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(ETHNOGRAPHIC SERIES)

(BATWAL; BHANJRA; DUMNA, MAHASHA OR DOOM; GAGRA; GANDHILA OR GANDIL GONDOLA; SARERA; DEHA, DHAYA OR DHEA).

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FOREWORD

The Indian Census has had the privilege of presenting authentic ethnographic accounts of Indian communities. It was usual in all censuses to collect and publish information on race, tribes and castes.

The Constitution lays down that "the state shall promote with special care educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation".

To assist states in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the social and economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the Constitution and the Parliament is empowered to include or exclude from the lists any caste or tribe. No other source can claim the same authenticity and comprehensiveness as the census of India to help the Government in taking decisions on matters such as these. Therefore, besides the statistical data provided by the 1961 Census, the preparation of detailed ethnographic notes on a selection of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in each State and Union Territory was taken up as an ancillary study. During the census operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The census enumerators, therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-castes or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the social studies unit of the office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of the Director of Census Operations in the various states. These ancillary operations include (i) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and preparation of bibliography in respect of them ; (ii) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space ; and (iii) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Deputy Registrar General, India Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri A. L. Kurup and Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty, is co-ordinating all the studies at the Central level. At the State level Director of Census Operations and his staff are collaborating in conducting the field investigation and preparing the reports.

Shri Charan Singh prepared the drafts of the Batwal ; Bhanjra ; Dumna, Mahasha or Doom ; Gagra ; Gandhila or Gandil Gondola ; Sarera ; Deha, Dhaya or Dhea, Scheduled Castes and Shri P. L. Sondhi, Shri H.S. Kwatra, Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Shri N. G. Nag and Shri G. S. Pabla, edited these reports. To them I extend my warm thanks.

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR,

Registrar General, India.

Dated the 8th July, 1970

PREFACE

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of Selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the census organisation.

In India the census organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the census organisation to take up such studies. During census operation, the census organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these changes as well, otherwise comparison of consecutive census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect of study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the census organisation as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethnodemography. In 1961 Census separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items :- -

(i) industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex,

(ii) age and marital status,

(iii) education,

(iv) religion,

(v) persons at work classified by sex and type of activity for Schedule Castes

(vi) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes, and

(vii) mother-tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the census organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India, even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in census except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala, it is important for the planners to know whether, the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions of sociological and practical importance arise :—

(a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa ? The census data suggest one of the two possible developments, namely, (1) Bulk of the Bauris were cultivators and by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.

(b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggests that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility or downward mobility, or even horizontal mobility and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

(c) The social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether in spite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of a particular occupation, for instance agriculture, continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problems of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instances can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethno-demographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960, at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the office of the Registrar General of India to co-ordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys, handicraft surveys, etc. In December, 1961, a Study Camp was organised in Delhi, where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies and other social and handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the offices of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the Study Camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology,

economic organisation and total cultural pattern of the country. It was further suggested that the primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decision of the Study Camp, rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological and operational problems. In May and June, 1966, two Ethnographic Study Camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the office of the Registrar General of India as well as from the offices of the Census Superintendents participated. In the Study Camp held at Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, and Director, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In these Study Camps, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at 'Annexure' In addition the studies in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe separately a number of subsidiary studies were undertaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature, which have bearing on the different aspects of the lives of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows :—

(1) Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.

(2) Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.

(3) Socio-economic survey of the Scheduled area of Rajasthan.

(4) Socio-economic developments among the hillmen of North-East India.

(5) Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from Scheduled Castes.

(6) Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.

(7) Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in earlier censuses.

(8) Social mobility movements among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary study indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each State. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed.

This is the series of Ethnographic Notes on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of composite Punjab State. This volume contains notes on Batwal ; Bhanjra, Dumna, Mahasha or Doom ; Gagra ; Gandhila or Gandil Gondola ; Sarera and Deha, Dhaya or Dhea. Field investigation on these castes was undertaken in the joint office by a team of investigators, under the supervision of Shri R. L. Anand the then Superintendent of Census Operations, Punjab. The drafts on these castes were prepared by Shri Charan Singh, Senior Technical Assistant. These notes were finally edited by the Editorial Board constituting Shri P. L. Sondhi, Director of Census Operations, Punjab, Shri H. S. Kwatra, P.C.S., Deputy Director of Census Operations, Punjab, Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty, Office of the Registrar General, India and Shri G. S. Pabla, Tabulation Officer and myself. I am also thankful to Shri H. S. Dhingra who typed out the drafts of these reports and Shri K. D. Sharma, Proof Reader who helped me in reading and seeing the Volume in the Press.

My thanks are due to Shri Gurpartap Singh Srao, Deputy Controller, Printing and Stationery Department Chandigarh, (U.T.) for his personal attention in the printing of this volume.

I take the opportunity to express my thanks to all the colleagues who collaborated in this Project.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator, who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefited not only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies as well as the other studies conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India. Under his guidance the scope of Social Studies by the Census Organisation has been further expanded. In spite of his other pre-occupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

BATWAL

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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BATWAL

1. Identity

The Batwals have been declared among the Scheduled Castes in Punjab, J. & K. and the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh according to President's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956. In Jammu and Kashmir,—*vide* President's Order of 1956, Barwala Community has been notified as a separate scheduled caste, though Batwal and Barwala are considered to be synonyms on the basis of the rigidity of their caste occupation. Regarding the synonymity of these two names it would be interesting to mention the views expressed by different writers. According to Ibbetson, "Barwala and Batwal are two words used almost indifferently to express the same thing, the former being more commonly used in the lower hills and the latter in the mountain ranges of Kangra. In Chamba both names are current as synonyms. But I have separated the figures, because the Batwal of Kangra is a true caste while Barwala is little more than the name of an occupation. Both words correspond very closely with the Lahbar or Balahar of the plains and denote the village watchman or messenger. In the higher hills this office is almost confined to the Batwals, while in the lower hills it is performed by men of various low castes who are all included under the generic term of Barwala. These men are also the coolies of the hills, and in fact occupy much the same position there as is held by the Chamars in the plains, save that they do not tan or work in leather. In Kangra they are also known as Kirawak or Kirauk, a word which properly means a man whose duty it is to assemble coolies and others for *begar* or forced labour and they are also called Satwag or "bearers of burdens". ....The term Barwala seems to be current also in Jalandhar, Amritsar, Lahore, and Sialkot, as considerable numbers are returned for these districts. In the higher ranges and where they are known as Batwal, they are almsot all Hindus, but when they decend to the lower hills or plains and take the name of Barwala they are almost entirely Muslman" (Ibbetson 1881-p.338). From the above account it is possible that the nomenclatural variation might be due to the difference in the religious belief of these communities. However, at the time of 1961 census, this community has been returned under the name 'Batwal' both from the mountains and plains. It also appears that the name Batwal has been homogeneous with its own social boundaries, and it enjoyed somewhat greater prestige than Barwala as the latter was generic in sense and persons from lowest groups could come into its fold. Rose, at the time of compilation of 'Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province' has recorded about Barwala, Batwal as, "These two names, though probably of different origin, are used almost as synonyms, the former being more common in the lower hills and the latter in the mountain ranges of Kangra. But in Chamba the Barwala is clearly distinct from the Batwal, being a maker of mats and winnowing fans, and the name is probably derived from bara or baria, the kind of grass used for them. Batwal or batwar on the other hand means a tax-collector, and batwal is an ordinary peon of any caste, even a Brahaman, though of course he may be by caste, a Batwal ., but the Batwal has perhaps a slightly higher standing than the Barwala. Indeed the name of Barwala is said to be a corruption of baharwala or "outsider", because like all outcastes, they live in the outskirts of the village" (Rose 1911-II-pp. 66-67). Unlike Ibbetson, Rose has stated that Barwala is distinct from Batwal in Chamba, which appears contradictory to a certain extent; but he gives the distinction between the two that Barwala deals in making mats and winnowing fans from a kind of grass termed as 'bara' or 'baria' and Batwal is usually a peon or tax-collector and latter name is prestigious as compared

to the former. Barwal: Barwala and Batwal have been reported as 'Chaukidars' at the 1891 census and Maclagan has quoted Mr. O'Brien while writing on Batwal, "Mr. O'Brien on the other hand, tells me that he knows of Batwals who are stone cutters like the Bataihras, they are however, outcastes, while the Bataihras, are not" (Maclagan—1891-p.292). It is to be noted that Batera—Bataihra—was returned another caste of stone cutters and masons reported to be enjoying a better status (ref. *ibid*). Batwal were returned as farm labourers (C.I. 1931. J.&K. p. 158). The Barwalas on the other hand were reported to be making mats, winnowing fans, and act as musicians according to Chamba Gazetteer of 1904. Further more from the Himachal Pradesh, 'Bakhala' was reported to be another synonym or local name for Batwal; but its confirmation is lacking.

In the foot-note Rose has stated "The Batwals' folk etymology derives their name from betwal, 'son of a daughter'. A Raja's daughter became enceinte by an illicit amour and was expelled from her father's kingdom. A Chuhra took her to wife, but her child founded the Batwal caste". (Rose—1911-II.p.67). For the purpose of present study, Batwal households in Kangra and Hoshiarpur Districts were contacted in 1962. The informants of the community from Hazipur Thana of tahsil Dasuya in Hoshiarpur District claimed their descent from Rajputs and further reported that their ancestors were expelled from the community due to some act which was considered as immoral according to norms prevalent at that time. Since then their descendants came to be known by the name of 'Batwal' which perhaps meant derogatory in sense. Another version revealed that the name has been derived from '*batta*' (exchange) marriage which was said to be prevalent among certain Rajput household who were said to be ex-communicated and their progeny in due course came to be called as 'Batwal'. The Batwal of Sarah village in Kangra District also claimed themselves from Rajput ancestry admitting themselves to be lower in social status than the Rajputs more popularly known as 'Thakurs'. It was reported that the princes had separated their (Batwal) ancestors on some pretext or the other and thus they were degraded in social status and since those days they have been suffering from social disabilities till very recently. Traditionally, the community was reported to be associated with menial jobs like chowkidars, peons, coolies, and agricultural labourers, etc., but these days they were also reported to have dissociated themselves from their traditional occupation and have professed diversified occupations like cultivation, Government services, animal husbandry and allied works, etc. They are called Batwal by the members of the community themselves and by the members of other communities. A male member is known by the caste name as 'Batwal', whereas female member of the community is called 'Batwali'. The Batwal informants in Hoshiarpur had reported that their ancestors had migrated from Kangra more than six generations ago. They lack information about their original place of migration.

2. Population Distribution

Maximum concentration of the community was returned from Kangra and Gurdaspur Districts. Some hundreds each of the community were returned from Hoshiarpur and Karnal Districts whereas in other districts the strength reported was very slender. According to 1961 census, out of a total of 11,479 persons, in the Punjab State, 6,412 were males and 5,067 females, from which the sex-ratio approximates to 790 females per thousand males. The population of Batwals in J & K and Himachal Pradesh stood at 12,733 and 757 persons, respectively according to 1961 census. Sex wise distribution of the community with respect to rural and urban areas in 1961

census a returned from the 12 districts is furnished below:—

TABLE I

Population as per 1961 Census

Serial No.	Name of the District	Rural/ Urban	Total	Males	Females
1.	Hissar ..	(R)	4	..	4
		(U)	..	..	..
2.	Karnal ..	(R)	473	469	4
		(U)	..	..	..
3.	Ambala ..	(R)	1	1	..
		(U)	7	4	3
4.	Kangra ..	(R)	5,453	2,943	2,510
		(U)	163	87	76
5.	Lahaul and Spiti ..	(R)	3	3	.
		(U)	..	..	..
6.	Hoshiarpur ..	(R)	354	195	159
		(U)	4	..	4
7.	Jullundur ..	(R)	30	3	27
		(U)	51	25	26
8.	Ludhiana ..	(R)	85	38	47
		(U)	172	92	80
8.	Ferozepur ..	(R)	21	13	8
		(U)	..	..	..
10.	Amritsar ..	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	140	79	61
11.	Gurdaspur ..	(R)	4,378	2,380	1,998
		(U)	73	37	36
12.	Bhatinda ..	(R)	23	16	7
		(U)	44	27	17
	Total ..	(R)	10,825	6,061	4,764
		(U)	654	351	303

The abovetable reveal that the population of the community is concentrated more in rural areas.

than in urban area . A table illustrating the distribution of the male and female with respect to age-group is furnished below :—

TABLE 2

Age-group		Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total	Percentage
(0—14)	..	2,382	53·15	2,100	46·85	4,482	39·05
(15—44)	..	2,988	56·60	2,291	43·40	5,279	45·99
(45 and above)	..	1,042	60·72	674	39·28	1,716	14·95
(Age not stated)	..	..	..	2	100·00	2	00·01
Total	..	6,412	55·86	5,067	44·14	11,479	100·00

The table reveals that the distribution of population with respect to age-groups is more or less natural. In Hoshiarpur District their population is sparsed and there were few scattered households in some villages. In Kangra District, according to the local informants Batwals preponderate at the places shown below :—

Tahsil Kangra

Name of the village :—

1. Sarah
2. Bhanala
3. Talwata
4. Relue
5. Ladwara
6. Arjol
7. Charri
8. Gharoh
9. Ghaniara
10. Yole Camp
11. Tramblu
12. Jadrang

Tahsil Palampur

Name of the village :—

1. Pathiar
2. Lalah
3. Chachian
4. Tanda

Tahsil Nurpur

Name of the village :—

1. Jawali
2. Nurpur
3. Bharmar

It was the general view of the informants that the population of Batwal had considerably increased, during the last decade, and new households were coming up after the split of large-sized and joint families.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

As revealed from the available literature and observed during the field study, Batwals live in Kachcha houses situated in the outskirts of the village more often adjacent to the houses of other Harijans. In Kangra District, their houses consist of Kachcha walls plastered with mud from within. The roofs are made of rectangular pieces of slate placed on bamboo structure and fastened together with iron wires. The area of a house premises usually varies from 100 to 200 sq. yards consisting of one room with or without a kitchen, small verandah and also a small kitchen garden attached to the houses in the case of relatively well-off households. Due to shortage of covered area, the accommodation density is considerably high and young boys and girls hardly get separate room to sit and sleep. Two to three children normally share the same cot and bedding.

In Hoshiarpur their houses were reported to be situated round a rectangular or square compound, which is used commonly by all the Batwal households. The dwellings are called '*Chhans*' (huts) when bisloped roofs of straw or '*khar*' grass or thin slabs are raised on the *kachcha* walls. The dwellings are plastered from inside with a paste of mud. All dwellings and huts are guarded against the entry of rainwater. The modern amenities of electricity and tap water are conspicuous by their non-existence. Least attention is devoted for providing light and cross-ventilation and there is invariably poor hygiene and sanitation around the dwellings. During winter all the members of the household have to sleep in suffocation.

4. Dietary Habits

In respect of eating habits Batwals are generally reported non-vegetarian. Their daily meals include chapatis of wheat, or maize flour and '*dal*' (pulses) or vegetables. In the hills, rice is also consumed frequently. Due to economic pressure and high cost of living, they cannot afford to take milk, meat and eggs daily. But on important festive occuasions, they arrange non-vegetarian feasts. Those who keep buffaloes, cows and poultry the produce is sold within the village or in the nearest market. Beef is abjured. Plain tea is served in the morning and at dusk. The informants in Kangra had reported that '*lugra*' (a locally prepared beverage) of rice is a special preparation which they relish. Liquor is said to be consumed on festive occasions and social functions.

5. Dress and Ornaments

The male adults usually wear a '*kamiz*' or '*kurta*' (shirt) together with a '*kachha*' (under wear) or '*pyjama*' (trousers). They use turban to cover the head. '*Pannian*' or '*Pahari Jooti*' made of ordinary leather forms the popular foot wear. The dress of females consists of a '*jumper*', and '*salvar*' (baggy trousers) and a '*dupatta*' or '*chadru*' (scarf) froms the head wear. They expressed that they could hardly afford to wear warm and costly clothes. On special occasions like marriage etc. the women hardly adorn themselves with distinct dress. The only difference reported was that they use some new clothes with some embrodiered patterns on them. The popular ornament used by women was reported as '*Kokka*' (nose-stud) or '*teeli*' (nose-ring) usually of gold or silver. Most of the men wrap their bodies in '*Khesis*' of cotton thread to protect against clod. The children normally move about bare footed. Mostly they keep shorn hair on the head. Beards are shaved, but some keep small moustaches.

6. Language, Education and Literacy

The Batwals in Kangra traditionally speak the dailect known as Kangri or *Pahari boli* which was observed to be having much in common with Panjabi. Except a few songs or dialogues, there is hardly any literature or script of their own. According to Grierson's classification it seems to belong to Indo-Aryan branch of Aryan-sub-family of Indo-European Family of languages. A few words collected during the enquiry are furnished together with their English equivalent as follows :

As spoken by the Batwal	*English equivalent*
Bhat	Rice
Bhujju	Curry
Bhiyaga	Morning
Kuthu	Where
Mata	Very
Minjo	Me
Tijo	You

The words above show that language of Batwals is an integral part of the Pahari dialect. According to 1961 Census data, out of a total of 11,479 persons, 1,118 were returned as literates, revealing the literacy level at 9.74 per cent which

nearly equates with the percentage of literacy (9.64) among the scheduled castes as a whole throughout Punjab. The corresponding figures for literacy percentage of Batwal in J & K and Himachal Pradesh are 4.58 and 13.47 respectively. Break-up of their population into illiterates and literates with reference to educational standard is given below :—

TABLE 3

Area	Total		Illiterates		Literates without Educational level		Educational Level			
							Primary or Junior Basic		*Matriculation and above*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Rural	6,061	4,764	5,154	4,656	532	71	348	35	27	2
Urban	351	303	263	288	40	7	44	8	4	.
Total	6,412	5,067	5,417	4,944	572	78	392	43	31	2

From the above figures, it is calculated that in urban areas the percentage of literacy is 15.75 and 9.38 in rural areas. The reason for the former being higher is that in urban areas better educational facilities exist and parents also appear to be aware of the various concessions and aids given by the Government for the education of Scheduled Caste people.

7. Economic Pursuits

The published literature reveals that traditionally they earned their livelihood by working as 'Chowkidars', peons, coolies and also as agricultural labourers. In this context, Ibbetson is worth quoting, who has discussed the community under the heading "Menials of the Hills" where he says, "Like most hill menials they often cultivate land, and are employed as ploughmen and field labourers by the Rajputs and allied races of the hills who are too proud to cultivate with their own hands. They are true village menials, and attend upon village guests, fill pipes, bear torches, and carry the bride-groom's palanquin at weddings and the like, and receive fixed fees for doing so. In the towns they appear to be common servants" (Ibbetson—1881 p. 338). According to the 1961, Census, they were recorded to be mainly engaged in jobs like 'cultivation, agricultural labour, plantations and livestock care' transport and communication, 'other services', etc., together with the household industry of making *'pattals'* and *'doonas'* (leaf plates and cups).

The occupational classification of Batwals is given as below :—

TABLE 4

WORKERS

Area Rural/Urban	Total			Total Workers		As Cultivators		As Agricultural labourers		In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and allied Activity		At Household Industry	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Rural	10,825	6,061	4,764	3,607	861	1,459	469	530	84	276	164	131	41
Urban ..	654	351	303	165	14	6	1	18	..	2	..	3	..
Total ..	11,479	6,412	5,067	3,772	875	1,465	470	548	84	278	164	134	41

Area Rural/Urban	WORKERS: In Manufacturing other than household industry		In Construction		In Trade and Commerce		In Transport Storage and Communication		In Other Services		Non-Workers		Workers in Special Occupations: *Tanning and currying of Hides and skins*		*Scavenging*	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Rural	91	4	58	..	49	1	174	..	839	98	2,454	3,903	..	..	2	2
Urban	25	3	19	..	6	..	37	..	49	10	186	289	..	1	1	.
Total	116	7	77	..	55	1	211	..	888	108	2,640	4,192	..	1	3	2

Source :—C.I. Pb. 1961. Vol. XIII Pt. V-A.

