divorced woman may marry again.

The caste worship the goddess Parmeshwari, the wife of Vishnu, and Jagannāth, the Uriya incarnation of Vishnu. Parmeshwari is worshipped by Brāhmins, who offer bread



and *khīr* or rice and milk to her; goats are also offered by the Dehri or Mahākul, the caste priest, who receives the heads of the goats as his remuneration. They believe in witches, who they think drink the blood of children, and employ sorcerers to exorcise them. They worship a stick on Dasahra day in remembrance of their old profession of herding cattle, and they worship cows and buffaloes at the full moon of Shrāwan (July-August). During Kunwār, on the eighth day of each fortnight, two festivals are held. At the first each girl in the family wears a thread containing eighteen knots twisted three times round her neck. All the girls fast and receive presents of cloths and grain from their brothers. This is called Bhaijuntia, or the ceremony for the welfare of the brothers. On the second day the mother of the family does the same, and receives presents from her sons, this being Puājuntia, or the ceremony for the welfare of sons. The Dumāls believe that in the beginning water covered the earth. They think that the sun and moon are the eyes of God, and that the stars are the souls of virtuous men, who enjoy felicity in heaven for the period measured by the sum of their virtuous actions, and when this has expired have to descend again to earth to suffer the agonies of human life. When a shooting star is seen they think it is the soul of one of these descending to be born again on earth. They both burn and bury their dead according to their means. After a body is buried they make a fire over the grave and place an empty pot on it. Mourning is observed for twelve days in the case of a married and for seven in the case of an unmarried person. Children dying when less than six days old are not mourned at all. During mourning the persons of the household do not cook for themselves. On the third day after the death three leaf-plates, each containing a little rice, sugar and butter, are offered to the spirit of the deceased. On the fourth day four such plates are offered, and on the fifth day five, and so on up to the ninth day when the Pindas or sacrificial cakes are offered, and nine persons belonging to the caste are invited, food and a new piece of cloth being given to each. Should only one attend, nine plates of food would be served to him, and he would be given nine pieces of



cloth. If two or more persons in a family are killed by a tiger, a Sulia or magician is called in, and he pretends to be the tiger and to bite some one in the family, who is then carried as a corpse to the burial-place, buried for a short time and taken out again. All the ceremonies of mourning are observed for him for one day. This proceeding is believed to secure immunity for the family from further attacks. In return for his services the Sulia gets a share of everything in the house corresponding to what he would receive, supposing he were a member of the family, on a partition. Thus if the family consisted of only two persons he would get a third part of the whole property.

The Dumāls eat meat, including wild boar's flesh, but not beef, fowls or tame pigs. They do not drink liquor. They will take food cooked with water from Brāhmins and Sudhs, and even the leavings of food from Brāhmins. This is probably because they were formerly the household servants of Brāhmins, though they have now risen somewhat in position and rank, together with the Koltas and Sudhs, as a good cultivating caste. Their women and girls can easily be distinguished, the girls because the hair is shaved until they are married, and the women because they wear bangles of glass on one arm and of lac on the other. They never wear nose-rings or the ornament called *pairi* on the feet, and no ornaments are worn on the arm above the elbow. They do not wear black clothing. The women are tattooed on the hands, feet and breast. Morality within the caste is lax. A woman going wrong with a man of her own caste is not punished, because the Dumāls live generally in Native States, where it is the business of the Rāja to find the seducer. But she is permanently excommunicated for a *liaison* with a man of another caste. Eating with a very low caste is almost the only offence which entails permanent exclusion for both sexes. The Dumāls have a bad reputation for fidelity, according to a saying: 'You cannot call the jungle a plain, and you should not call the Dumāl a brother,' that is, do not trust a Dumāl. Like the Ahīrs they are somewhat stupid, and when enquiry was being made from them as to what crops they did not grow, one of them replied that they did not sow salt. They are



good cultivators, and will grow anything except hemp and turmeric. In some places they still follow their traditional occupation of grazing cattle.

Fakir.¹—The class of Muhammadan beggars. In the Central Provinces the name is practically confined to Muhammadans, but in Upper India Hindus also use it. Nearly 9000 Fakirs were returned in 1911, being residents mainly of Districts with large towns, as Jubbulpore, Nāgpur and Amraoti. Nearly two-fifths of the Muhammadans of the Central Provinces live in towns, and Muhammadan beggars would naturally congregate there also. The name is derived from the Arabic *fakr*, poverty. The Fakirs are often known as Shāh, Lord, or Sain, a corruption of the Sanskrit Swāmi, master. Muhammad did not recognise religious ascetism, and expressly discouraged it. But even during his lifetime his companions Abu Bakr and Ali established religious orders with Zikrs or special exercises, and all Muhammadan Fakirs trace their origin to Abu Bakr or Ali subsequently the first and fourth Caliphs.² The Fakirs are divided into two classes, the Ba Shara or those who live according to the rules of Islam and marry; and the Be Shara or those without the law. These latter have no wives or homes; they drink intoxicating liquor, and neither fast, pray nor rule their passions. But several of the orders contain both married and celibate groups.