The statement reveals that out of a total of 11,479 persons, 4,647 were recorded as workers giving a percentage of working force as 40.48. Working force among males and females was calculated to be 58.83 per cent and 17.27 per cent, respectively. In rural and urban areas the percentage of their working force was 41.27 and 27.37, respectively which indicates that their participation rate in economic pursuits is comparatively more in rural areas than in urban areas. 59.52 per cent of their total population has been recorded as 'non-workers' which includes infants, children, students, housewives, disabled persons, beggars, pensioners, rentiers and employment seekers, etc. Further insight reveals that maximum percentage i.e. 41.64 of working force or 16.86 of the population was recorded to be engaged in 'cultivation'. Secondly 21.43 per cent of the workers or 8.68 per cent of the population was recorded to be engaged in 'other services' constituting mainly chowkidars, peons, a few 'patwaris' and some in military and police services. Third important category of occupation was 'agricultural labour' in which 13.60 per cent of the working force or 5.51 per cent of their population is absorbed. 9.51 per cent of the workers or 3.85 per cent of the population were recorded to be engaged in cutting stones, livestock and plantation, etc. 3.76 per cent of the workers were reported to be pursuing the household industry which consisted of preparing leaf plates and leaf cups. 4.54 per cent of the workers were recorded to be absorbed in 'transport storage and communication'. 77 males were engaged in 'construction work' like whitewashing, etc. Smaller percentages of workers were recorded in other categories of occupation. One female from the workers was recorded to be engaged in 'tanning and currying of hides and skins' whereas 3 males and 2 females of the workers were returned to be following scavenging as their occupation though these are hardly admitted to be the caste associated occupations by the informants.

8. Life Cycle

The inquiry in Kangra District has revealed that they give preference if the first child is born in his/her father's father's house but there is hardly any such consideration for the subsequent births. The male birth is preferred and is a source of rejoicing as compared to a female birth. A '*singi*' (an emblem of Bawa Balak Nath) is put in the neck of the new born with the belief of safeguarding it against evil spirits or bad sight. *Dai* (midwife) of their own caste attends to the parturient, but in serious cases help of trained '*Dai*' from the maternity centre is also called, who attends the delivery case irrespective of caste. Customarily '*sootak*' (pollution) was reported to be observed for a span of 40 days following the date of delivery. Five days after the birth of a child '*gutar*' ceremony was reported to be performed in which drops of '*Gánga Jal*' (water of river Ganges) are sprinkled over the members of the family. 'Sidh Dewat is worshipped and girls of the community below puberty are given something to eat. An earthen '*deeva*' (improvised lamp) is lit and incense is burnt and the child administered '*janamghutti*' (a liquid indigenous medicine prepared from herbs) by a person who is thought to be of good fortune and pleasant in temperament with the belief that the child will embrace all qualities of that person. After 3 weeks, the above ritual is repeated and *Sidhs* are propitiated. On this occasion the child's maternal uncle and its mother's father bring '*cholutopu.*' which consists of milk, clothes, one or two ornaments and dry fruits, etc. depending upon their economic soundness. The mother and the new born take bath on this day and the mother starts attending the household chores hernceforth. After three weeks mother is reported to go out for worshipping the well along with other women of the unity where she throws some grains of rice or wheat by prostrating before it. '*Mundan*' (Tonsure) was said to be performed when the child is running in third year or fifth year of age. On this occasion the maternal uncle of the child cuts the first crop of hair and relatives are invited to a feast. Women folk sing songs on this occasion which is locally called '*Hasnu Khelnu*'. It was

also reported that in some cases the first male child is taken either to the temple of Chintpurni or Jawalaji where lambs or goats are offered at the shrines for the welfare of the child. Post-natal care of the mother consists in giving her milk and *'panjiri'* (a sweetmeat prepared from ghee, jaggery, wheat flour, aniseed, thyme seed, etc).

Regarding the institution of marriage 'Batwals', are an endogamous ethnic group and it was also reported that some exogamous groupings also exist which function like *'gotra'*, but they expressed ignorance of the knowledge of any belief and mythology associated with the origin of these divisions. In district Hoshiarpur, they had named Patial, Bharolar, Narial, Zaril and Sapihia as the divisions. According to Rose, "In Kapurthala the Barwala 'gots' are:

Badial	Dhadi	Phankrain
Chakmak	Jhajriha	Raiti
Chandgirain	Nahra	Soner
Chauhan	Pambalia	

With the Chandgirain got the other Batwals have no connection and do not even smoke with them". (Rose-1911 p.-68)*

For negotiating marriage, the names of the exogamous groupings are reported to be scrutinized and it is customary not to marry in one's own, mother's, father's mother's and also mother's mother's grouping or division. In some cases marriages by service and exchange were also reported provided the above mentioned conditions were satisfied. Sale of bride is also common but exact prices could not be ascertained.

About the age at marriage, the 1961 Census data were examined, from which it is revealed that in the age-group (0—14) years out of 2,382 boys and 2,100 girls, 15 males and 55 females were recorded as married establishing the fact that the system of early marriage prevailed among them. This system dominates more in the case of female marriages. Traditionally the Batwals married their girls at an early age. "The Batwals marry their girls at an early age, but allow widow-remarriage, and that too without regard to the husbands brother's claims". (Rose-1911-p. 67). But at the time of enquiry it was reported that they had started marrying their sons and daughters when they entered the later phases of their adolescence. Pre-marital or extramarital relations were reported to be hardly tolerated. The matrimonial alliances are negotiated with the help of relatives. Brahman priest sparingly officiates at their marriage ceremonies. In fact their own priest officiates on such occasions. Rose in this connection has stated "The Batwals have Brahman priests, but they do not conduct their marriage rites : they also avoid contact with them" (Reference: *Ibid*). Ibbetson has also expressed similar view, "Brahmans are said to officiate at the weddings of the Batwals; but if so I suspect it must be an outcaste class of Brahmans" (Ibbetson-1881-p.338). In the age-group (15—44) years, 1,995 males and 1,976 females were recorded as 'married' 879 men and 196 women returned as 'never married' and 106 men and 114 women were recorded as 'widowed'. Only 8 males and 5 females were recorded as 'separated/divorced'. In the age group (45 years and above) out of 1,042 males, and 674 females, 10 males returned as never married', 811 males and 336 females were returned as 'married', 206 males and 335 females were noted as 'widowed' and 15 males and 2 females were recorded as 'separated/divorced'. Amongst 2 females of 'unspecified age', one was a spinster and another married. From the total population of 11,479, 2,821 males and 2,368 females were returned as married. The trend appears to be unusual when ethos regarding the type of marriage is reported to be monogamous. The Batwal population in Karnal District mainly attributes to such a trend where 386 males and only 2 females were returned as 'married'. Particularly in Karnal and generally in the rest of the state a large number of married males are without their female

*This community was not returned from Kapurthala district during 1961 census. It appears that the Barwala of Kapurthala in those days might be Muslims who might have migrated to Pakistan as a result of partition.

counterparts which can be safely attributed to the influx of married male population from the neighbouring areas in search of various economic pursuits.

Betrothal ceremony, locally termed '*Kurmai*' is usually performed when the boy attains the age of 12 years. Boy's father with a relative or caste elder goes to girl's father for negotiations. The boy's father after obtaining the consent of girl's father presents '*taka rupaya*' (2 paisa and a rupee) to him. As was reported, for marrying the Batwal girl rendering of service, was usually resorted to from the side of the betrothed boy. For this purpose usually one male member from the boy's family goes to the girl's house twice a year or so, to offer assistance in their work. This type of visit by the same member continues for about four years in the peak seasons of work and it also keeps both the sides aware of each other's affairs. He also gives some clothes to the girl's father. After about four years, about ten persons are reported usually to go to girl's father's house. On this occasion they are served with a gala feast and some clothes and ornaments etc. are also presented to the boy's father. The date for conducting marriage is got fixed in consultation with a Brahman. Usually one day before the departure of the '*barat*' (marriage procession) or as directed by the Brahman '*batna*' (oil bath prepared from wheat flour, turmeric, mustard oil, and camphor etc.) is applied to the body of the boy by his mother's brother's wife, mother's mother, elder brother's wife, with the purpose of beautifying his complexion. On the day of departure of '*barat*', lunch is served to the members of the community, and '*Telsaund*' (sprinkling of mustard oil drops) on the head of the boy is performed on the same day. After this the boy takes the bath and dresses himself in saffron coloured new clothes A '*sehra*' (marriage chaplet) is tied on the forehead. At the same time '*timol*' or '*tikka*' (applying the vermilion mark on the forehead) ceremony is performed. The relatives offer clothes and money after waving it over the head of the groom. Before departure of the '*barat*' the groom is asked to propitiate the local deities in the village. Dewat Sidh or Bawa Balak Nath is particularly worshipped by the groom and the members of his family. The groom is also reported to wear '*mundran*' (ear-rings) of kneaded flour in his ears, holds a pair of tongs or '*khumdi*' (an iron rod in his hands and a mendicant's '*jholi*' (wallet) hung over his left shoulder , a '*singi*' (an iron emblem of Sidh Dewat in neck) and dressed like this he collects '*kar*' (alms in the form of flour and jaggery). A '*rote*' (big sweet chapati) is baked with the material collected in alms, and small morsels from it are offered to Bawa Balak Nath and the rest of it is distributed among the members of the community. For propitiating '*matarani*' (goddess of smallpox) female children are feasted on '*karah*' (sweet porridge prepared from wheat flour, ghee and Jaggery) and '*babroos*' (round loaves of sweetened flour fried in ghee). '*Guga*' (god of serpents) ballads are also sung on this occasion to propitiate the deity.

Usually the '*barat*' stays at bride's house for a night and returns after lunch the next day. The 'barat' is escorted to stay in the '*dera*' (a place where the marriage party stays). At night the party is served with dinner. In the late hours of night, '*havan*' (sacred fire) is burnt and fire offerings are made to it. Bride's brother presents a ring and '*dhoti*' to the groom. To conduct the '*phera*' or '*lawan*' (circumambulation) there is hardly any 'pandit' Brahman; but bride's elder sister's husband or her father's sister's husband officiates at the occasion and both the groom and the bride are made to walk seven times in clockwise direction round the sacred fire. On this occasion both the bride and the groom are dressed in clothes brought by their respective mother's brothers and the bride wears ivory bangles in her wrists. Some outfits of clothes, a few ornaments and utensils constitute the dowry. After taking lunch the members of the marriage party come back to groom's house and the bride is brought in a palanquin. The bride is reported to go back to her father's house the next day and '*muklawa*' (ceremony permitting the groom and bride to co-habit) is usually said to be performed as decided by the Brahman.

Death Rites and Beliefs

According to Rose, "Batwals either burn or bury their dead." (Rose 1911—p. 67). The dead below the age of 3 years are buried while the dead above this age-group are reported to be cremated. It is believed that if the traditional rites are not performed, the soul of the dead would haunt the other members of the household by appearing in the form of ghosts and witches. If a person breaths his/her last on the cot, it is considered to be inauspicious and a person dying after taking milk is believed to reappear among the species of snake. At the time of last breath the dying person is laid down on the floor and sometimes also made to touch the tail of a fulfleged black (Kapila) cow, which is given in charity afterwards, which is a part of religious beliefs that this cow would lead the person from earth to the doors of heaven and help going across many bloody streams and thorny routes that fall on the way. The females in the house start weeping and beating their breasts as soon the person passes away. The neighbours and relatives come for mourning after hearing the news or message sent by the members of the household of the deceased. The corpse is given a bath with water to which some Ganges water is also added in the belief that this would absolve all the sins committed by the deceased. The corpse is then wrapped in '*khaddar*' (coarse) cloth and placed on the bier prepared from bamboo poles. Some ghee and '*gur*' (jaggery) is put into the mouth of the deceased and the face is shown to the kinsmen and others to have a last glimpse and then it is carried to the crematorium which is usually a bed of stream or river terrace. The kinsmen and caste brethren follow the funeral procession. A man carries fire in an earthen pitcher. After covering half of the distance or at the burning spot itself the earthen pitcher is broken. On the way balls of flour are offered when the funeral procession halts for a moment to take rest, and the females usually accompany only upto this spot and then return. The corpse is put into the pyre and members of the procession also add some twigs and stubbles of dried grass to it and usually the eldest son sets the pyre on fire. When the pyre is fully ablaze the skull of the deceased is struck thrice with a pole. After this the members of the funeral procession return home and take bath. On reaching home the pitchers are emptied and filled again with fresh water. On the third day some bones and ashes of the deceased are collected and thrown in some river or stream or in some gorge. In case of unnatural deaths the ashes are carried to Pehowa for the welfare of the departed soul. Pollution was reported to last for a period of 10 days during which washing of clothes, cutting and dressing of hair is avoided, the wife of the deceased puts off the jewellery and no festivals are celebrated for a period of one year at least. An earthen improvised lamp is lit for 10 days in the house and on the morning of 11th day it is thrown into some stream and on 14th day '*kirya*' ceremony takes place and the eldest son gets his head and beard shaved, which is also termed as '*bhadra*'. On the 16th day '*Solah*' takes place when relatives, friends and caste brethren are invited to feast and some articles of daily use are given in charity to Acharaj Brahman. '*Sharadhs*' or anniversaries are hardly observed by the Batwals, though not conspicuous by their omission altogether.

9. Religious Beliefs and Practices

According to 1961 census, out of a total of 11,479 persons 6,394 males and 5,060 females were recorded as Hindus and 18 males and 7 females were recorded as Sikhs. The enquiry had revealed that they mostly followed '*Sanatanist* (oldest) Hindu religion and believe in all the Hindu gods and goddesses and propitiate sun, moon, earth, fire and water etc. Principally, they worship Lord Krishna, Rama, Guru Nanak Saheb, Shiva and the 'Sidhs'. The other important deities were reported to be the 'Lakhdata', *Khawaja Pir* (god of water), '*Guga*' (god of

Serpents) and goddesses like *Bhagwati Devi* of Kangra, *Kali of Calcutta*, '*Matarani*' (goddess of small-pox). The modes of worship and propitiation were reported as, Lord Rama is worshipped on Ram Navami in (March-April) and Lord Krishna on Janamashtami in (August-September) by keeping fasts, Guru Nanak Saheb on 'Purnima' (full-moon) in Kartik (October-November) and Shiva on 'Shivratri' in the month of Jayashta (May-June) by offering grains of wheat, money, flowers etc. The *Sidhs* are worshipped at various occasions but particularly when some one falls ill. The *Devis* were reported to be worshipped. during 'Navratras' of '*Chetra*' (April-May) and 'Asuj' (September-October) both at their respective shrines and at the house. *Dewat Sidh* or Bawa Balak Nath is worshipped by offering a portion of harvest in the form of 'rote' prepared from it. 'Khawaja' (god of water) is reported to be worshipped by sitting in the middle of some shallow rivulet or nullah and by offering '*dalia*' (a sweet porridge prepared from wheat flour or rice), curd, 'ghee', flowers and incense etc. The sun is worshipped in early morning by offering '*argh*' (water) to it and prostrating before it. Some salt and money is offered in the name of '*guga*' every year. Female children are feasted to avoid the displeasure of 'matarani'. Sidh Chano is propitiated for the welfare of the cattle. Diseases, physical and mental, are usually attributed to the displeasure of their deities and for their cure, they approach '*chelas*' (disciple followers of the *sidhes*) who are thought to be experts in exorcism and sorcery. For treatment of barrenness and sterility they also approach 'chelas' and very often prostrate before the '*Gaddis*' (seats) of 'sidhs', namely, Bawa Palohwala, Bawa Luthru, and Bawa Balak Nath. Incense is burnt at their '*dhoonis*' (bon-fire) and their ashes being considered as sacred are eaten and smeared on their bodies and foreheads with the belief that Sidhs would shower blessings on their devotees. Like all other Hindus, the important festivals like Diwali, Dussehra, Lohri, Shivaratri, Holi etc. are celebrated by this community also. The informants in Kangra reported that they attend fairs like '*Raje da mela*' held at Rait Dera '*Shivratri da mela*' held at Gang Bhairon etc.

10. Social Status and Control

The Batwals were reported to be lower in social status as compared with the other Hindu castes, namely Brahman, Rajput, Jats, Ghumar, Lohar, Tarkhan, Nai, Ghirath, Doomna, Chamar, Julaha and Sarera etc. in the area. Traditionally, they have been treated as untouchables and were not allowed to fetch water from common well. Though there has been a general awareness among the people that untouchability has been abolished by law, yet the Batwals have been conditioned to keep themselves away from the wells, *bowaries* (sources of drinking water fed by springs) and temples of *swarnas*. It was also reported that in Kangra the school-going children of Batwal were hardly allowed to take water from the common earthen pitchers. They had to ask somebody belonging to 'swarnas' to serve them water. However, the social disability was observed to be disappearing now as compared to the past. Social distance is not rigidly observed, by the young and educated people of the upper clean castes. The social control of Batwals, was in the hands of a caste panchayat about 3 decades ago but it was reported by the informants that this 'panchayat' had become defunct now. At the time of survey it was reported that the household disputes were usually settled by caste elders and village headman or landlords. The complicated matters are referred to the statutory village panchayats. Being small in number and occupying a low position in the social hierarchy, it was reported that they find it difficult to contest elections of statutory panchayats and usually take a community decision to vote and support other scheduled caste candidate having a parallel social status with Batwals.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

BHANJRA

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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BHANJRA

1. Identity

The Bhanjra has been declared a scheduled caste throughout the Punjab State and in Himachal Pradesh *vide* President's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modifications) Order, 1956. In Himachal Pradesh Dumne together with 'Bhanjre' in parenthesis is listed separately as a Scheduled Caste *vide* the same order. Mahanjra has been reported as a synonym of Bhanjra throughout Himachal Pradesh. The economic pursuits of Bhanjras and other ways of life are very much common with Dumnas. While compiling a Glossary on Tribes and Castes, Rose has stated, "Bhanjra, a synonym for Dumna in the lower hills of Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur. He makes sieves, winnowing fans and other articles of grass and bamboo. Like the Sansois, Sarials and Daolls, the Bhanjras may be regarded as an occupational group of the Dumnas, with whom they intermarry". (Rose. H.A.; A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab, And North-West Frontier Province. Vol. II, 1911. p. 84.)

In district Hoshiarpur majority of the population reported that Bhanjra and Dumna constitute the same caste, though the former name is more familiar in the plains, and the latter is customarily used in the hills which considerably support the views expressed by Rose. It was also reported that Bhanjra is more or less a generic name fancifully derived from 'bhanj' which in the local dialect means bamboo from which they prepare various articles like 'chicks' (blinds) baskets, winnowing fans etc. The enquiry conducted in Jullundur District revealed that the community is known by various names at different places. In Kangra District they are familiarly called 'Doomna', in Ambala District as '*chiksaaz*' (blind-maker) and in Una Tehsil of Hoshiarpur District as Sansoi. However, Sansoi is the name of another Scheduled Caste which is primarily engaged in the collection of gold particles from the river and stream beds. As some Bhanjras also professed to washing of sand for gold, in the past, they were popularly known as Sansoi. The relationship of Bhanjra with Dumna has been expressed by Ibbetson as, "The Dumna called also Domra, and even Dum in Chamba, is the Chuhra of the hills proper, and is also found in large numbers in the submontane districts of Hushyarpur and Gurdaspur. Like the Chuhra of the plains, he is something more than a scavenger; but whereas the Chuhra works chiefly in grass, the Dumna adds to this occupation the trade of working in bamboo, a material not available to the Chuhra. He makes sieves, winnowing pans, fans, matting, grass rope and string, and generally all the vessels, baskets, screens, furniture and other articles which are ordinarily made of bamboo. When he confines himself to this sort of work and gives up scavengering, he appears to be called Bhanjra, at any rate in the lower hills, and occasionally Sarial ; and I have included 261 Bhanjras and 31 Sarials in my figures. In the Jalandhar division Bhanjras were not returned separately from Dumnas" (Ibbetson D.C.J., Report on the Census of the Panjab—1881. p. 338). From the foregoing statement of Ibbetson it appears that Bhanjra is an occupational group of Dumna, who have strived to confine themselves to bamboo work and have left scavengering and for this reason appear to look upon the term Dumna as opprobrious. The term Bhanjra is considered to be higher in the social hierarchy. It seems that the bi-nomenclature of this caste has emerged on account of occupational diversity professed by the two groups. But it is difficult to draw a dividing line between the two groups as they overlap each other and the social boundaries appear to be invisible. However, in common parlance Bhanjra appears to be slightly higher in social status. Rose writes, "Dumna, a low sweeper caste, also called Bhanjra, in the hills and in Gurdaspur, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur. They make chiks, baskets, etc. of bamboo and do menial service" (Rose. H.A., A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province—Vol. II, 1911—p. 250).

From this reference Dumna and Bhanjra appear to be synonyms. At the time of 1891 Census, as in 1881, Bhanjras (also Bhenjar and Bhangra) were included among Dumna and also the Rachalia or weavers, brush makers, in Jalandhar ; but Daola and Brar were separately classed in the returns of 1891 (ref; Maclagan E.D; Census of India 1891 Vol. XIX, The Punjab and its Feudatories. Part I. Report on the Census p. 299). Sirdar Arjan Shah Singh has reported about the Bhanjara as, "The Bhanjaras of the plains are similar to Dumnas of the hills. They are generally Hindus by religon and bamboo-workers by occupation. Most of the chick-makers come from this caste". (C. Patiala State—1931—p.208). From this account it is revealed that this caste is popular by the name of Bhanjras in plains and Dumna in the hill and that they are Hindus by religion. During the inquiry it was reported at both the places that Dumnas have been following the occupation of beating drums and participating in the band orchestra at marriages and doing their traditional occupation of bamboo industry. Bhanjras also play upon musical instruments at marriages but they have switched on to cultivation, cane industry, agricultural labour along with their traditional occupation of preparing articles of bamboo wood. The information about Dumna as reported by the above authority during 1931 Census is also worth mentioning. "Like Dagi and Koli castes, Dumnas are also a low caste people. They are met in Kandeghat Tehsil and live by beating drums on ceremonial occasions, and by making baskets, when not otherwise engaged. They have nothing in common with the "Dooms" of the plains, who are generally Mohammadans by religion and called Mirasis" (Ref. *Ibid.* p.201). The members of the other castes call a male of the community by the name of *Bhanjra* and a female by *Bhanjri* and say that they have a social status on the lower steps of social hierarchy. It may be noted that Bhanjra may not be confused with Banjara which is another Scheduled Caste with its own social boundaries in the state of Mysore and Union Territories of Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. About the etymology of the term Bhanjra and its origin, the informants report that they derive their descent from Rajputs. The narration goes that once their ancestors fled from the battle-field and took shelter in the hills and consequently they came to be known by the name Bhanjra derived from '*Bhajana*' (in Punjabi means to flee). According to another version, they associate themselves with bamboos. According to a legend current among them, Paras Ram had taken a pledge to kill all the Kshatryas, but Lord Rama wanted to rescue them from Paras Ram's hands and it is said that He through spiritual powers converted all the Kshatryas into bamboo trees. Paras Ram getting furious, ordered his servants to cut all the bamboo trees, and they in course of time adopted bamboo industry as a means of livelihood and the 'Bhanjras' under study claim their descent from those servants A similar legend with minor variation was reported by the informants in Jullundur District It is difficult to have historical verification of these legends.

From the foregoing account there seems to be some justification for treating Bhanjra as an ethnic offshoot of 'Dumna'. Occupationally the caste is identified through the traditional occupation of preparing chiks, furniture, baskets matting, sieves, winnowing fans etc. from bamboo and adding to their industry the preparation of *patta's* (leaf platters), canning chairs and also participating in band parties etc. It may also be noted that their women augment to the income of household by helping their male counterpart in the bamboo industry. For the purpose of present study, the Bhanjras of Hoshiarpur and Jullundur Districts were surveyed and the field work was completed in 1962.

2. Population Distribution

According to 1961 Census the total population of Bhanjra community in the Punjab State was 3,702 whereas in Himachal Pradesh 1,264 persons were returned. In the Punjab State, Hoshiarpur District represented the area of their maximum concentration reporting 1,418 persons. The sex ratio of the community approximates to 971

females per thousand males. The distribution of their sex-wise population with respect to rural and urban areas is furnished in the table below:-

TABLE I

Serial No.	Name of the District	Rural/ Urban	Population as per 1961 Census		
			Total	Males	Females
1	Hissar	(R)	1	1	..
		(U)	2	1	1
2	Rohtak	(R)	40	9	31
		(U)	1	1	..
3	Gurgaon	(R)	46	30	16
		(U)	..	..	..
4	Karnal	(R)	18	1	17
		(U)	9	6	3
5	Ambala	(R)	510	257	253
		(U)	195	113	82
6	Simla	(R)	478	278	200
		(U)	32	19	13
7	Kangra	(R)	272	142	130
		(U)	..	..	..
8	Lahaul and Spiti	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	..	..	..
9	Hoshiarpur	(R)	1,149	511	638
		(U)	269	151	118
10	Jullundur	(R)	64	32	32
		(U)	309	169	140
11	Ludhiana	(R)	7	2	5
		(U)	64	36	28
12	Ferozepur	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	12	5	7
13	Amritsar	(R)	4	..	4
		(U)	7	6	1
14	Gurdaspur	(R)	11	9	2
		(U)	..	..	..
15	Kapurthala	(R)	26	10	16
		(U)	112	49	63
16	Bhatinda	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	8	8	..
17	Sangrur	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	1	1	..
18	Patiala	(R)	18	12	6
		(U)	37	19	18
19	Mahendragarh	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	..	..	...
	Total Punjab	(R)	2,644	1,294	1,350
		(U)	1,058	584	474

It is seen from the above table that their population preponderates in rural areas, and in

a few districts they have been recorded sparsely in the urban areas alone. A table giving the distribution of males and females with respect to age-groups and corresponding percentage proportions is furnished below:—

TABLE 2

Age-group		Males	Percent-age	Females	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age
(0—14)	..	849	52·63	764	47·37	1,613	43·57
(15—44)	..	676	46·49	778	53·51	1,454	39·28
(45 and above)	..	350	55·56	280	44·44	630	17·02
(Age not stated)	..	3	60·00	2	40·00	5	0·13
Total	..	1,878	50·73	1,824	49·27	3,702	100·00

From the above table the trend of distribution of population with respect to age, sex and corr esponding percentage proportions appears to be normal. Age of 5 persons could not be ascertained at the time of enumeration.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

Usually Bhanjras are found to be living in thatched huts and houses both in the suburbs of towns and towards one side of the villages. Some of them are reported to have taken houses on rent in cities and those who cannot afford the rent charges, still live in their encampments. Their dwellings in towns consist of hardly one or two rooms. In many cases, the houses are found in dilapidated conditions. It is very difficult to maintain the modesty of the married couples as everybody sleeps under the same roof. There is hardly any provision for a separate kitchen. The rooms are dark and dingy from inside and hygienic conditions are very poor. In the lower hilly areas the huts are generally built on some bulging piece of land in one corner of the main village habitation. They have no access to the common source of drinking wat The huts in the hills are reported to be m spacious than those in the plains but labour costlier than the construction material. T stones and earth are required for the walls an thatched roof is supported on wooden bea and rafters, and traditionally there exists rec procity in the matter of manual labour, whic has now been reported to be dwindling awa resulting in high costs of new construction The dwellings or huts are guarded against rai water lest these should leak from any side. Th people believe in the super powers of variou gods like '*Khawaja*' (god of water), '*Gugg* (god of snakes) etc. The evil effects of the powers are warded off through some religiou observances before occupying the house. Fo '*shub mahurat*' (auspicious occasion) the consult the Brahman priests or some '*chela* (sorcerers) in the area. At the time of starting new construction boiled gram and jaggery ar distributed and at the time of completion boiled and sweetened rice are distributed amon the members of the community.

4. Dress and Ornaments

Traditionally, the dress of a male consists of a *'kamiz'* (shirt). For covering the pubic region a *'kachha'* (underwear) is used and for covering the lower extremities a *'pyjama'* (trousers) of a *'dhoti'* (waist cloth) is used. A *'safa'* (turban) is the traditional head-gear. During winter season they wrap themselves in a *'khes'* (a coarse sheet of cloth) or a blanket. Coats, Pantaloons, socks and sweaters are also becoming popular among the well-to-do and educated sections of the community. Ordinary local leather shoes is the popular foot-wear. Women usually use *'kurti'* (a sort of shirt) or a jumper. To cover the lower extremities they wear *'salwar'* and a *'dupatta'* (scarf) forms their head-gear. An ordinary leather shoes, sleepers, or sandals forms the foot-wear of the females. Tattooing was reported to be a common feature particularly among the females about two decades ago; but presently it is reported to be disappearing. The females wear only light jewellery. Finger rings of silver and gold, *'koka'* (nose-stud) usually of gold, *'nath'* (nose-ring) either of gold or silver are the common ornaments) worn by the females. Young and unmarried grown-up girls wear ordinary metallic and glass bangles on their wrists. They also wear *'pazebs'* of silver in their ankles. The use of costly jewellery and sophisticated patterns of ornaments are on the decrease on account of economic pressures.

5. Food Habit

Generally Bhanjras are reported to be non-vegetarian. Chapatis of wheat, gram and maize ; and rice, *'dal'* (pulses) and vegetables form their staple food. Beef is abjured. Fish and eggs are consumed. Smoking of *'bidis'* cigarettes, and hubble-bubble is popular among the males, and very common in use on social gatherings. Liquor is consumed, but hemp and opium are also infrequently used. Spices are used in cooking food. Those who can afford, take tea once or twice. A few have got goats and domesticated poultry also.

6. Language and Literacy

In the plains, Bhanjras are reported to converse in Punjabi in their day-to-day matters. The Bhanjras in the hills also understand Punjabi; but minor linguistic variations are reported from region to region. According to 1961 census data, out of a total of 3,702 persons, 493 persons were returned as literates giving a literacy percentage of 13.32 which is a bit higher than the percentage of literacy (9.64) among the Scheduled Castes as a whole in Punjab State. The percentage of literacy of Bhanjras in Himachal Pradesh approximates to 11.47. Break-up of the community into illiterates and literates with and without educational level is furnished in the table below :—

TABLE 3

Area	Total		Illiterates		Literates without educational level		Educational level			
							Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculation and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Urban ..	584	474	412	426	68	27	95	21	9	..
Rural ..	1,294	1,350	1,057	1,314	146	26	85	10	6	..
Total ..	1,878	1,824	1,469	1,740	214	53	180	31	15	..

The above data reveal that the percentages of literacy in urban and rural areas aproximate

to 20.79 and 10.32 respectively, the reason for the former being higher is that comparatively better educational facilities exist in urban areas as compared to rural areas. It was reported that now they have felt the need of the educating their children and some of them are taking initiative in that direction.

7. Economic Pursuits

As already mentioned, the Bhanjras' traditional occupation is the bamboo industry pertaining to the preparation of chiks (screens), furniture, baskets, matting, sieves, winnowing fans, coupled with allied industries like preparing *'pattals'* (leaf platters) and canning of chairs. Some of them are carrying over to cultivation, agricultural labour, 'other services' and also participating in band parties etc. It is to be noted that their women also participate in their economic pursuits especially in their household industry. The articles of bamboo wood, and leaf platters etc. are either sold by hawking in the villages and towns or by setting up evening stalls along the foot-paths in the bazar. The break up of population with respect to industrial categories as returned in 1961 census shows that out of 3,702 persons, (40.09%), were recorded as workers. It is interesting to note that about one-third of their working force constitutes females. (40.02%) and 40.26% of their population in rural and urban areas respectively constitute the working force, revealing levels of equality in the participation rates of working force in the two areas. Further, 21.39% of their population or more than half of the working force was recorded to be engaged in their 'Household Industry' of preparing articles of bamboo and leaves etc. 9.45 per cent of their population or 23.58% of the working force, which is second in its order was returned to be engaged in 'cultivation' though very few of the Bhanjras possess land with occupancy rights and their holdings are very small. 10.71% of working force is engaged in other services constituting jobs like clerks, and peons, etc. About 6% of the workers are recorded to be engaged in 'Manufacturing other than Household Industries' but the type of industry could not be ascertained during the survey. 27 persons (19 males and 8 females) were returned to be working as agricultural labourers, 31 persons (29 males and 2 females) were returned to be engaged in 'Construction' and 25 males were recorded to be engaged in 'Transport Storage and Communication'. Very insignificant number of workers were engaged in other categories of occupations. It may be alluded that none of the Bhanjras has been reported to be engaged in occupations like 'Tanning and Currying of Hides and Skins' and 'Scavenging'. The analysis of occupational structure reveals that the 'Household Industrsy' still holds a pivotal position.

8. Life Cycle

The conception is associated with the stoppage of menstrual flow at the initial stage and bulging of the belly at the advance stage. Barrenness is considered to be inauspicious, while prevention of conception is regarded as sinful. In the later phase of first pregnancy the enceinte is usually sent to her father's house, where she gets pre-natal care from the old women of the house. Her movement outside the house is restricted, and she is also asked to avoid meeting the widows and to see the eclipsed sun or moon, with which is associated the belief that it will deform the foetus in the womb. Regarding her diet, she is advised to avoid taking meat, and pulses of *'mash'* or *'urad'* (phaseolus-mungo) and grams; but light diet enriched with fats is recommended. An untrained but experienced 'dai' (midwife) of their own caste is called to attend the delivery case. The enceinte is given hot milk which is further emulsified with addition of 'ghee' to help deliver the child comparatively with less labouring. For delivery usually a separate place is arranged in the house and the male adult are tabooed to go near the parturient. The umbilical cord is cut with scissors and buried outside. In case a male child is born, who is preferred to a female, mango leaves are tied at the door. A pot of water, a match box, a piece of iron and a sieveful of grains

are kept below the parturient's cot, which is believed to scare away the evil spirits. At the time of birth, some sweet thing like honey is put into the baby's mouth. Traditionally the pollution period lasts for 40 days; but in usual practice, it is reported that the mother enters the circumscribed portion of the kitchen after 13 days. A child who is born in the month of 'Kartik' (October-November) is weighed against grains which is given to the 'dai', so as to counteract the evil effects believed to be associated with this month. For about 10 days after birth the parturient is fed on light diet; but ghee and milk is served in abundance if it is within means. A sweet preparation of ghee, wheat flour, ginger, dry fruits etc. is given to the mother of the new born. On the 13th day after birth mango tree is said to be worshipped by the parturient who is accompanied by other women and the ritual associated with it, is the offering of water, '*parsad*' (sacred food) and prostrating before the mango tree. After 1¼ month the crop of hair at the head of the baby is cut. The child is fed on mother's milk for about a year. The child is usually weaned from mother's milk by applying something bitter at the nipples. The name for the child is suggested by the parents or by the relatives.

For negotiating marital ties the help of a go-between is usually sought. It was reported that among the Bhanjras there exist several exogamous divisions but they expressed ignorance of the origin of their names and etymological significance . The exogamous division reported by them with minor variations in pronunciation are furnished below:—

1. Ajauriye
2. Amoroiye
3. Bhagalu
4. Bhatti
5. Chanauriye
6. Dhadwal
7. Dhialchu
8. Ghanarsey
9. Gharial
10. Gunariye
11. Jaghial
12. Jaswal
13. Jaward
14. Kalerhiye
15. Khatiarh
16. Narial
17. Narharchey
18. Magruriye
19. Malpotey
20. Palial
21. Panjoriye
22. Salorhiye
23. Sallan.

For regulating marriage, names of the exogamous groupings are examined. A man does not marry a woman of the same patronymic grouping to which his father or mother belongs and similarly of the same matronymic grouping. Cross cousin and parallel cousin marriages are reported to be tabooed. Marriage by exchange is permissible. Bride-price was reported to exist; but its value could not be ascertained; and in case of divorce, according to the caste sanctions, the father of the woman or the new husband pays '*riti*' (a traditional amount) of Rs 300 to Rs 900 to the divorced husband.

Pertaining to the age at marriage, a glance at the 1961 census figures shows that from the age-group (0—14) years, out of 849 boys and 764 girls; 13 males and 51 females were returned as married from which it is implied that system of child marriage exists among this community. From among the age-group (15—44) years which corresponds to the reproductive age span, out of 778 females, 645 females were returned as 'married' 206 males and 90 females were recorded as 'never married', 39 males and females each were recorded as 'widowed', 8 males and 1 female were returned as 'divorced or separated' and 3 females were recorded of unspecified status. Among the elderly (45 and above years) group of persons out of 350 and males 280 females only 10 males were recorded as 'never married', 256 males, 165 females were recorded as 'married',

80 males and 111 females were returned as widowed, 4 males and females each were recorded as 'devorced or separated'. Age of 3 males and 2 females could not be stated and from these, 2 males and 1 female were returned as 'never married' and 1 male and female each were recorded as 'married'. Polygynous unions are also reported to exist among them.

Traditionally, early marriage was reported to be prevalent, after which '*muqlawa*' (connubial co-habiting of the husband and wife) ceremony used to be performed at a later stage. But now the pendulum has swung in the other direction and marriages are mostly solemnized when the boys and girls quite grow up in age. Premarital and extramarital sexual relations are hardly tolerated both within and outside the '*biradri*'. It is reported that a healthy and hard-working boy is preferred over the wealthy as a spouse for the girl. For negotiations, the party thinking itself desirable at the instance of the go-between and caste elders, approaches the other party, but usually the party from the girl's side takes the initiative. If both the parties agree, the father of the girl offers one rupee and a '*chhuara*' (dry date fruit) to the boy. The marriage date is fixed in consultations with the Brahmin either from the Arya Samaj sect or from the Sanatanists. If no such Brahman is available, then they engage their own priest. Before marriage '*myian*' (oil bath) ceremony is performed which consists of rubbing '*butna* (an abstergent paste constituting turmeric powder, mustard oil, gram flour etc.) both on the body of the boy and the girl at their respective places, after which they take bath. Customarily the groom and the birde wear the clothes presented by their respective maternal uncles. The groom's elder brother's wife applies collyrium (antimony) to the groom's eyes. Sister (s) of the groom hold his *injhri* (end of the sheet of cloth placed on the shoulders of the groom) and accompany in a procession to see him off. The *barat* (marriage party) usually consisting of about 20 persons, leaves for bride's village. *Milani* (a ceremonial introductory meeting) is held in which bride's father offers one rupee and a '*pag*' (turban) to the groom's father. Dinner is served at night. In the morning marriage is solemnized by conducting '*pheras*' (circumambulation) five times round the sacred fire. The Officiating priest recites hymns and imparts instructions to the couple and after this the father of the bride performs '*sirjori*' i.e. makes the spouses to touch each other's hands. The items of dowry usually consist of a few clothes, orraments and utensils etc. After taking lunch the marriage party returns home along with the bride. Usually the bride returns to her parents on the third day. '*Muqlawa*' ceremony depends upon the ages of the spouses. If the bride has reached puberty and the groom is fully grown up then they start co-habiting after marriage. To keep a girl as unmarried after puberty, is considered to be socially undesirable in the community. Marriage is patriloçal and the descent is patri'lineal. Widow remarriage is permissible. General ethos regarding the type of marriage is monogamy.

Death Rites and Beliefs

Bhanjras have the belief that the death of a person is controlled by God and '*Yamraj*' is thought to be the god of death, and the flight of soul from the mortal frame is considered death. According to their eschatology '*Yamraj*' is believed to send his servants who take out the soul from the human body and the diseases are the mere nominal pretence for death. After the *Yamraj* has issued somebody's death warrant, no doctor can defy it. They believe in life after death and a person who dies after taking milk is thought to become a snake in his next life. A man who dies on the cot is thought to have met a very inauspicious end. Just at the time of last breath, the body is laid flat on the floor. Infants and children upto 12 years are buried. The corpse of an adult is first given a bath and then wrapped in clothes and placed on a bamboo '*arthi*' (bier) to be carried to the '*shamshan*' (cremation ground). The bier is followed by a funeral procession uttering in unison '*Ram Nam Sat Hai*'. The corpse is placed on the pyre, to which the members

of the procession also add twigs of grass or wood. The head of the corpse is placed towards the North and feet towards the South. Elder son, brother or some near relative sets the pyre on fire. The ashes are collected after two days and immersed in Ganges or in some other sacred river. Mourning continues for ten days and for this period, an earthen lamp is lit in the house and on the 11th day it is quietly taken to some street and placed there. Charities are offered in the name of deceased. *Kirya Karam* (funeral last rites) are performed on the 13th or 16th day depending upon the age of the deceased. The priests are offered feast in the belief that the soul of the deceased would not haunt the house. On this day sixteen *dunas* (leaf cups) are filled with *urad* (phaseolus mungo) pulse *til* (seasamum) rice and two pice coins and are sprinkled with water and the members of the deceased's family bow before them with folded hands. The Brahman is offered two rupees and a cot.