1. General notice.

The principal classes of Fakirs in the Central Provinces are the Madari, Gurujwāle or Rafai, Jalāli, Mewāti, Sada Sohāgal and Nakshbandia. All of these except the Nakshbandia are nominally at least Be Shara, or without the law, and celibate.

2. Principal orders.

The Madari are the followers of one Madar Shāh, a converted Jew of Aleppo, whose tomb is supposed to be at Makhanpur in the United Provinces. Their characteristic badge is a pair of pincers. Some, in order to force people to give them alms, go about dragging a chain or lashing their legs with a whip. Others are monkey- and bear-

¹ This article is mainly compiled from Sir E. D. Maclagan's *Punjab Census Report* (1891), pp. 192-196, the article on Fakir in the Rev. T. P.

Hughes' *Dictionary of Islām*, and the volume on *Muhammadans of Gujarāt* in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, pp. 20-24.

² Hughes, p. 116.



trainers and rope-dancers. The Madaris are said to be proof against snakes and scorpions, and to have power to cure their bites. They will leap into a fire and trample it down, crying out, '*Aam Madar, Aam Madar.*'¹

The Garujwāle or Rafai have as their badge a spiked iron club with small chains attached to the end. The Fakīr rattles the chains of his club to announce his presence, and if the people will not give him alms strikes at his own cheek or eye with the sharp point of his club, making the blood flow. They make prayers to their club once a year, so that it may not cause them serious injury when they strike themselves with it.

The Jalālias are named after their founder, Jalāl-ud-dīn of Bokhāra, and have a horse-whip as their badge, with which they sometimes strike themselves on the hands and feet. They are said to consume large quantities of *bhāng*, and to eat snakes and scorpions; they shave all the hair on the head and face, including the eyebrows, except a small scalp-lock on the right side.

The Mewāti appear to be a thieving order. They are also known as Kulchor or thieves of the family, and appear to have been originally a branch of the Madari, who were perhaps expelled on account of their thieving habits. Their distinguishing mark is a double bag like a pack-saddle, which they hang over their shoulders. The Sada or Mūsa Sohāg are an order who dress like women, put on glass bangles, have their ears and noses pierced for ornaments, and wear long hair, but retain their beards and moustaches. They regard themselves as brides of God or of Hussan, and beg in this guise.

The Nakshbandia are the disciples of Khwaja Mīr Muhammad, who was called Nakshband or brocade-maker. They beg at night-time, carrying an open brass lamp with a short wick. Children are fond of the Nakshband, and go out in numbers to give him money. In return he marks them on the brow with oil from his lamp. They are quiet and well behaved, belonging to the Ba Shara class of Fakīrs, and having homes and families.

The Kalandaria or wandering dervishes, who are

¹ *Punjab Census Report (1891)*, p. 196.



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GROUP OF GURUJWĀLE FAKĪRS.

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occasionally met with, were founded by Kalandar Yusuf-ul-Andalusi, a native of Spain. Having been dismissed from another order, he founded this as a new one, with the obligation of perpetual travelling. The Kalandar is a well-known figure in Eastern stories.¹

The Maulawiyah are the well-known dancing dervishes of Constantinople and Cairo, but do not belong to India.

The different orders of Fakirs are not strictly endogamous, and marriages can take place between their members, though the Madaris prefer to confine marriage to their own order. Fakirs as a body are believed to marry among themselves, and hence to form something in the nature of a caste, but they freely admit outsiders, whether Muhammadans or proselytised Hindus.

Every Fakir must have a Murshid or preceptor, and be initiated by him. This applies also to boys born in the order, and a father cannot initiate his son. The rite is usually simple, the novice having to drink sherbet from the same cup as his preceptor and make him a present of Rs. 1-4; but some orders insist that the whole body of a novice should be shaved clean of hair before he is initiated. The principal religious exercise of Fakirs is known as Zikr, and consists in the continual repetition of the names of God by various methods, it being supposed that they can draw the name from different parts of the body. The exercise is so exhausting that they frequently faint under it, and is varied by repetition of certain chapters of the Korān. The Fakir has a *tasbīh* or rosary, often consisting of ninety-nine beads, on which he repeats the ninety-nine names of God. The Fakirs beg both from Hindus and Muhammadans, and are sometimes troublesome and importunate, inflicting wounds on themselves as a means of extorting alms. One beggar in Saugor said that he would give every one who gave him alms five strokes with his whip, and attracted considerable custom by this novel expedient. Some of them are in charge of Muhammadan cemeteries and receive fees for a burial, while others live at the tombs of saints. They keep the tomb in good repair, cover it with a green cloth and keep a lighted lamp on it, and appropriate the

3. Rules
and
customs.

¹ Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*, art. Fakir.