9. Religious Beliefs and Practices

Some Bhanjras profess Hindu religion and others profess Sikh religion. From their population of 3,702 persons, 1,842 males and 1,793 females both from the rural and urban areas were returned as Hindus and 36 males and 31 females were recorded as Sikhs. Hindu Bhanjras believe in all the gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, while the Sikh Bhanjras believe in tenets of Sikh Gurus. Many of the Hindu Bhanjras were reported to follow the *Arya Samaj Sect* and *Sanatan Dharam* as well. Lord Rama is believed to be the supreme diety as revealed from thier *rites-de-passage*. The Bhanjras reported that they worship *Baba Buland Dev* of Mukerian town in district Hoshiarpur. It is said that Baba Buland Dev wanted his temple to be at a place where *basil* (a local variety of plant) grew. The *basil* plant grew at Mukerian and consequently a temple in the diety's honour was built at this place. The people make vows before the diety for fulfilment of their wishes. After the fulfilment, they offer the vowed things like *karah parsad* (sanctified food) rice, and flag, etc. They also have faith in '*Sidhs*' in the hills, and the important '*Sidhs*' propitiated by them are *Bawa Balak Nath, Bawa Bharthri.* Goddesses like *Mata Rani, Jawala ji, Kali, Mansa Devi* are the other objects of veneration. *Gugga* (the god of serpents) *Khawaja* (god of water) and *Pir Lalanwala* or *Sakhisarwar* are also said to be propitiated. They prostrate before the shrines of these dieties and generally offer a *rote* (baked sweet chapati) to mollify them. Most of the diseases are attributed to the *Sidhs* and goddess *Matarani.* Some of them offer a he-goats at the shrines of Balak Nath. Some are reported to consult *chelas* (sorcerers) in such matters. It appears that the power of imitation plays its own role in the religious observances of Bhanjras, as some of them inspite of returning themselves to be the followers of Arya Samaj Sect, yet indulge in the rigmarole not accepted by the sect, like worshipping idols, feeding the insects offering sacrifices of he-goats etc. and propitiating other deities too. The Samaj is actually averse to polytheism and pantheism and inculcates vegetarianism and abstinence from spirituous drinks and smoking, etc. as evidenced by *Vedas* with which the nuclear beliefs of the Arya Samajists are associated. Firmness about their religious belifes has been reported lacking and usually they change their views and take stand according to the social and religious doldrums.

They observe all the important Hindu festivals like Dewali, Dussehra, Lohri, Holi, Janamashtami, Shivratri, Baisakhi and the Sikh Bhanjras observe the 'Gurpurbs' and venerate 'Guru Granth Saheb'.

10. Social Status

The Bhanjras, as revealed from the available literature and this enquiry appear to rank in the lower middle zone of the social hierarchy. They appear to be nearly equal social status to Dumna, Sanhai and Sansoi Scheduled Castes. They seem to rank higher in social status than Chamar, Chuhra, Gagra, Dhaya, Gandhila and Bangali and much lower to castes like Brahmans, Rajputs, Baniyas, Jats, etc. Traditionally a Bhanjra used to be considered a vile person by the so called

upper castes whose physical touch was thought to be polluting because of his low offices even though he may not be engaged in handling ordure or tanning hides, and was prohibited from taking water from the well of Swarnas. At some places in Hoshiarpur where they are also popularly called as Doomna, such observances were still reported to be in vogue, but less rigidly enforced. Persons of higher castes avoid taking meals cooked by the Bhanjra. A Brahman can accept only uncooked ration from a Bhanjra. A Bhanjra having some land or having a better financial position enjoys comparatively a better status. As the observance of untouchability has been declared an offence under the law, physical distances have been narrowed down and emotional integration is emerging among the younger and educated section of the scheduled and clean caste people.

11. Social Control

The Bhanjras have a caste panchayat at the local level which functions through traditionally recognised leaders and influential individuals belonging to the community. In their habitats they recognise a few intelligent and wise persons locally called as 'daanas'. To decide the caste disputes or feuds, a meeting is convened in which the caste leaders act as assessors. Whenever a party levels allegation against an other, the case is referred to 'daanas' to process the matter and deliver the judgment . 'Daanas' then convene the caste meeting and efforts are made to reach a unanimous decision through general consensus. For taking important decision social sanctions and caste norms are given full weightage. Caste Panchayat decisions are mostly honoured by the contestant parties. However if the parties fail to reach an accepted decision at the hands of 'daanas' the aggrieved party can approach the law court in which the 'daanas' appear as witnesses to support the decision of the caste panchayat. The common punishments inflicted by the caste panchayat range from excommunication from the 'biradri' to a fine varying from Re. 1¼ to Rs. 251, all depending about the nature of the crime. It is reported that all proceedings including the judgments of the caste panchayat are verbal and written records are not maintained. The community panchayat also helps in the collection of contribution for a community feast and fixing the remuneration rates for various functionaries (like barber, priest, carpenter, musician etc.) engaged at different stages completing the human life cycle.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

DUMNA, MAHASHA OR DOOM

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

(31-32)

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DUMNA, MAHASHA OR DOOM

1. Identity

Dumna, Mahasha or Doom has been recognised as a Scheduled Caste throughout the Punjab State according to President's 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956.' In Himachal Pradesh, Doom or Doomna, and Dumne (Bhanjre) have been separately noted as scheduled castes,—*vide* the order *ibid*. The community with minor variations in spellings and pronunciation of its identity from region to region is found almost all over the country, as is revealed from the order *ibid*. Whether the community is homogeneous or not the ethnographer finds it difficult to state until discerning and authentic data are made available from different States and Territories. The community under the nomenclature Dom, Dome, Doom, Dum, Dumna/Dumne, etc. is noted as denotified tribe in Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Orissa States and is noted as a nomadic tribe in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Maharashtra, Mysore, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. It would be interesting to examine some of the authentic literature on Dumna caste in Punjab and surrounding areas. Ibbetson is worth mentioning who has stated, that "The Dumna called also Domra, and even Dum in Chamba, is the Chuhra of the hills proper, and is also found in large numbers in the sub-montane districts of Hushyarpur and Gurdaspur. Like the Chuhra of the plains he is something more than a scavenger but whereas the Chuhra works chiefly in grass, the Dumna adds to his occupation the trade of working in bamboo, a material not available to Chuhra. He makes sieves, winnowing pans, fans, matting, grass rope and string, and generally all the vessels, baskets, screens, furniture and other articles which are ordinarily made of bamboo. When he confines himself to this sort of work and gives up scavengering, he appears to be called Bhanjra, at any rate in the lower hills..... The Dumna is often called Dum in other parts of India, as in Chamba ; and is regarded by Hindus as the type of uncleanness. Yet he seems once to have enjoyed as a separate aboriginal race some power and importance. He is of course quite distinct from the Dum-Mirasi whom I have classed as "Mirasi". [Ibbetson, 1881-p. 338]. From this account it is revealed that Dumna is engaged in low type jobs like a Chuhra and adds to his occupation the bamboo industry. When he gives up handling filth and unclean jobs, he appears to be called Bhanjra which is thought to be comparatively a prestigious name for the community. Domra and Dum are said to be the other names in Chamba for the community. Ibbetson has further stated, "The Dums, however, must be carefully distinguished from the Dom or Domra, the executioner and corpse burner of Hindustan, and the type of all uncleanliness to a Hindu ; as also from the Dum of the Hill States, whom I have classed as Dumna and not as Mirasi, as I understand that the word Dum is there applied to workers in bamboo" (Ibbetson-1881-p.289). From the above statement it is revealed that Dum in the Hilly areas applied to workers in bamboo and corresponds to Dumna and that Dum or Domra is occupationally a different group and similarly is Mirasi. It may also be noted, "The word Mirasi is derived from the Arabic 'miras' or inheritance ; and the Mirasi is to the inferior agricultural castes and the outcaste tribes what the Bhat is to the Rajputs...., he is also a musician and minstrel.....The Mirasi is almost always a Musalman. The few Hindus returned from the hilly and sub-montane districts are very possibly Dumnas returned as Dums" (*Ibid* p.289, 290). While compiling, the information on Dum, Rose has stated, "But though the Dums may overlap the Mirasis and be in common parlance confused with them they appear to be, in some parts of the Punjab at least, distinct from them, and the Mirasis are beyond all questions inextricably fused with the Bhats.....In fact they rank below the Chuhra. So too in Ludhiana they are distinct from and lower than the Mirasi". (Rose 1911-pp. 249-250).* At some places Dumna is

*In Maya Singh's Punjabi Dicty. §Dumna is said to = 'a species of bat'.

synonymously called as Bhanjra as stated, "Dumna, a low sweeper caste, also called Bhanjra, in the hills and in Gurdaspur, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur. They make chiks, baskets, etc, of bamboo and do menial jobs." (Ref. *Ibid* p. 250). Bhanjras are said to be a bit higher in social status than Dumnas as the former hesitate from handling low jobs like scavengering as already mentioned. It is to be noted that Dumna is the more familiar and popular name for the community rather than Mahasha or Doom. In Kangra District the name of the community is pronounced as 'Dumna' where the letter 'u' gives the sound as it gives in the word 'plume'. About the etymology of the term it was reported that it has been derived from 'Doomnu' the name of one of their ancestors, which in course of time evolved as Dumna (or Doomna) It was also reported that 'Doomnu' was engaged in bamboo work, and so his descendants adopted this occupation. The term 'Mahasha' is also said to have been coined for the community for about the last two decades which is perhaps due to the preaching activities of Arya Samaj Sect, and the term is thought to be a prestigeous one than the other names, and it is to be noted that the term 'Mahasha' is generic in nature and may include persons of other castes in its fold.

Dumnas have also been reported to participate in band orchestra at marriage processions, playing upon kettle drums flageolets and clarions, etc. especially in hilly areas and are said to be different from Dooms. Mirasis who are also musicians but Mohammadans by faith. Information of this sort is available as, "Like the Dagi and Koli castes, Dumnas are also a low caste people. They are met in Kandeghat Tehsil and live by beating drums on ceremonial occasions, and by making baskets, when not otherwise engaged. They have nothing in common with the 'Dooms' of the plains, who are generally Mohammadans by religion and called Mirasis". (Census Report of Patiala State—1931, p. 201).

At the time of 1891 census Dumnas were reported to be scavengers and bamboo workers, and Maclagan had reported, "The Dumna is called Dum in Chamba according to Mr. Ibbetson while in Sialkot the Dum (*see* Mirasi) is said to be commonly called Dumna, and the Dumnas of Sialkot have been classed by me in the returns as Mirasis. There is probably a confusion between the two castes in most sub-montane districts. The Dumna of Kangra are said to include besides the Dumnas proper (also called Sanhais who live by making baskets and matting and playing on pipes and kettle drums), the Sansois, or gold washers, and the Barars who make winnowing-pans, sieves, strings or pallet bows, etc. These two latter are separately classed in our returns" (Maclagan, 1891-p.299). A segment of population in Amritsar District returned themselves to be Mirasi or Doom professing Hindu and Sikh religions and following the traditional occupation of the groups as singing, dancing and playing upon musical instruments and are reported to be known for lampooning and panegyrising the individual from whom they demand or beg something. This segment may very possibly be Dumnas returned as Mirasi or Doom, and appears to be neo-sociatively grouped with Dumna under study. At the time of 1911 census, Dumna were also reported to be known as Dum (Ref. C.I. 1911, Punjab, p.454). Randhawa has reported them to be working as village watchmen. (Ref. Randhawa—Farmers of India, Vol. I pp. 179, 242). It is also alluded that Machhelu, Lahuru, Chohan, Taware, and Narial were reported to be the synonyms, generic or local names for the community in Kangra District, but these names are yet uncertain as more authentic information is lacking. Similarly in Hissar District they are said to be known by the generic or local name 'Rana' which is also not yet confirmed. About the Dumnas in the Jammu, Ibbetson has stated, "Many of the Dumnas of the Jammu hills and the plains immediately below them are professional thieves" (Ibbetson 1881-p.314). But in recent times it was communicated by the Superintendent of Census Operations, J. & K. that they are sweepers. To identify the community with reference to

occupational dimensions it appears appropriate to say that they are still considerably engaged in their traditional occupation of bamboo industry and at the same time occupational mobility is also pronounced in diversified pursuits like 'cultivation', 'agricultural labour' and 'other services' to which singing, dancing and playing upon musical instruments is also attributable. A female of the community is familiarly called as Dumni (or Doomni) and the people usually say *"Mauqa Chuki Dumni, gavae aal pataal"*. English version of which corresponds to "A Dumni after losing the occasion sings meaninglessly". 'Dumra' is used as a diminutive of Dumna. According to the general consensus, Dumna (or Doomna) is the familiar name for the community and for the purpose of present study the informants were contacted in Kangra and Amritsar Districts, perhaps during 1962. Village Deol (Teeka Phatar) near Baijnath, Ujjain and Beerta villages in Kangra tehsil of Kangra District, and Haripura and Kot Khalsa villages in Amritsar were selected as the spots of study.

2. Population Distribution

As already mentioned the community under the nomenclature Dumna, Doomna, Doom, Dom, Dum, Dome, Dumne is spread almost all over the country. According to 1961 census figures, the population of the community in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh is 95,609, 57,871 and 19,297 persons respectively. The community is also spread all over the Punjab State. Maximum of their number was returned from Gurdaspur District. Out of a total of 95,609 persons, 51,047 were the males and 44,562 were females from which sex-ratio approximates to 873 females per thousand males. The sex-wise distribution of the community with respect to rural and urban areas is given in the table below :—

TABLE

Serial No.	Name of District	Rural/Urban	Population as per 1961 census		
			Total	Males	Females
1	Hissar	(R)	3,060	1,407	1,653
		(U)	87	44	43
2	Rohtak	(R)	466	249	217
		(U)	24	10	14
3	Gurgaon	(R)	87	47	40
		(U)	..	..	..
4	Karnal	(R)	393	208	185
		(U)	..	..	..
5	Ambala	(R)	145	76	69
		(U)	63	42	21
6	Simla	(R)	1,012	650	362
		(U)	109	62	47
7	Kangra	(R)	15,462	8,106	7,356
		(U)	99	46	53

Name of District	Rural/Urban	Population as pe 1961 census		
		Total	Males	Female
Lahaul and Spiti ..	(R)	2	2	..
	(U)	..	..	..
9 Hoshiarpur ..	(R)	5,955	3,215	2,740
	(U)	811	490	321
10 Jullundur ..	(R)	130	30	100
	(U)	103	66	37
11 Ludhiana ..	(R)	301	160	141
	(U)	626	331	295
12 Ferozepore ..	(R)	253	145	108
	(U)	6	1	5
13 Amritsar ..	(R)	1,106	570	536
	(U)	2,858	1,611	1247
14 Gurdaspur ..	(R)	53,423	28,515	24,908
	(U)	8,059	4,383	3,676
15 Kapurthala ..	(R)	1	1	..
	(U)	..	..	..
16 Bhatinda ..	(R)	98	56	42
	(U)	6	6	..
17 Sangrur ..	(R)	424	235	189
	(U)	158	91	67
18 Patiala ..	(R)	142	99	43
	(U)	1	1	..
19 Mahendragarh ..	(R)	136	89	47
	(U)	3	3	..
Total ..	(R)	82,596	43,860	38,736
	(U)	13,013	7,187	5,826

It is apparent from this table that this community is predominantly concentrated in rural areas. The table below gives the age-group wise distribution together with percentage proportions.

TABLE

Age-Group		Male	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total	Percentage
(0—14)	..	21,495	53·00	19,068	47·00	40,563	42·43
(15—44)	..	21,084	51·88	19,552	48·12	40,636	42·50
(45 and above)	..	8,454	58·81	5,920	41·19	14,374	15·03
(Age not stated)	..	14	38·89	22	61·11	36	0·04
Total	..	51,047	53·39	44,562	46·61	95,609	100·00

It is clear from this table that in the age-group (0—14) comprising of 'infants' children, boys and girls' the males preponderate over the females and similar is the position in the age-group (15—44) comprising of 'young men and women' and in the age-group (45 and above) comprising of elderly persons. On the whole the trend of distribution of population with respect to age-groups is more or less in the normal range. Age of 36 persons could not be ascertained during enumeration and the reasons for low-sex-ratio are lacking. The informants expressed the view that their population is multiplying rapidly.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

Usually Dumna households are found to be in a secluded place at a distance from the main habitat of the village. Double storeyed houses having two to three rooms are met in Kangra District, but normally the house of Dumna has two rooms having dimensions from 12′ × 12′ to 15′ × 20′ with or without a kitchen or verandah. The upper room is locally known as '*bohr*' and the lower one as '*owan*. '*Bohr*' (upper room) is used as a sleeping room for the women while lower room is used as workshop, store room, guestroom, and sleeping room for the men. Ventilation is provided through the holes in walls. The roof is made of slate and the walls are made of stone and mud. The rooms are usually dark and dingy and without adequate ventilation. Mango, '*Shisam*' (Dalbergia Sissoo) and bamboo wood is commonly used in house construction.

The foundation of a house is laid after consulting a Pandit as to its time and date (*Mahurat*). '*Halwa*' (sweet porridge) is distributed among the 'virgins' at this time. One rupee and one red handkerchief are placed on the foundation stone which are picked up by the mason. On completion of the house, the mason is given '*lota/garbi*' (tumbler of water. The mason stands on top of the roof and pours this water on the ground while the occupants of the house stand with folded hands. The mason is offered Re. 1¼ on this occasion. The head of the hiusehold starts taking meals in the new house after the family 'Brahman' has performed '*puja*' (worship) and a community feast is arranged.

In Amritsar District they were found to be living in tents or huts made of cloth wrapped on bamboo sticks giving a semi-cylindrical appearance. These huts are erected in open ground outside the main habitation of the village, town or city.

4. Food and Drink

Rice, wheat and maize form the staple food of Dumnas. Pulses and vegetables are also consumed. In the morning they usually take '*nachai*', or '*pitchh*' (boiled rice water) and at some places take one or two *chapatis* with tea. At about 12 noon they take the full meals consisting of *chapatis* or rice with '*dal*' (pulse). Evening tea is also taken by those who can afford it. In the evening *chapatis* or rice with pulse or vegetable is taken. On festive occasions, several of them butcher a goat and take its meat. '*Karah*' (sweet porridge) and '*rote*' (sweet *chapati*) is also prepared. Apart from vegetable ghee mustard oil is also used for cooking and frying purposes. Beef is abjured. Many of the Dumnas are given to smoking and their women use snuff. Spirituous drinks are not common but '*lugri*' (a local beverage prepared from rice) is frequently used in hilly areas.

5. Dress and Ornaments

The dress of a male of the community usually consists of '*topi*' (cap) or *safa* (turban) a '*kurta*' or *kamij* (shirt) *kachh* (short breeches) or pyjama in the summer and in winter is added a blanket or a coat of coarse woollen yarn. Ordinary leather shoes form their foot wear. The females of the community wear '*salwar*' (baggy trousers), *jumper* or *kamiz* (shirt) and '*dupatta*' (scarf) forms their head wear. Ordinarily sleepers of rubber tyre are used as foot-wear. Well-to-do as well as newly married women wear sandals. In Amritsar District the males are reported to wear '*tahmat*' to cover the lower extremities and also keep unshorn hair at the head, grow beards and

moustaches. The male members of the community hardly use any ornaments except ear-rings or finger-rings of gold and silver. The newly married women adore their ears with *'baloo'* (ear-rings), nose with *'long'* (nose-stud) and *'nath'* (nose-ring), feet with *'pazebs'* wrists with *'tokas'* and *'gokhrus'* (sort of bangles) and neck with *'haar'* (necklace). The children wear *'kanganu'* in the wrists. The ornaments are usually made of silver. Elderly women are not much interested in wearing ornaments. If some financial difficulty arises, they pawn their ornaments with the local landlords and obtain funds.

6. Language and Literacy

The Dumnas in Kangra District speak the local dialect familiarly known as *'Pahari boli'* and aslo understand and speak Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. In Amritsar District they are reported to speak Punjabi. According to 1961 Census figures the percentage of literacy among the community approximates to 9·43 which is nearly equal to the percentage of literacy (9·64) among the scheduled castes as a whole in the Punjab State. The percentage of literacy in this very community in J. & K. and Himachal Pradesh is 3·35 and 6·98 respectively. Break-up of their population into illiterates and literates in Punjab with reference to educational level is furnished in the table below :—

Area	Total		Illiterates		Literates without educational level		Educational level			
							Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculation and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Urban ..	7,187	5,826	5,821	5,596	543	137	745	91	78	2
Rural ..	43,860	38,736	37,163	38,017	3,732	528	2,731	182	234	9
Total ..	51,047	44,562	42,984	43,613	4,275	665	3,476	273	312	11

From the figures given in this table, the percentages of literacy in urban and rural areas were calculated to be 12·26 and 8·98 respectively, the former is higher owing to the existence of better educational facilities in urban areas. Broadly speaking even less than one-tenth of the students entering 'Primary or Junior Basic' level reached the 'Matriculation and above' as is evident from these figures. For a general low level of literacy prevailing among them, poverty was reported to be the main reason. The school-going age children start participating in the household industry with their parents so as to augment the income of the household.

7. Economic Pursuits

Primarily the Dumnas were found to be engaged in their traditional bamboo work, but presently they are also striving to pursue other occupations like cultivation, agricultural labour, 'other services' and working as minstrels etc. Women and children also assist in splitting bamboo into strips and splinters. Objects of material culture prepared from bamboo are : *'dallan'* (baskets for carrying rubbish), *'topkian'* (small containers for keeping chapatis), *'tokru'* (basket for carrying grain), *'peri'* or *'peru'* (storing vessels), *'Changeran'* (flat type of baskets for cleansing rice with water) *'chhikkas'* (for covering mouths of oxen), *'kherian'* also called *'sup'* (winnowing pan), *'kirnu'* (for protecting the plant), *'chik'* (blind), *'odian'* (small baskets for keeping grains, fruit etc.), *'gudki'* (a small deep basket) and *'chhatroo'* (a sort of umbrella) *'bathrala'* (a big basket for storing rice). The different varieties of bamboos used for preparing the above articles are locally known as *'magar'* bamboo, *'mauri'*

bamboo, *'bauntloo'* bamboo, *'phaglu'* bamboo, *'nal'* bamboo and at the time of survey they were reported to be locally available at a price ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 2 per bamboo. Facilities like an organised market for the sale of their products hardly exist in hilly areas. Customarily, these craftsmen supply their products to the agricultural households and in return receive one maund of grain at the harvest time besides free meals on marriages in the households. The important tools/implements used for the bamboo industry are mentioned below:—

Darato—It is a sort of big sickle to cut the bamboos from the land.

Chako—It is a big knife to split the bamboos into strips and splinters.

Guhr—It is a big and sharp iron piece for knitting the strips and splinters together.

Lehni—It is a thin bamboo rule to smoothen the pieces of strips and make them plain.

For making various articles, they avoid cutting bamboo on Friday, Saturday, and Monday and during the *'panchak'* (five days of the month which are said to be inauspicious). The informants expressed the view that this craft was hardly lucrative now and consequently the younger generation was losing interest in it.

Members of this community in Amritsar District were reported to be minstrels and also acting as messengers, *'laggis'* (attendants) to their respective *'jajmans'* (patrons) from whom they get a six-monthly payment partly in cash, but mainly in the form of grains. They also beg alms. They are glad in panegyrising or lampooning the individual in order to extract some money from the person. The trend of the economic pursuits of the community is revealed from their break-up by industrial categories as recorded in 1961 census which is furnished in the table below :—

TABLE

Status	Total			Total workers		I As Cultivators		II As Agricultural Labourer	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rural ..	82.596	43,860	38,736	23.860	4,258	3,885	1,391	4,780	230
Urban ..	13.013	7.187	5,826	3,942	251	73	2	104	2
Total ..	95.609	51,047	44,562	27,802	4,509	3,958	1,393	4.884	232

III In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Plantation Orchards and Allied Activities		IV At Household Industry		V In Manufacturing other than Household Industry		VI In Construction		VII In Trade and Commerce	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
384	41	4,042	2,159	701	65	418	..	198	7
56	..	173	93	712	75	168	2	161	2
440	41	,,215	2,252	1,413	140	586	2	359	9

VIII In Transport, Storage and Communication		IX In Other Services		X Non-workers		Worker in special occupations: *Tanning and Currying of Hides and Skins*		*Scavenging*	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
580	1	8,872	364	20,000	34,478	29	2	25	23
606	..	1,889	75	3,245	5,575	3	4	14	4
1,186	1	10,761	439	23,245	40,053	32	6	39	27

A glance at the census data reveals that out of 95,609 persons, 32,311 were recorded as workers or in other words 33·79 per cent of their population constitutes the working force. 13·95 per cent of the working force constitutes the females, which shows that their women folk also lend a hand in augmenting the income of the household. 34·04 per cent and 32·22 per cent of their respective populations in rural and urban areas constitute the working force from which it is apparent that the proportion of working force in rural and urban areas is nearly equal. Break-up of 66·21 per cent non-workers into categories has not been indicated. A deeper insight into the census data reveals the structure of the working force. Maximum proportion, i.e., 11·71 per cent of the total population or 34·66 per cent of the working force was recorded to be engaged in the category of 'other services'. The next important category of industrial classification is their 'household industry' in which 6·76 per cent of the total population or 20·01 per cent of the workers are recorded to be engaged. 5·60 per cent of their population or 16·56 per cent of the workers are recorded to be engaged in 'cultivation'. 5·35 per cent of their population, or 15·83 per cent of the working force constitutes those of the 'agricultural labourers'. Fewer number of persons were recorded in other categories of industrial classification as shown in the table. From among the workers, a few were recorded to be engaged 'in special occupations' like, 'tanning and currying of hides and skins' and 'scavenging' etc. as shown in the table.

8. Life Cycle

The birth of a child may occur either in its father's house or mother's house. For pre-natal care, some old women from the house or near kinswomen attend to the expectant mother. She is fed on '*karah*' (sweet porridge) till she gives birth to the child. Aniseed, thymeseed '*ilaichi*', ginger and jaggery are consumed by her. After the birth of the child the parturient is given '*giri*' (coconut), '*chhuara*' (dry date fruit) and milk for 5 days. After the birth of the child, '*kuth*' (costos) is rubbed on stone and applied on the nose of the child.

At the time of birth mustard oil is boiled in a frying pan with the belief to ward off evil spirits from the house. Leaves of '*sanspayan*' (a local wild plant) or '*siris*' (Albizzia lebek) and flowers are tied to the door to announce the birth of a son and also to ward off evil spirits. The child is given the bath on the same day. 'Naroo Molia' is the ceremony associated with the disposal of placenta and umbilical cord. The '*naroo*' (umbilical cord) is cut with a sickle. A portion of the '*naroo*' is tied to the neck of the child with the help of a thread. When it dries and breaks, the thread is taken away from the neck. Part of umbilical cord is preserved and whenever the child falls sick, the cord is rubbed on stone and applied on the aching portion. The placenta and the other portion of the umbilical cord is buried on the house premises by the mid-wife. The mid-wife gets one rupee and the sickle with which '*naroo*' is cut, as her remuneration.

It is believed that if any issueless woman eats a part of the '*naroo*', she would start bearing children, while the women whose child's '*naroo*' has been eaten would stop bearing children in future and for this reason the placenta and '*naroo*' is buried on the premises.

'*Sootak*' (pollution) is observed for 13 days during which the parturient remains inside the house and avoids entering the kitchen. After this period the mid-wife is given a shirt and rupees two to five. She is also given rice equal to the weight of the child on the first day.

'Guntar' is the ceremony related with the purificatory bath by the parturient. After the observance of 'Sootak' for 13 days, the mother is administered bath and allowed to move. The rooms of the house are smeared with cow-dung. Jaggery and grains are distributed to the caste brethren and incense is burnt in the house. A big '*rote*' (loaf or sweet chapati) and '*karah*' (sweet porridge) is prepared and offered to the

deity 'dewat Sidh'. The relatives are also invited to a feast. With the performance of this ceremony pollution is believed to have ended. The mother and the child wear new clothes. The clothes worn by the mother and the child are given to the mid-wife. The child is not taken outside the house for 40 days during which period, water, iron, mustard seeds, and '*hing*' (asafoetida) are kept under the mother's cot. Father's sister brings' *kangan*' (silver bangles for the wrists) and a few clothes for the child and in return child's father also offers her some clothes. '*Ram Jhunjnu*' (birth songs) are sung by the females on this occasion.

After about a week of '*Guntar*', another similar ceremony called '*Panjap*' is performed. The relatives bring new clothes for the child. The mother and the child put on new clothes after taking a bath. From this day onward, she starts participating in household duties. A feast is arranged for the members of the community. On this day the local '*pandit*' is consulted for naming the child who suggests to the parents some rames, from which the parents select one name of their choice. In Amritsar District the child is named according to the Sikh scriptures. The child is taken to the '*Gurdwara*' (Sikh Shrine) and Guru Granth Saheb is recited at random and the first letter of the Shabad(maxim) is selected as the first lettar of the name. Some coins and sweets are offered in the shrine.

In Kangra District it was reported that '*Jamalu*' (tonsure) ceremony is performed after the child is 2½ years old. The barber or maternal uncle of the child usually cuts the head hair of the child. The ceremony may be performed either at home or at 'devi's' temple in Kangra. '*Timol*' which is a remuneration consisting of Re 1¼ and 3 yards of cloth is given to the barber. The maternal uncle presents golden ear-rings to the child in order to ward off evil spirits. The sister of the child applies '*tilak*' (sectarian mark) at the forehead of the child and ties a turban on its head and in return she receives rupees five and some clothes.

Sex and marriage

In Kangra District the Dumnas reported that when a girl reaches puberty, she is given ghee and pudding to eat on her first menstruation. During menstruation period, she is tabooed to enter the kitchen and neither she changes clothes nor takes bath. Such practices are rarely reported from Amritsar District.

Among the Dumnas in Kangra District, some exogamous social units have been reported, namely, Chanauria, Babri and Nanial. Rose has reported about their clans as, "Their clans are Kalotra, Manglu, Pargat, Drahe, and Lalotra" (Rose—1911—p. 250). For regulating marriage, the clans of the spouses are scrutinised and they are required to be different for establishing the matrimonial alliances. Cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages are prohibited. Negotiation is the usual mode of acquiring the mate but marriage through exchange is also prevalent.

'Sewar' (Betrothal) .

Traditionally it has been the practice, that the parents of the boy start looking for a girl within a certain radius. When some suitable girl comes to their notice, the father of the boy approaches the girl's father with two-three caste elders or relatives. They bring '*bhuji*' (fried up vegetables, pulse, curd and a basketful of chapatis) along with them. The party requests the girl's father to engage his daughter with the boy. The caste brethren at the girl's place are invited to partake the food of boy's party.

After sometime the boy's party revisits the house of the girl and again take along with them food and meat so as to give a feast to the caste brethren at girl's place. At this occasion they also bring a dozen basketfuls of wheat, some quantity of '*batashas*' (sugar puffs), and two seers of oil to be presented to the girl. One or two ornaments and a few outfits of clothes are also offered to the girl. Bride-price was reported to exist and its monetary value ranged from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,000 which is also paid at this occasion. This ceremony is locally termed as '*kurmai*' or '*chhoti shadi*'.

During the present enquiry a change from the traditional pattern was observed to be taking place. It was reported that the rigid traditional norms are loosening and cases are met where initiative for negotiation has been taken by either side.

Regarding the age at marriage, the perusal of the 1961 census data reveals that in the age-group (0—14) years out of 21,495 boys and 19,068 girls, 72 males and 387 females were recorded as married which indicates that early marriage existed among them though the number of such unions was small and it further reveals that girls are married at a comparatively lower age than the boys. In Amritsar District early marriage was hardly reported. The marriage date is fixed by the local Brahman priest. According to the Dumna informants of Kangra District the months of '*Bhadon*' (August-September) and '*Chet*' (March-April) are considered to be inauspicious. Preparations for marriage usually start one month before the due date. The marriage functionaries as musicians, barber, '*Jhewar*' etc. are contacted in advance to discharge their functions at the occasion.

Seven days before the marriage the girl's mother's brother and other members of his family bring '*chhak*' which consists of 4 logs of wood, bedding, cot, ½ maund of rice, 5 seers of pulse and one goat, which is a sort of help to meet partly the marriage expenditure. On the day of departure of '*barat*' (marriage procession), '*batana*' (an abstergent paste prepared from mustard oil, turmeric powder and flour) is rubbed on the body of the bride by her mother's brother's wife with a view to giving a shine to the complexion. After this she takes bath. Similarly the '*batana*' paste is rubbed on the body of the groom. The family deity '*Dewat Sidh*' is also worshipped on this day. '*Tel sand*' ceremony is also performed at the groom's house on the day of departure of '*barat*'. In this ceremony mustard oil is poured on the head of the boy and some coins are placed in the oil. These coins are taken away by the '*pandit*'. After this, the '*timol*' ceremony takes place, in which money, clothes, and dry fruits are presented to the groom by the relatives. He is made to sit outside on a matting or carpet while the members of the community are served with '*bhat*' (rice and pulse), At the time of departure of the '*barat*' the groom's elder brother's wife applies collyrium (antimony) or lamp black to his eyes, and pours some oil at his feet. Groom's mother's brother's wife dresses his hair after applying oil. The marriage procession is led by an orchestra of musicians consisting of '*shehnai* (clarion) players and drum beater. '*Torna*' ceremony is performed in which the groom and the members of the '*barat*' are made to pass under a '*torna*' (gate) made of bamboo poles covered with red cotton thread and yellow clothes. When the marriage party has gone a few yards the groom's mother runs to give her breasts to be sucked by the groom. A similar ceremony is observed at the time of departure of the bride from her home for the groom's house. Groom's party also takes along with them a goat, rice, and wine to be served to their own party and bride's relatives. The groom is generally seated on a mare and other members of the '*barat*' follow on foot. When the '*barat*' reaches bride's village, it is given a warm reception by the bride's father and other relatives. Bride's father gives a turban to the groom's father and helps him tie it. They embrace each other and offer rupee one each by doing '*sarwarna*' (moving in a circular way over the head) to be given to the accompanying musicians. Dinner is served at night. A '*chowk*' (quadrangle) is prepared with flour around which four sticks are fixed in the earth and a red cloth is tied on it. A stool is arranged under it for seating the couple. This is called '*bedi*' The priest lights the '*havan*' (sacred fire) and fire-offerings are made with the chanting of '*mantras*' (hymns). The bride and the groom are made to circumambulate seven times round the sacred fire and the Brahman reads out vedic scriptures. In Amritsar District the marriage is reported to be conducted according to the Sikh scriptures and the ceremony is popularly called '*Anand Karaj*'. In case a '*Granthi*' (Sikh priest) is not available,

marriage rites correspond to those described above. The Brahman gets some money as '*dakshina*' (charity). Traditionally the '*barat*' used to stay at bride's house for 4 days; but these days groom's party departs with the bride and dowry on the next day after taking the lunch. The bride is seated in the '*doli*' (palanquin). When the '*doli*' reaches the groom's house, women of the household and neighbouring area receive the couple . The family deity is worshipped and a goat is butchered and meals are served to the members of the party. After a day the bride is sent back to her father's house. With these rituals etc. the marriage bond is reported to be strengthened.

'*Ghar Phera*' (final home coming of the bride) is the ceremony when after some period ranging from weeks to months the groom goes to bride's house with bread and other eatables and brings the bride with him to his house.

Death Rites and Beliefs

Death is believed to be caused both by physical and mental ailments as well as by poltergeists and other magical influences. The dead below three years are buried and those above this age are burnt. Persons who die of smallpox are also buried. The death of a person is announced, by loud shrieks by the members of the family of the deceased. A messenger goes around to call the near kins and other agnates living in the neighbourhood. They usually bring '*kaffan*' (shroud) and Re. 0·25 to Re. 1 each. The corpse is given the final bath and wrapped in '*kaffan*' which is usually red or white depending if it is of female or male respectively. The corpse is not cremated after the sunset. Some coins are placed in the mouth of the deceased. '*Ganga-jal* (Ganges water) is sprinkled on the body of the deceased. '*Murdani*' (bier) is prepared from bamboo poles and the corpse is placed on it. The clothes of the deceased are placed on the bier and the '*kaffan*' brought by the relatives is put on the corpse. The face of the deceased is normally kept towards the west and the hearse is thus carried to the cremation ground. '*Rakh*' is the the ritual performed in the midway where the hearse is placed in the ground and axe blows are given on the ground on all the four directions of the bier. Women hardly attend the funeral procession upto the cremation ground. The eldest son or some other near kin carries a burning wooden stick. A pyre of wood is prepared in the cremation ground to which twigs of '*chandan*' wood are at times added. The corpse is placed on the pyre and the eldest son or the near kin sets it on fire. When the corpse is fully ablaze, the skull is cracked with the stroke of a pole and the performance is called '*Kapal Kirya*'. The ashes are collected on the 4th day, which are either sent to the Ganges river for immersion or thrown in some gorge.

Other post mundane practices reported in Kangra District include lighting of lamps on the place of '*rakh*' for ten days following the death. On the tenth day the head of the son is shaved and clothes are washed. Mourners continue visiting the house upto the thirteenth day, and are served with *bhat* (rice) and *dal* (Pulse). '*Patak*' (pollution) is observed for 13 days. During this period usually the sister of the head of the household prepared meals which are served only once a day. During this period taking of meat is prohibited. Purificatory rites consist in cleansing the house with a paste of cow-dung and mud. At this occasion a goat is butchered and a community feast is arranged. The post-mundane oblations made by the head of the household to the priest consist of an umbrella, a cot, a fan, a sheet of cloth, and two or three utensils and their efficacy is believed in providing some of the necessities of the deceased in the life after death. After a year '*barsi*' (first anniversary) and after four years '*chawarkhi*' (fourth anniversary) are performed at which relatives partake lunch with the members of the household and again offer a few utensils to the priest.

9. Religious beliefs and practices

The informants in Kangra district reported that they believe in the super powers of all the gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon. They are chiefly Shaivites, and venerate Lord Shiva

as their chief deity. '*Dewat Sidh*' and '*Nag Devta*' or '*Gugga*' are the important gods on the upper steps of hierarchy of gods. Goddess Bhagwati, Ajyapal, Seetla Devi are also worshipped. Lord Shiva is worshipped on the occasion of Shivratri in the month of '*Chaitra*' (March). The adult members of the household observe fast on this day. In the evening a white flower of a local '*barah*' tree is hung from the ceiling with a cord and the ground floor below the flower is smeared with a paste of cow-dung and mud. Flowers of different varieties, rice, ghee, curd, milk and other food preparations etc. are placed on the cleansed floor, whose boundary is already marked with a solution of turmeric and some sour solution . They propitiate the deity by prostrating before these things, and pay obeisance after this. When the hanging flower naturally swings towards the right it is believed to be auspicious, and if it swings towards the left, it is believed to be inauspicious and in the latter case they invoke the deity's mercy so as to avert the befalling misfortune which is feared by them.

Dewat Sidh is believed to be a malevolent deity. To mollify the deity '*chelas*' (sorcerers) are contacted at whose advice a he-goat is usually offered at the deity's shrine. Incense is burnt before a stone upon which is inscribed the figure of Dewat Sidh. The members of the household pay obeisance to the deity by having a grass rope in their necks and '*dhrub*' grass in their mouths. '*Rote*' (sweet loaf) is offered to the deity.

'*Nag Devta*' is worshipped on all Saturdays of the month of '*Sawana*' (July-August). '*Nag melas*' (fairs commemorating god of snakes) are held on these Saturdays near Rani Tal and some other places. In the temple of Nag there is placed a stone on which the line drawing of a snake is carved. Grains of wheat and coins of money are offered to the deity and the devotees prostrate before the deity. From near about the shrine they get '*Chik di mitti*' (clay soil) and a thread. The thread is worn round the neck and the clay is preserved in the house and used in cases of curing snake bite. The clay is also given to the members of the household as '*parsad*' (sanctified food). Some portion of the clay is dissolved in water and sprinkled on the house premises with which is associated the belief that it would prevent snakes from entering the house.

Bhagwati Devi is propitiated by offering sweet '*rote*' (chapati) weighing a quarter seer on Sundays and Tuesdays during Chaitra.

Ajyapal is offered grain, pudding and a '*rote*' at the harvests. It is believed that if the deity is not propitiated by offering grains of new crops the malevolence is manifested in destruction of new crops with excessive rains and hail-storms.

Seetla (goddess of small pox) is worshipped to safeguard the children from the disease. Sweet '*rote*' (chapati), pudding and rice is offered to the deity on every Tuesday of Jaishtha and Asadha (May-June).

'*Parian*' are worshipped particularly by women. There is '*Achhrakund*' (tank of Achhran) near Kangra where women have a dip. In the vicinity there is also a temple where the pilgrims offer coins of money and clothes, which are collected by the '*pujari*' (functionary priest) attached to the temple.

The informants in Amritsar District reported that they have faith in Sikh Gurus and their tenets and venerate Guru Granth Saheb at their birth and marriage ceremonials.

They celebrate important festivals like Dussehra, Diwali, Holi, Baisakhi, Lohri, Rakhi. *Sagrand* of 'Bhadon' (August-September) locally called as 'Sail' in Kangra District is celebrated with enthusiasm. '*Chhalli*' (cob of maize), cucumber, guava and stalk of rice are placed on the premises of the house. The local '*nai*' (barber) comes to officiate at this ritual and the members of the household prostrate before the things and a prayer is offered in the name of God. The barber collects the things and also receives some money as his remuneration. The meals are also served

at this occasion. The informants in Amritsar District reported that they celebrate '*gurpurbs*' in the memory of Sikh Gurus. According to 1961 census data 50,781 males and 44,375 females were recorded to be Hindus, 266 males and 187 females as Sikhs both in rural and urban areas in Punjab. Apart from the above mentioned beliefs and practices, there have been reported to be observed some prejudices and superstitions by the Dumnas in Kangra District though hidebound to a lesser extent than in the past. The most common prejudices and superstitions are mentioned below:—

(1) Bamboo is avoided to be cut on Friday, Saturday and Monday and during '*Panchak*' (certain five inauspicious days in a month).

(2) Hooting of a jackal is considered to be an ill omen which is thought to be an indication of death of a person suffering from any disease.

(3) If a dying person at his last breath happens to see a dog, he is believed to take birth after death in the species of dog.

(4) If a person is ill and a doctor is to be called, the persons sent to call the doctor are even in number. An odd number of person going to call a doctor is believed to prolong illness or patient's life is exposed to danger.

(5) If the left eye of a person suddenly feels jerks, it is considered to be an ill omen. In order to stop it the person concerned spits over a bamboo twig and then waves it over the eye.

(6) If the person commencing a journey comes across a Nai (barber), Brahman, village headman (Lamberdar), a person carrying fuel wood, a snake, it is considered advisable to postpone the journey or wait for a moment as unusual happenings are likely to occur enroute otherwise.

(7) Sneezing or a call from behind at the starting of a journey is believed to be an ill omen. The journey is either postponed or delayed for an interval so as to avoid imaginary evil happenings enroute.

(8) Sight of Bhangi with a basketful of rubbish, a person carrying a pot of water or meals is believed to be an auspicious sign towards the fulfilment of purpose.

However in Amritsar District the informants reported that such prejudices or superstitions have been renounced by them.

10. Social Status

In social status *Dumnas* rank in the lower middle zone of social hierarchy of scheduled castes. They are reported nearly equal in status to Batwal, Bhanjra, Dagi, Koli, Sanhai, Sansi, Daole or Dauli, and higher than Barad, Dhaya, Gagra, Bangali, Chuhra and Gandhila who are reported to rank in the lowest zone of hierarchy of castes. They are considered to be much lower in social status than Brahman, Baniyas, Kashtryas, Jats the so called clean castes and slightly lower than Ghiraths, Lohars, Tarkhans. Minor variations also exist from place to place in the hierarchy described above. They have been suffering from social disability, which is still rampant at certain places in hilly areas where they have their separate '*bowaries*' (sources of drinking water fed by natural springs) and they are conditioned to avoid entering the circumscribed portions of the kitchens of Swarnas. Untouchability is on the wane these days. Previously the Dumna was treated like a Chuhra. They are considered to be lower in social status than Gaddis. They receive cooked food from the castes superior in social status to them; but only uncooked food articles from the castes lower to them. They can sparingly go to the idols in temples of the so called high caste Hindus, whereas they can go to a Gurdwara Sahib (Sikh shrine) without any inhibition.

Regarding their day to day behavioural aspect, it has been reported that they have a submissive attitude before the persons of the so called upper castes. A Dumna usually sits on the ground rather than on the cot when a person of upper caste comes to him for anything and listens to him submissively. In Kangra District it was observed to be a behavoural trait that a Dumna is in the habit of moving his hand towards his thigh in

order to highlight his point during the course of conversation with another person. When he meets a person of an upper caste coming from the opposite direction, he usually detours from the way towards the left side, as a mark of respect.

In his own household, the head is respected most. The social and economic status of woman is regarded inferior to the man and sometimes she gets thrashing in case she goes against her husband's will. A newly wed bride customarily observes '*purdah*' (veil) from her husband's father and other elderly males. Elderly women are respected by the younger ones and similarly elder brother is respected by his younger brother.

11. Social control

For smooth functioning of the caste and maintaining social cohesion among its members, Dumnas have caste panchayats on regional pattern. Tenure of office of any member is neither fixed nor hereditary. The members of the panchayat are generally elderly persons and wield influence and if the performance of any member is unsatisfactory, he is liable to expulsion from the body of the panchayat. Their selection to the community panchayat is made unanimously on the occasion of some marriage or other some such social function when persons from different villages in the area get together . The caste panchayat is vested with powers by the *Baradr* to decide all sorts of cases ranging from civil to criminal. Parties in a dispute are summoned through a messenger and then the caste panchayat convenes its meeting. Proceedings are conducted in open. Precedents are cited and witnesses are heard. The assessors try to arrive at a decision through general consensus, which is pronounced verbally on the spot, keeping in view the caste sanctions and norms. The parties usually respect the decision of the panchayat and thinking of further proceedings is rare. If a party challenges the caste panchayat's decision, it may approach a court of law; but the appellant loses further support from the community panchayat. The wrong doer is either ostracized or fined upto Rs 100. It was reported that presently importance of the traditional caste panchayat was on the decline.

Jurisdiction of a caste panchayat usually extends to a radius of 15—20 miles and its members are selected from various villages scattered in that area.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

GAGRA

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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GAGRA

1. Identity

According to President's 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956' Gagra is treated as a Scheduled Caste only in Punjab. Their population in the State is sparse and only an insignificant number, i.e., 31 persons were returned according to 1961 Census figures. A rapid survey was conducted in early sixties, when a couple of households were reported to be traced in district Hoshiarpur. From the enquiries it appears that Gagra was probably a Muslim caste, though some Hindus were returned as Gagras. According to previous census records, it has been recorded as a low caste, who catch worms and other insects. "Hereditary occupation in catching, keeping and applying leeches" (C.I.1931—Patiala—p.210). At present they are familiarly known by another regional generic name '*Jukeru*' (one who applies leeches). The members of the community under study returned themselves as '*Chhajwala*' (one who deals in winnowing fans) whereas they are known as Gagra or '*Jukeru*' among members of neighbouring communities. The households under study, were reported to be the migrants from Pakistan who traditionally follow the occupation of catching, keeping and applying leeches and '*singis*' (horns), and also deal in the preparation of winnowing fans from reeds. They were reported to be ranking low, like Balmikis/Chuhras in Social Status. They were reported to be leading a semi-nomadic life; as seasonally they go for game and collecting material for preparing winnowing fans, and their women partially beg. Information about origin and history is lacking.

2. Population Distribution.

The population of the community is highly sparsed, and they were returned only 31 persons, i.e., 13 males and 18 females throughout the State giving thereby a sex-ratio of 1,385 females per 1 000 males. They were returned only from the seven districts, and the sexwise distribution of the community is furnished below both with respect to rural and urban areas :

Serial No.	Name of District		Population as per 1961 Census		
			Persons	Males	Females
1	Ambala	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	5	4	1
2	Kangra	(R)	1	1	..
		(U)	..	..	..
3	Hoshiarpur	(R)	8	3	5
		(U)	..	..	..
4	Jullundur	(R)	2	..	2
		(U)	..	..	..
5	Ferozepur	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	6	3	3
6	Amritsar	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	3	1	2
7	Sangrur	(R)	6	1	5
		(U)	..	..	..
	Total		31	13	18

(*Source* : 1961 Census data).

The perusal of he census data from the above table reveals that Gagras are concentrated more in rural areas than in urban areas.

Further more a table giving age distribution of the males and females is furnished below :—

Age-group	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total	Percentage
(0—14) ..	7	43·75	9	56·25	16	51·61
(15—44) ..	4	30·77	9	69·23	13	41·94
(45 and above) ..	2	100·00	..	..	2	6·45
Total ..	13	41·94	18	58·06	31	100·00

It appears from the table that there is a surplus of females in the age-group (15—44) years, and on the other hand in the elderly segment of population, i.e., in the age-group (45 and above) there are only two males without their female counterparts. There is preponderance of infants, children, boys and girls as compared to the persons of the young and elderly segments of population, i.e., in the age-groups (15—44) and (45 and above).

3. Dwelling Dress and Hygienic Habits

Normally the members of the community erect their huts outside the village or town habitat in the open space. As they have been following a semi-nomadic way of life, they make temporary huts and dismantle them when leaving for other places. The huts or shelters are erected by stretching old rags and sheets of cloth on the bamboo bows, thus representing a semi-cylindrical appearance supported on bamboo poles on either side. These huts serve the purposes of protecting against the sun, but can hardly protect them from rains. During heavy rains they take shelter either in some public places or verandahs of houses of private persons. These huts serve for accommodating the members of the household and keeping the other articles of daily life. The hearth is made by erecting two bricks or stones outside the hut. The cooking utensil is called '*handia*' which serves the purpose of cooking vegetable, '*dal*' (pulse) or meat. The surrounding of the hut appears to be dirty and they hardly care for clean hygienic habits. They were observed to be wearing dirty and torn clothes, either begged or purchased second hand ones. They rarely clean their teeth and the use of soap is also considerably low.

4. Food Habits

They are non-vegetarians. Cereals like wheat, maize, rice form their staple food. It was reported that they also hunt wild animals and birds like lizards, frogs, tortoises, iguanas, jackals, fish, pigeons, partridges. For catching the game they keep hounds and nets. Beef is abjured; whereas meat of sheep and goat is

onsumed. Liquor is said to be consumed at marriages.

5. Education and Literacy

According to 1961 census figures out of a total of 31 persons, only 2 persons have been returned as literates among them giving thereby a percentage of literacy as 6.45 against 9.64 among the Scheduled castes as a whole in Punjab. It is to be noted that there was only one male literate with primary or junior basic standard and also there was only one female literate without educational level, and both of them were from urban area. These people particularly in the rural area hardly showed any interest of educating their children, which was due partly to poverty, ignorance on the part of parents and the semi-nomadic way of life.

6. Occupation and Economic Pursuits

As already mentioned, they lead a semi-nomadic way of life. For catching the leeches, they have to go to village ponds, river or a marshy place where the leeches are expected. For catching the leeches, first they apply the blood of a he-goat to their legs, and then stand in knee deep water. The leeches from within the water, come to suck the blood and stick to the legs. They are removed from the legs and are pressed with fingers to squeeze out the blood so sucked. They are then tamed in an earthen pot in damp environment inside it by putting some sand and water into it. The leeches are applied to an ailing or aching portion of the body or on an ulcer on the body in order to get rid of the poisonous substance or foreign element in the blood. The leech sucks the impure blood and swells itself. The leech is again pressed to squeeze out the sucked blood and it is again preserved in the earthen pot. To perform the same function they have another improvised sort of contrivance called *'singi'* (horn), which is hollow from inside and has a narrow aperture at the apex. Such type of *'singi'* is said to be prepared from the horns of a locally called *'neelsar'* cow, which they procure from hunters. The *'singi'* is applied to suck the impurities in large quantity by first pricking the skin with a sharp razor. The *'singi'* is placed with its base on the part of body from where poisonous blood is to be sucked. Then the air inside the *'singi'* is sucked with the mouth through the narrow aperture, so as to create vacuum inside the *'singi'* and then the aperture is closed with wax applied with tongue. After some interval, it is picked up and the poisonous blood is thrown away. Their household industry consists of preparation of articles like winnowing fans, baskets, mats, ropes, brooms and chicks from reeds and grass. Both men and women go to sell these articles from village to village. The women folk also help in the preparation of such articles. It was reported that some of the males have started carrying over to jobs like cultivation with other farmers; construction works etc. Some of their men were reported to be committing petty thefts, while their women were reported to be lax in sexual matters. It was reported that younger generation is losing interest in the traditional occupation, as it is becoming uneconomic due to rising prices and advancement in medical researches. An idea of such a trend can be had from the break up of community by industrial categories as recorded in 1961 census.

According to 1961 census data, out of 31 persons 13 were recorded as workers, i.e., about 42 per cent of the population of the community constitutes the working force. Sex-wise break-up of the working force reveals that 8 out of the 13 males and 5 out of the 18 females were recorded as workers. In rural area out of 17 persons, 9 persons (4 males+5 females) were returned as workers, whereas in urban area out of 14 persons (8 males+6 females), only 4 males were recorded as workers, which shows that in rural area their working force constitutes more than 50 per cent, but in urban area it is lesser than 30 per cent. From these figures we observe that there is considerable difference in the corres-

ponding participation rate of working force in rural and urban areas. Break up of 18 non-workers among them, with respect to any activities have not been indicated separately in census data, though such persons are supposed to include children, old and disabled persons and beggars, etc. Further insight into the figures reveals the structure of the working force. Out of a total of 13 (8 males+5 females) workers 3 males were recorded to be engaged in cultivation in rural area only. One male each in rural and urban area and 5 females in rural area were recorded to be engaged in their household industry. Two males were recorded to be engaged in construction work in urban area only. Only 1 man was recorded doing other service in urban area; but the type of service could not be ascertained. It is to be noted that none of them was recorded to be engaged in special occupations like tanning and scavenging, etc. From the census data it appears that their economy looms largely on their household industry, and working as cultivators.

7. Life Cycle

On the occasion of child birth, a '*dai*' (mid-wife) who is usually an unqualified old women of their own caste or Balmik caste attends to the enceinte. Some other women of the community were reported to assist the parturient regarding the postnatal care of the new born and household duties. Pollution period was reported to be sparingly observed. An iron 'talisman' is put round the neck of the new born with the belief of safeguarding it from evil spirits. '*Ghungrus*' (miniature bells) of silver were also reported to be worn by the child in its feet for decorative purposes. When the parturient is able to move away from the bed a feast is given to the community's female children, and after this she starts doing the household activities. '*Mundan*' (tonsure) is usually performed at home but some may perform it at the temple of Jawalamukhi in Kangra District.

Caste elders or relatives act as go-betweens for negotiating matrimonial alliances. For regulating marriage ties they hardly scrutinize '*gotra*' or clan about which they had rather expressed ignorance. Cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages were reported to be prohibited. Bride price was reported to exist, but its traditional amount could not be ascertained.

Regarding the age at marriage 1961 census data reveals that in the age-group (0—14) years out of 16 boys and girls, 2 females were recorded as married, which suggests that in those days there existed early marriage to a certain extent. In the age-group (15—44) years, out of 4 men and 9 women, 3 men and 8 women were married, while 1 man and 1 woman each were recorded as 'never married'. In the elderly age-group (45 and above), there were only 2 men who were recorded as married. None was reported to be divorced/separated or widowed. Out of a total of 31 persons, 8 males and 8 females were recorded as 'never married' whereas 5 males and 10 females were recorded to be enjoying the married life which suggests that there were either some polygynous families among them or some of the male counterparts of married women had moved to the neighbouring States at the time of enumeration or some married females had temporarily migrated to Punjab without their male counterparts. The surplusage of married females over their male counterparts poses a difficulty to state definitely whether one or more than one of the above factors is responsible for such a trend.

For solemnization of marriages usually the members of '*dera*' (encampment) of groom move to the '*dera*' of the bride. Priest and barber either of their own community or of Chuhras officiates at their marriages as the enquiries had revealed. A community feast is said to be arranged by both the parties at bride's house, where meat, rice, and liquor is consumed. At the occasion of marriage '*ghoris*' (ballads) are sung and their deities like Balmik, Bala Shah are said to be worshipped and '*gugga*' (god of serpents) is propitiated and both the parties greet each other. After marriage both the parties start living adjacent to each other; but the bride moves to the hut of the groom's father

which determines that the marriage is patri-local. A widow is allowed to remarry and levirate is also permissible. It was reported that the rules regarding marriage, divorce, remarriage, etc., are governed according to the traditional caste norms by the caste *'chaudhries'*.

Dead infants and children are generally buried. The adults are cremated. Customarily the persons in the household of the deceased observe mourning and pollution for the following ten days after death. A community feast was reported to be arranged on the eleventh day which marks their purificatory rite and with which is also said to be associated the belief of scaring away the grief and sorrow.

8. Religion and Social Status

Gagras reported that they are akin to the Balmik/Chuhras; but claimed to be of slightly higher social status than the former in view of the fact that they neither lift night soil nor are engaged as sweepers but according to the general consensus both were reported to be nearly equal in social status and both have their position in the lowest zone of social hierarchy. They have been conditioned to live in segregated places away from the *'swarnas'* or twice-born castes and their entry to the Hindu temples has remained barred, whereas entrance to a Sikh shrine has remained open to all irrespective of the caste. However at present the shackles of social disability were reported to be loosening as compared to the traditional way of life, and social distance is less rigidly observed though it was said to be alive at certain places.

As mentioned earlier, Balmik is regarded as their chief deity, and they celebrate Balmik Jayanti which generally falls in Asuj-Kartik (October-November) and they worship Balmik at their various *rite-de-passage* The. other deities propitiated by them were reported to be Bala Shah, *'Gugga'* (god of serpents) and goddess *'Jawalamukhi'* or *'Lattanwali devi'*, whose shrine is reported in Kangra District.

All the Gagras were returned to be professing Hindu religion as the 1961 Census figures indicate.

9. Social Control

They have been maintaining their social norms and group cohesion among its members through the traditional functioning of a statutory body of its own in the form of a caste panchayat to which the disputes and other matters concerning the caste are referred. It is through its sanctions that law and order is maintained. Ordinary family disputes are settled by the caste elders. For settling disputes, between different households. both inter-*'dera'* or intra-*'dera'* caste meeting in the form of a panchayat consisting of caste *'choudharis'* and other members is convened. Both the defendants and plaintiffs throw open their grievances and allegations against each other before the caste *'choudharis'* who act as the assessors in the meeting. The statements and evidences are given by taking an oath in the name of Balmik or Bala Shah. After listening to the statements of both parties and other discussion of the trial they approach a decision through general consensus which is advanced to the parties, to which they usually agree. They rarely approach the law courts in the matters of caste. The common types of punishments consist of inflicting some fine on the defaulter, and he is made to apologise before the caste members and the aggrieved party is paid some compensation by the defaulter. It is to be noted that the proceedings of the caste are rarely recorded.

FOR FURTHER READING

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

GANDHILA OR GANDIL GONDOLA

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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GANDHILA OR GANDIL GONDOLA

1. Identity

According to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 'Gandhila' was declared as a Scheduled Caste in the then Punjab and Pepsu States and later according to the President's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, Gandhila together with its synonym as 'Gandil Gondola' was notified as Scheduled Caste throughout the Punjab. However, this Caste is treated as denotified tribe both in the States of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh since the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act. For the purpose of conducting an ethnographic study of Gandhilas two centres of their main settlement, one in Ludhiana and another in Momian village in tahsil Samana in Patiala District were visited in early sixties to collect data on the socio-economic facets of their way of life. The total population of the community according to the 1961 census is 901 persons found to be thinly scattered in various districts of the state. Some of their clusters were reported in Patiala and Ambala Districts. As scanty data are available on this caste it is difficult to produce an exhaustive paper on it, yet it will be of great value to examine whatever bits of ethnographic information are available with a view to drawing up as clear a picture as possible for the reader.

According to the 1931 census report of the then Patiala State, a reference to this caste was made as follows : "Gandhila are low caste people of vagrant habits. Their occupation is begging though they make articles of straw and reed also". (C.I. 1931—Patiala p. 210). In the same year in Punjab the Gandhila was stated to be a minor and untouchable caste with an unimportant numerical strength (C.I. Pb. p. 374*). Earlier to this, Ibbetson had stated "Gandhila is a low vagrant tribe. They wander about bare-headed, bare-footed, beg, work in grass and straw, catch quails, clean and sharpen knives and swords, cut wood and generally do odd jobs" (Ibbetson, 1881—p. 317). The studies conducted at Ludhiana have revealed that in the economic field they have occupational overlappings and have professed ways of life which are common among other ethnic groups like Deha, Dhaya, or Dhea, Sansis Bhedkut or Manesh, Gagra etc. ; who are said to be nearly of the same social status as Gandhilas. However connubial relations with these ethnic groups were denied by the informants in Momian village; whereas commensal relations were reported to be existing to a considerable extent at both the centres of study. A similar position was also revealed during an interview with a group of persons generally called 'Bagri Sansis' in Amritsar, who expressed the view by a local saying "barah Jat Sansat" by which they meant that a dozen of castes are akin to Sansis ; and some of such ethnic groups mentioned were 'Gandhila' 'Kutchband', 'Badhia', 'Dhaya', Batwal', 'Barar', 'Nat', and 'Bazigar' etc. It is to be noted that commonness of ways of life among these ethnic groups was reported to be more in the occupational sphere. As mentioned by Ibbetson, they clean and sharpen knives and swords. But cleaning and polishing of knives and swords is said to be the traditional occupation of 'Siqligar', another Scheduled Caste in Punjab as well as in some other states. Commensal and connubial relations of Gandhila or Gandil Gondola with Siqligar have hardly been established in this study. It is to be noted that Gandhila is the popular name of the community used for ethnic identification by the people; the caste members also admitted that this is the general nomenclature to establish their ethnic identity.

About the etymological significance of the name of the community it was reported that the name has probably been derived or evolved from '*gadhi* (donkey) as traditionally they used to keep donkeys for carrying their luggage and other household belongings from place to place. While writing on this community Maclagan has said "A vagrant tribe : Also spelt Gadhela" (Maclagan, 1891—p. 301). The enquiries have

also revealed that in the past, the members of their community were involved in thefts and burglaries and they used to live near forests for hunting wild life and getting fuel wood. From the present enquiries, it appears that at present they are shifting to other economic pursuits like cultivation, agricultural labour etc. and are striving to dissociate themselves from their traditional vagrant way of life.

During the inquiry, precious little information could be gleaned about the origin of the community and in fact they expressed ignorance about the time and place of the following legend. According to them, this caste traces its descent from Raja Rasalus's family, who is regarded as a ledgendary king. It is said that there was a beautiful virgin named Sedo in his family. A Rajput king asked for her hand, but Sedo did not consent. At her refusal, the king tried to abduct her. This led to a fight between Sedo's family and the Rajput king. Sedo along with her brother Sabbal Singh fought against the king very valiantly; but she was killed. The king was victorious and Sabbal Singh was believed to have fled away to jungles and adopted a nomadic way of life. The Gandhilas under study reported themselves to be the descendants of Sabbal Singh and they regard him their ancestor for whom they show reverence.

2. Population Distribution

The Gandhila population is thinly scattered except for a few sizeable clusters in the districts of Ambala, Ludhiana and Patiala. According to the 1961 Census they numbered 901 persons, 457 males and 444 females giving thereby a sex-ratio of 972 females per 1,000 males. The sex-wise break-up in rural and urban areas in various districts is furnished below :—

TABLE 1

Serial No.	Name of District	Rural/Urban	Population as per 1961 Census		
			Persons	Males	Females
1	Hissar	(R) ..	1	..	1
		(U) ..	..	..	..
2	Rohtak	(R) ..	..	..	..
		(U) ..	1	1	..
3	Gurgaon	(R) ..	9	5	4
		(U) ..	..	..	..
4	Karnal	(R)	14	11	3
		(U) ..	12	5	7
5	Ambala	(R)	305	163	142
		(U) ..	..	..	..
6	Kangra	(R) ..	..	..	..
		(U) ..	2	..	2
7	Jullundur	(R) ..	15	3	12
		(U) ..	..	..	..
8	Ludhiana	(R) ..	34	..	34
		(U) ..	1	1	..
9	Ferozepur	(R) ..	..	..	..
		(U) ..	7	1	6
10	Gurdaspur	(R) ..	4	2	2
		(U) ..	..	..	..
11	Bhatinda	(R) ..	2	1	1
		(U) ..	..	..	..
12	Patiala	(R) ..	429	213	216
		(U) ..	40	26	14
13	Mahendragarh	(R) ..	25	25	..
		(U) ..	..	..	..
	Total	(R) ..	838	423	415
		(U) ..	63	34	29

(*Source.*—C.I. 1961—Pb., Vol. XIII—Pt. V-A).

It is evident from this table that Gandhila or Gandil Gondola preponderate in the rural areas than in urban areas.

The distribution of the community with respect to age groups and sex has been furnished as under :—

TABLE II

Age-group	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total	Percentage
(0—14) ..	169	43·78	217	56·22	386	42·84
(15—44) ..	223	54·79	184	45·21	407	45·17
(45 and above) ..	65	60·19	43	39·81	108	11·99
Total ..	457	50·72	444	49·28	901	100·00

From the table it is revealed that in the age-group (0—14) years the females preponderate over the males, whereas in the reproductive age-group, i.e. (15—44) years, there is a surplus of males over the females; and same is the position in the elderly group of persons, i.e. (45 and above). The trend of population among the segments of 'infants, children, boys and girls' ; 'young and women' and 'elderly persons' appears to be natural.

The villages of Sona, Sadhanpur, Bakraha, Naiwala, Netu, Paind and Momian in Patiala District were reported to be some of the places where members of the community could be traced, though insignificant in number.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

As they indulged in vagrancy till recently, the used to erect huts outside the village or town. Most of them are still leading a vagrant way of life. In Momian the huts were observed as made of mud. The huts were constructed without any planning or special design. The huts were reported to be covering an area of about 4 sq. meters each. The side walls of these huts were hardly over one meter in height and they were covered with a bisloped thatched roofing and there was hardly any separate provision for kitchen. However, an open space of about 25 sq. meters was reported to be serving the purpose of a common courtyard in front of the huts, which served as a platform for holding meetings, where they discuss their day-to-day matters, and take community decision. In Ludhiana District different types of huts were observed which appeared semi-cylindrical in shape, being 6 feet wide, 9 feet long and about 6 feet high at the middle. The huts were erected by stretching old sheets of cloth or pieces of terpaulin on bamboo bows supported on wooden sticks or bamboo poles on all sides. The material for the roofs is usually said to be collected through begging and if purchased it is generally second hand. Very often a number of sheets of cloth are sewn together to form a thick layer for the roof. The cost of such a hut is estimated to be rupees forty and its capacity is just to put in two charpoys. The hut has small entrance and without any provision for locking. The huts are preferably erected on a sloping ground to safeguard against rain water.

For the same objective a sort of small parapet wall of mud is erected around the hutment. The open space in front of the hut provides room for bath, hearth, and tethering donkeys, hounds etc. It was reported that a Gandhila hut preferably faces the rising sun. Ceremonies or rituals are rarely performed when they erect the huts or shift from one place to another. However to celebrate the new construction a few kgs. of jaggery is distributed among the caste brethren when they move into a new hut. The floors of the huts are smeared with cow dung paste on the occasions of marriage, of birth and death. Vegetable oil or Kerosene oil is used for lighting purposes. Articles of daily use lie higgledy-piggledy inside the hut. They do not have any clean hygienic habits. They also do not bother about their environmental pollution of all kinds.

4. Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dress of Gandhila male adults consists of '*Kamiz*' (shirt) and '*tahmat*' or '*dhoti*' (sheet of cloth tucked round the waist) to cover the lower extremities and a coloured '*safa*' (turban) as their traditional head gear. The females wear a lowly hanging '*kamiz*' (shirt) and '*salvar*' (pair of baggy trousers) and a '*chunni*' or '*dupatta*' (head dress) of muslin cloth. The traditional '*lehanga*' or '*ghagara*' is reported to be out of fashion these days. It is to be noted, that while they are on begging rounds, they are usually seen dressed in rags. Many of the males wear long hair and keep moustaches and their women either make plaits or buns of the head hair at the occiput. Boys of the school-going age wear shirt and '*pyjama*' and generally remain bare-headed. Tattooing was said to be a favourite thing with these people ; but it is now vanishing fast. It was revealed that previously their married women used to adorn themselves with light jewellery of gold and silver but now they are unable to do so owing to higher prices and other economic pressures. Common type of ornaments worn by some of their women are '*churas*' (plastic wrist bangles) '*haar*' (a necklace of silver), '*tilli*' or '*Koka*' (a nose stud usually made of gold) ; '*ballies*' (either of gold or silver) said to be worn in the lobes of the ear. Rings either of gold or silver are worn by males and females in fingers and ears by relatively well-to-do members of the caste.

5. Food Habits

The Gandhila community is invariably non-vegetarian. Chapatis of wheat, or maize form their staple food. They also occasionally consume seasonal vegetables, soups, rice, etc. It was reported that they hunt wild animals and birds like tortoise, wild cat, wild pig, jackals, iguanas, fish, pigeons, partridges, quails, for which they keep hounds, nets, traps etc. It was reported that they abjure beef, carrion and flesh of hare. Meat of goat, sheep and dear is relished with liquor at marriage and other festive occasions. Chewing of betel leaves, areca nuts and smoking of tobacco is common among them.

6. Language

Gandhilas speak Panjabi ordinarily in their daily life but with outsiders they would talk in Hindustani mixed with Urdu, Panjabi, and Gurmukhi words. The study reveals that they have some code words, which they call Farsi dialect and which scarcely seems to have any vocabulary references and equivalents with actual Persian language. It was perhaps used with criminal intents in the past. The code words of their Farsi dialect are altogether unintelligible to the outsiders and it hardly has any script. Some of the code words of their phraseology collected at Momian village are furnished below together with their English and Panjabi equivalents.

As spoken by Gandhila	*Panjabi*	*English*
'Manso Awi jo'	'Admi aunda hai'	The man is coming
Lotial	Kutta	Dog
Bawan	Istari	Woman

As spoken by Gandhila	*Punjabi*	*English*
Chheli	Bakari	Goat
Khasro	Jutti	Shoes
Kataka	Roti	Chapati
Bachhal	Sap	Snake
Baier	Apni aurat	Own wife
Mamma	Maan	Mother
Khatla	Manji	Cot

7. Education :

According to the 1961 Census data, out of a total of 901 persons, only 47 persons were returned as literates among them, giving thereby a percentage of literacy as 5.22, whereas percentage of literacy among the scheduled castes as a whole in the Punjab state works out to 9.64. The break-up of the population by educational standard is furnished below :—

TABLE III

Area	Total		Illiterates		Literates without educational level		Educational Level: Primary or Junior Basic		Educational Level: Matriculation and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Urban ..	34	29	29	27	5	1	..	..	..	1
Rural ..	423	415	383	415	25	..	14	..	1	..
Total	457	444	412	442	30	1	14	..	1	1

The parents have hardly shown any interest in the education of their children, rather they have the lust to absorb them in homely duties so as to assist in increasing the income of the household. Poverty and vagrant way of life coupled with ignorance on the part of parents were attributed to be the reasons for low level of literacy. Some of them are gradually changing their attitudes towards education and have started sending boys to school, but no attention is being given to education of girls.

8. Occupation and other Economic Pursuits

The previous census records indicate that their traditional occupation of making articles of grass and straw along with beggary formed the core of their economic pursuits. Further, Ibbetson has stated, "They also keep donkeys, and even engage in trade in a small way. It is said that in some parts they lead about performing bears ; but this I doubt." (Ibbetson—1881—p. 317). The field enquiry has revealed that some of them still keep donkeys and hounds ; whether they perform bears could not be ascertained during this rapid survey. The type of trade in which the yare engaged could not be pinpointed during this rapid enquiry. The informants reported that at present 'cultivation' and agricultural labour had considerably entered their domain of occupation, though the making of articles of grass and straw still holds its pivotal position in the category of household industry. The informants at Momian reported that some of their brethren were possessing land. R.R., a Gandhila, resident of Naiwala village was reported to be possessing 40 bighas of land, while some had taken land on lease and some others were engaged in cultivation on partnership basis, locally termed as 'seeris' (partners) being involved in cultivation, supervision, and bearing profit and loss; but being devoid of occupancy rights over the land. Some of them were found to be possessing stock like cows, buffaloes, bullocks, donkeys, goats and hounds and agricultural implements like ploughs, rollers, bullock-carts, yokes, sickles, etc. Economic structure of the community by industrial categories as recorded at the 1961 Census shows that out of 901 persons, 395 (43.82 per cent of the total population) are engaged in different occupatiional pursuits :

TABLE IV

Industrial Classification of Persons at work and non-workers by Sex

Total Rural/Urban	Total			Total workers		Workers			
						As Cultivators		As Agricultural Labourers	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rural ..	838	423	415	277	87	60	6	40	1
Urban ..	63	34	29	28	3	1	..	19	2
Total ..	901	457	444	305	90	61	6	59	3

Workers									
In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and Allied Activity		At Household Industry		In Manufacturing other than Household Industry		In Construction		In Trade and Commerce	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	..	144	78	2	..	6	..	19	1
..	..	..	..	4	..	2	1	..	..
1	..	144	78	6	..	8	1	19	1

Workers				Non-workers		Workers in Special Occupations			
In Transport, Storage and Communication		In Other Services				*Tanining and Currying of Hids and Skins*		*Scavenging*	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
4	..	1	1	146	328	..	..	..	..
..	..	2	..	6	26	..	..	..	..
4	..	3	1	152	354	..	..	..	..

Perusal of occupational details from table No. IV reveals that 305 out of the 457 males and 90 out of the 444 females were returned as workers. Further in rural area out of 838 persons 364 persons (277 males+87 females) were returned as workers and in urban areaout of 63 persons 31 persons (28 males+3 females) were returned as workers. In rural area 43.44 per cent of the population are workers and in urban areas the corresponding percentage is 49.21. These figure, reveal that participation rate of working force in rural and urban areas differs to a small extent. 506 persons out of a total of 901 persons, i.e., 56.16 per cent were returned as non-workers whose break-up with respect to any activity has not been indicated separately in census data and it is presumed that they include children, old and disabled persons, housewives, beggars, pensioners and rentiers, students, persons seeking employment etc. Further the table reveals that maximum 24.64 per cent of their population or 56.20 per cent of the working force is engaged in their house hold industry exclusively in rural area from which it appears that avenues for their craft exist more in rural area. Second important category of occupation was reported to be cultivation, in which 16.96 per cent of the total workers were returned to be engaged. 6.88 per cent of their population or 15.70 per cent of the workers were reported to be absorbed in agricultural labour. In 'trade and commerce' only 5.06 per cent of the workers were reported to be engaged. Number of persons engaged in other categories of occupation was insignificant and none of them was reported to be engaged in tanning and scavenging etc.

9. Life Cycle

Any pre-natal practices are hardly reported amongst this caste. Up to the last phase of pregnancy the woman continues to attend to household chores. With the advent of labour pains a 'dai' (mid-wife) who is usually a *Bhangi* by caste attends to the enceinte. In the event of any complication a trained 'dai' from the nearby maternity centre is called for. Usually the delivery takes place in the husband's hut. To assist the parturient for post-natal care, the married daughter if any is also called to the house, '*Sootak*' (pollution) was reported to be observed for 7 days during which the mother and the new born remain confined to the hut and father of the new born remains away from the parturient. After the pollution period is over, the mother and the new born take purificatory bath and wear new clothes and the floor of the hut is smeared with cow-dung. Birth of a male is reported to be preferred to a female birth and the former is manifested with rejoicing associated with serving two or more bottles of liquor to the caste brethren. A community feast is also arranged by the father if he can afford it. The name of the new born is suggested by the 'dai' which is generally approved by the parents. She is given a remuneration of Rs 1.25 for a female birth and Rs 10 for a male birth. If a son is born, the husband's sister or the eldest daughter hangs 'neem' leaves at the entrance of the hut in the belief of scaring away the evil spirits. The mother is given a nutricious dish called 'panjiri' (a sweetmeet prepared from ghee, jaggery, wheat flour, aniseed, thyme seed etc.) from the day following birth and the child is usually fed on breast, with occasional dozes of 'janamghutti' (a liquid indigenous drug prepared by boiling some herbs with water).

For further post-natal care of the child, an iron piece and smouldering fire is kept near the parturient with the belief of safeguarding the child from evil spirits and evil eye for the first three or four days and some body from the household keeps vigil on these nights. The child is also made to wear an amulet with the same belief.

Caste elders and relatives usually lend a hand in negotiating matrimonial alliances. For regulating marriage, the ethnic group is an endogamous but in Ludhiana its social boundaries were said to be invisible. They have been reported to be indifferent over the 'gotra' or clan scrutiny when negotiating marriages. Cross-cousin

marriages were reported to be permissible, whereas parallel cousin marraiges were reported to be prohibited. Payment of bride-price was said to to be existing and its traditional value was reported to be *'sat beeha'* (seven scores) of rupees, which at the time of survey was said to have gone upto rupees five hundred. Custom of offering dowry was also reported to be prevalent, which normally consists of a few, outfits of clothes and one or two ornaments, utensils etc.

On the betrothal ceremony, the boy's father approaches the girl's father and offers 'mauli' (a tinted cotton thread), sugar and one rupee to the girl and one or two bottles of wine or liquor to her father. The girl's father makes it clear in the presence of his guests and caste elders that he would offer his daughter in marriage only if he is paid his 'seven scores'. After this it becomes difficult for the girl's father to go back on his promise, and in case he chooses to do so, the caste panchayat inflicts upon him *'takk'* (customary fine) ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 1,000 besides his ex-communication from the caste as well at times.

About the age at marriage, the 1961 census data reveal that in the age-group (0—14) years out of 386 boys and girls, 11 males and 13 females were recorded as married, which indicates that early marriages are in existence. In the age-group (15—44), out of 223 males and 184 females, 151 males and 170 females were recorded as married ; 65 males and 7 females were recorded as 'never married' ; 6 males and 7 famales were recorded as widowed and only one male was returned under 'unspecified status'. Among the elderly persons, i.e., in the age-group (45 and above) out of 65 males and 43 females, only 1 male was recorded as 'never married' ; 57 males and 26 females were recorded as 'married' ; 5 males and 16 females were recorded as widowed and only 2 males and 1 female were returned to be divorced or separated.

For conducting marriages, the village Brahmin is invited to officiate, who is generally paid Rs 10 as his charges. The bride and the groom are made to circumambulate seven times round the sacred fire in clockwise direction and during this ceremony the groom leads the bride, and the Brahmin recites the Hindu scriptures. A community feast is arranged at the bride's hut where meat, rice, chapatis and liquor are freely consumed and folk songs are sung. Marriage is patrilocal ; but in case the bride is the only daughter of her parents, marriage becomes matrilocal or uxorilocal. Widow marriage and levirate is permissible. The rules pertaining to marriage, divorce, remarriage etc. were reported to be governed according to the prevalent caste norms and sanctions by the caste *'chaudhris'* called 'lamberdars'.

The still born and children up to the age of 3 years are buried. Cremation of adults was reported at Momian and burial at Ludhiana. At Momian it was reported that they are less sanskritized as they hardly perform their death rites with any strict adherence to Hindu rites. Whether practice of burial by them at Ludhiana was due to Christianity and Islamic influences grafted on them at certain stage of their chronological history or it was just a regional variation could not be ascertained during this inquiry. The Gandhilas at Ludhiana reported that they believe in evil spirits and sorcery. At Ludhiana the dead body is first given a bath and then wrapped in a white shroud. Relatives and caste brethren of the deceased also offer sheets of cloth on this occasion. The sheets received in this way are distributed to a Brahmin or *'Maulvi'* and to the daughters of the household. The female relatives of the deceased offer food to the four carriers of the bier. The *'Chalaiya'* is said to be performed on the twelfth day after death which usually consists of offering *'Karrah'* (sweet porridge) or lunch to the caste brethren. Traditionally, five seers of sweets used to be distributed per household of the community in case of the death of an old man, whereas in the case of the death of young, only one and quarter seer of sweets used to be given ; but these days members of the community invited to partake food consisting of boiled and sweetened rice in a gathering. *'Siappa'* (mourning) is usually observed for two

days after the death during which women are usually seen weeping in rhythmic tunes and beating their breasts presenting in the form of a drill.

10. Religion

As mentioned earlier, the informants at Momian reported that they worship their ancestor Sabbal Singh and venerate him as '*pir*' (religious leader). The mode of worship was reported to be associated with the sacrifice of a goat. On some festive occasion, they purchase a goat. A spot on the ground is smeared with mud etc., which is thought to serve as the altar of the 'pir' and the goat is brought at this altar and then a drum is suddenly beaten to cause a quiver reflex. If the goat quivers a little which the animal generally does, it is believed to have been accepted by the 'pir'. The goat is butchered after this. Usually goat's meat and rice are prepared to arrange a community feast. Sometimes on such occasions, liquor is also used and for this purpose incense is burnt and few drops of diluted liquor are sprinkled over it and then they enjoy the drinks.

A similar practice was reported to be followed by the Gandhilas in Ludhiana, where they regard Baba Khetarpal as the most benevolent deity. Whether Baba Khetarpal is synonymous with Sibbal Singh couldn't be clear at the enquiry but, the mode of worship consists in offering the sacrifice of a black goat. After butchering the animal, its blood is offerd to the deity and its meat is relished in the community feast. The other deities propitiated by them were reported to be' *Gugga*' (god of serpents) and goddess 'Nainadevi' whose shrine is located near Anandpur Sahib, and goddess 'Durga' of the Hindu pantheon. Dewali was reported to be main festival celebrated by them with the accompaniment of lighting of lamps and at this festival they prepare 'Karah (sweet porridge prepared from ghee, jaggery, and wheat flour).

According to the 1961 census figures 866 persons, (441 males & 425 females) were returned to be professing Hindu religion and 35 persons (16 males & 19 females) were recorded to be professing the Sikh religion. All the Sikhs were returned exclusively from rural areas.

11. Social Status

At present the Gandhilas are said to be getting out of the shackles of untouchability and social distance from them is gradually vanishing as a good number from them work with the jat *zamindars* in their fields and houses. The jats were also said to have begun entering the huts of Gandhilas and the latter were also reported to be allowed to cross the threshold of jat houses. But the jats hardly accept any cooked food from the hands of Gandhilas. It is to be noted that the Gandhilas possessing landholdings enjoy comparatively a better social status. According to the general consensus, they were reported to be having a status nearly equal to Deha, Dhaya or Dhea; Sansi, Bhedkut or Manesh ; and Gagra etc., all having their position on the lower steps of the social ladder. They claim themselves to be of higher social status in comparison to Balmiki, Chura or Bhangi.

12. Social Control

Ordinary disputes are settled by the Panchayat and influential persons of the community at the local level. The houshlolds belonging to the common '*thurah*' (a sort of lineage group) refer the dispute to the elderly head of the lineage. In case satisfactory decision is difficult to reach at, the matter is referred to the members of traditional statutory body functioning in the form of a caste panchayat both inter-colony and intra-colony. Usually a Gandhila colony is reported to have at least one caste 'Chaudhry' also called 'Lamberdar'. The office of the Lamberdar is not hereditary. For settling disputes between different households, a caste meeting consisting of caste chaudhris an other members is convened, in which 'Lamberdars' of Deha, Dhaya or Dhea, Sansi, Bhedkut or Manesh and Gagra communities may also be invited to participate. The plaintiffs making grievances and

allegations against the other party, call upon four important persons of their community and approach the Lamberdar by placing rupees three before him in the presence of four arbitrarily selected persons. If the other party thinks that its case is weak and is hardly convincing, it would submit and request for the decision of the Lamberdar which the party would definitely honour without further contest. In case the defendant is to plead his case he accepts the challenge and also places rupees three from his side before the Lamberdar. The 'Lamberdar' takes the money and also gets the signatures of both the parties to the effect that whosoever would defy his decision he would be fined Rs 100 to Rs 500. Gold and silver ornaments are usually kept as security from each party. The parties are allowed to engage their advocates locally called '*charahva*' from the community who usually charge ruppees twenty as their fees. The Lamberdars and 'panches' hold an open session and examine the case based on statements and eye-witnesses. After listening to cross-examination, citing of precedents in the light of sanctions and norms of the community, the judgement is announced to the parties. If the aggrieved person still feels that the decision is an unjust one he throws another challenge by placing rupees 25 before the Lamberdars. The party and the panches then move to the higher caste panchayat authority known as '*Parikh*' functioning in some neighbouring area and both the parties spend the night at the *parikh's* place. The 'parikh' holds the court next day. All the securities and challenge money are passed on to the 'parikh' along with an additional amount of rupees 140 from each side. The 'parikh' re-opens the case to hear the appeal and thereafter announces his decision. In case any of the parties is still unsatisfied with the decision he can file an appeal to '*Narikh*' at the regional level, whose decision is final, and is given the status of a 'High Court' for referring caste disputes. In case of violation of the decisions of the 'Narikh' the defaulter is ostracised from the community. It is to be noted that 'Parikhs' and 'Narikhs' are the sorts of levels of judgement at various hands. They avoid to approach law courts in the matter of caste. The common types of punishments consist of inflicting fine ranging from rupees 200 to 1,000 on the defaulters and they are made to apologise before the caste brethren and then they are accepted back in the community. This is how they maintain social cohesion and control. It is also to be noted that they sparingly keep any records of proceedings of trials in black and white. Judgements to control and regulate their social set-up, are pronounced verbally and are invariably cited as 'judge-made laws' in the subsequent disputes.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

SARERA

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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SARERA

I. Identity

The Sarera has been declared as a scheduled caste throughout the Punjab State according to President's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956. In the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh, Sarde, Sarare or Siryare; and Sarehde are noted separately as scheduled castes according to the above order, whereas in Jammu & Kashmir a community 'Saryara' is treated as scheduled caste. For confirming the identification of this community, a great difficulty is experienced by social researchers on account of variations in spellings and pronunciation from region to region. Whether the names are synonyms and represent one and the same community in the neighbouring states mentioned above, it is difficult to establish for want of authentic data and other information regulating their socio-ethnic life. The published literature available gives different versions of ethnographic interests about Sarehra or nearly same as 'Sarera'. While writing on Sarera, Ibbetson has reported "In my tables I found two castes returned Sarera and Sarara; the former in Amritsar, Lahore and Rawalpindi Divisions, and the latter in Jalandhar Division and the Hazara District. It appeared on enquiry that Hazara people were probably, though not certainly distinct, while the others were certainly one and the same and were sometimes called by the one name and sometimes by the other. I, therefore, entered them as Sarera, reserving Sarara for the Hazara people. The Sarera are returned only from Kangra and its neighbourhood. In Kangra they are for the most part general labourers, and they specially scutch cotton like the Penja or Dhunia of the plains, and also said to make stone mortars". Ibbetson, Report on the Census of Punjab—1881—p. 339). From Ibbetson's account it appears that the name 'Sarera' returned as such in Punjab is correct as they were significantly returned from Kangra and Hoshiarpur Districts during 1961 census; and a great majority of them were returned as Hindus corroborating Ibbetson's findings of 1881. Elsewhere, Ibbetson about the Sarrara has stated, "It is perhaps probable that these men are the same as those discussed under the head "Sarera" in the section on Hill Menials. But I have separated them as their identity is not at all certain.....They are all Musalmans" (Ibbetson, Report on the Census of Punjab 1881—p. 272). From this account it is apparent that the ethnic boundaries of 'Sarera' and Sarrara tend to become visible and separate. In 1961 census, none of their community was returned as Musalman in Punjab but there does not seem to have taken place any nomenclatural integration. Rose has stated, "Sarera, Sarehra, Sarrara or in Amritsar Sadara—A low caste only returned from Kangra and the adjacent territories" And further he has quoted various authorities in the foot-note as, "Hutchison says the Riharas are native to Brahmaur and the 'Sararas' to the outerhills : Chamba Gazetteer, p. 163. Sareras, however, seem to be found as far west as Hazara for E. Molloy says that the Karrals of that district are regarded by everybody but themselves as a tribe of low origin, a view borne out by the fact that no tribe will marry with them but Sareras : P.N.Q. II §—282. But this account is irreconcilable with Wace's account of the Karrals" (Rose. 1914—III—p. 385). Further Rose has expressed 'Sarahira' as, "Doubtless the same as the Sarera" (*Ibid* p. 381). According to 1931 Census, they were returned as 'Sareras' chiefly from Kangra and Hoshiarpur Districts. '*Penja*' (from 'Pinjana' meaning to scutch or card cotton) is another generic name familiarly known for the community. From Palampur Tahsil in Kangra District 'Ranot', 'Katharchu', 'Hir' and 'Jamwal' were reported to be other synonyms, generic or local names for the community. However ethnographic information is lacking about these social groups. It is to be noted that 'Hir' and 'Jamwal' are also reported by Rose to be the 'Muhammadan Jat' and 'Hindu Rajput' clans respectively (Rose 1911—II—pp. 334, 352). Further it was revealed by the 1931 census that during its preceding decade many Sareras particularly in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts had professed Sikhism.

About the etymological significance of the name, the version recorded in 1891 census,

reveals "The name is said to be derived from Sir-hara : the share of the sons of a certain Dhund Sirdar by a low caste woman having been less than that of his other sons". (C.I. 1891 Punjab, p. 299). It is also to be noted that the Sarrara of the Hazara District were said to be Dhunds (Rajput tribe) by origin (Ref. *Ibid*). According to the Sarera informants in Hoshiarpur District they claim to be Salehria Rajputs by descent and reported that the present name has perhaps been corrupted from the original name of Salehria. In this connection Rose's foot-note is quoted as under :

"It is usual to speak of the Salehria Rajputs as a tribe ; but the term appears to merely mean 'low lander' and it is possible that the Salehria' tribe is really composed of a number of septs or fragments of tribes which happen to be settled in the Salehr or sub-montane tract H.A.R." (Rose. 1914—III—p. 273).

It was reported during the field enquiry that their ancestors in the past had migrated from Rajasthan.

The community 'Sarera' or 'Sarehra' as is more familiarly called by the other people and the members of the community itself, was traditionally identified through their economic pursuits of scutching or carding cotton as already mentioned. But at present they were found to be engaged in diversified occupations mainly pursuing the agricultural activities, household industry, 'in construction' and 'other services' etc. However the findings of the present study are limited only to the community living in Hoshiarpur District where field enquiry was conducted after the 1961 census.

2. Population Distribution

The community is returned to be having maximum concentration in Hoshiarpur and Kangra Districts whereas in other districts the strength returned was comparatively small. According to 1961 census out of a total of 10,122 persons, 5,049 were males and 5,073 were females giving a sex-ratio of 1,005 females per thousand males. Distribution of the community by sex and area is given in the table below :—

TABLE I

Serial No.	Name of District	Rural/Urban	Population as per 1961 Census		
			Total	Males	Females
1	Rohtak	(R)	21	12	9
		(U)	..	..	..
2	Karnal	(R)	284	118	166
		(U)	15	10	5
3	Ambala	(R)	14	3	11
		(U)	103	70	33
4	Simla	(R)	10	..	10
		(U)	..	..	..
5	Kangra	(R)	3,878	1,868	2,010
		(U)	115	60	55
6	Hoshiarpur	(R)	4,851	2,517	2,334
		(U)	73	43	30
7	Jullundur	(R)	177	43	134
		(U)	2	2	..
8	Ludhiana	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	6	4	2
9	Ferozepur	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	9	9	..
10	Amritsar	(R)	9	2	7
		(U)	9	8	1
11	Gurdaspur	(R)	521	267	254
		(U)	8	5	3
12	Kapurthala	(R)	4	1	3
		(U)	..	..	..
13	Bhatinda	(R)	5	5	..
		(U)	5	1	4
14	Patiala	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	3	1	2

Source :—(C.I. 1961—Pb.,Vol. XIII. Pt.V-A).

From the table it is evident that the population of the community is concentrated more in the rural areas than in urban areas. Distribution of population by broad age-groups and sex is shown in the table below;—

TABLE No. 2

Age-group	Males	Percent-age	Females	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age
(0—14) ..	2,126	50·82	2,057	49·18	4,183	41·32
(15—44) ..	1,874	46·77	2,133	53·23	4,007	39·59
(45 and above) ..	1,046	54·37	878	45·63	1,924	19·01
(Age not stated) ..	3	37·50	5	62·50	8	0·08
Total ..	5,049	49·88	5,073	50·12	10,122	100·00

From the Statement it appears that the trend of distribution of population with respect to age and sex is within the range of normalcy.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

In Hoshiarpur District, usually five to ten 'Sarera' households are found to be living in a village, in a nucleated form of houses and their habitat is locally known as *'behra'*. The location of the *'behra'* is usually on one side of the village settlement, connected by kachcha foot paths. Sometimes they settle in the form of a small cluster in the outskirts of the village. In the sub-montane area they usually select a piece of land bulging upwards and erect their *'chhans'* (huts) in a circular or ring shaped pattern and the open space is commonly used by all households. A Sarera hut consists of one or two rooms having erected walls of mud or kachcha bricks on which there is bisloped roofing either or *'khar'* grass, or baked thin slabs, or pieces of slates, or corrugated iron sheets, depending upon one's economic position. The material of the roof rests on a structure of rafters of mango or (*kikar*) (Arabica Accasia) wood. The floor is also 'Kachcha' and the plinth is slightly raised above the surface level lest rain water should enter the hut. The walls are protected from rain by projecting the roof all round. Some huts are also equipped with a verandah which serves as an improvised kitchen during rains and extreme weather conditions. A separate cattleshed is erected locally known as 'kurh'. To answer the calls of nature they invariably go into the fields and observe privacy behind a bush or in a low depression. The women folk generally go to the open in the dark hours. Modern amenities like tap water and electricity hardly exist. For lighting purposes, they use kerosene lantern or an earthen lamp fed with 'sarson' oil. The walls and the floors of the houses are smeared with a paste of cow dung and mud. Reciprocal help is extended at the time of new constructions. The material for hut construction is usually available in the local area. The cost of erecting such a hut approximates to rupees five hundred. For starting the construction of the hut the village Brahmin is consulted, who suggests the *'shub muhurat'* (auspicious time). The work of construction is started by distributing jaggery and boiled grams. After the construction is complete, *'chath'* (inaugural) ceremony was reported to be observed. The Hindu Sareras burn the sacred fire and give incense, whereas the Sikh Sareras conduct an 'Akhand Path' (Non-stop recitation of Guru Granth's text, from start to end) and after the 'Bhog' ceremony a community feast is arranged. A house inherited from an issueless widow is considered to be inauspicious. In order to ward off the influences of evil souls, incense is usually burnt in the hut and some religious rituals are also performed.

4. Food Habits

It was reported that Sareras are usually non-vegetarians. Chapatis either of wheat or maize flour with *'dal'* (pulses) and vegetables, form their staple food. In the hilly areas they consume rice also. They abjure beef but they eat sheep, goat and pig. They drink liquor also, on social and festive occasions. On the marriage of a male, they normally attend the marriage party after partaking liquor. They keep milch cattle. Those who cannot afford to keep a buffalo or cow, prefer to keep goats and poultry for domestic consumption. Meat is a special dish on the visit of a distinguished guest. Tea is also consumed in plenty in all seasons.

5. Dress and Ornaments

Traditional dress of a Sarera male adult consists of a full sleeved *' kamiz'* (shirt). To cover the pubic region, they wear *' kachha'* (underwear) but the use of pyjama was also reported to be predominant among the well-to-do people. *'Safa'* (turban) is the traditional head-wear and the country made leather shoes form their foot-wear. Females usually wear a jumper and *'salvar'* (baggy trousers) and *'dupatta'* (scarf) to cover the head. At the time of marriage the bride's dress consists of a saffron coloured *'chola'*. The women use only light jewellery and that too is worn by those who can afford it. Finger rings of silver and gold; *'koka'* (nose-stud) usually of gold and *'nath'* (nose-ring) of gold or silver are the common ornaments used for *adornment* by them. *'Kantay'* (ear rings) both of gold and silver are worn in the lobes of the ears. *'Ballies'* being smaller in size than *'Kantay'* are also used in the ears. A *'choora'* (ivory bangles) is worn in the wrists by the bride at the time of marriage. Hemispherical or conical shaped ornament called 'chuk-phul' is used for adorning the head. Males usually wear finger rings only.

6. Education and Literacy

The 1961 census data reveal that out of 10,122 persons, 1,408 persons were returned as literates, giving a literacy percentage of 13.81 which is higher than the percentage of literacy (9.64) among the scheduled castes as a whole throughout the Punjab State. Break-up of their population into illiterates and literates with reference to educational level is furnished in the following table:—

TABLE 3

Area	Total Illiterates				Literates without educational level		Educational level			
							Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculation and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Urban ..	213	135	155	118	31	14	24	3	3	..
Rural ..	4,836	4,938	3,727	4,714	565	144	508	78	36	2
Total ..	5,049	5,073	3,882	4,832	596	158	532	81	39	2

Source:—(C.I. 1961-Pb., Vol. XIII—Pt.-V.A.).

The data reveal that in urban areas, the percentage of literacy is 21.6 and in rural areas the corresponding percentage is 13.6. The reason of comparatively high level of literacy in urban areas may be due to the existence of better educational facilities. However, in the rural areas also there is growing consciousness for imparting education to their children.

7. Economic Pursuits.

The available literature on 'Sareras' reveals that traditionally they were cotton scutchers and carders; but at the time of the 1961 census count they were also found to be engaged in jobs like 'cultivation', 'agricultural labour', 'construction work' and 'other services' together with their 'household industry'. It was reported that younger generation is losing interest in scutching cotton as it is becoming uneconomic due to competition from power driven carding machines.

The distribution of population according to occupational classification is given in the table below:—

TABLE 4

Status	Total			Total Workers		Workers			
						As Cultivators		As Agricultural Labourer	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rural ..	9,774	4,836	4,938	2,567	909	1,366	743	279	16
Urban ..	348	213	135	127	8	..	5	1	..
Total ..	10,122	5,049	5 073	2,694	917	1 36	748	280	16

Workers									
In Mining quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and Allied Activities		At Household Industry		In manufacturing other than Household Industry		In Construction		In Trade and Commerce	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
60	30	224	95	31	..	171	1	23	2
5	..	3	2	6	..	48	..	9	..
65	30	227	97	37	..	219	1	32	2

Workers				Non-workers		Workers in Special Occupations			
In Transport, Storage and Communications		In Other Services				*Tanning and Curry-ing of Hides and Skins*		*Scavenging*	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
20	..	393	22	2,269	4,029	3	..	..	..
24	..	31	1	86	127	..	..	1	..
44	..	424	23	2,355	4,156	3	..	1	..

Source:—[C.I. 1961—Pb., Vol. XVII-Pt. V-A]

The data on the working force reveal that out of 10,122 persons 35.67 per cent were returned as workers. Out of this working force, about one-fourth constitutes females. Further, 35.56 per cent and 38.79 per cent of their population constitute working force in the rural and urban areas respectively from which it can be concluded that participation rate of working force is higher in urban area to the extent of about 3 per cent. The break up of 64.33 per cent non-workers among them is not available. The census data reveals the occupational structure of the working force as more than half of the working force engaged in cultivation and 12.38 per cent in 'other services' constituting mainly the army personnel, village watchmen, and peons etc. 3.20 per cent and 2.92 per cent of the population was recorded to be engaged in 'household industry' and 'agricultural labour' respectively. 2.17 per cent of the population was engaged 'in construction'. Low percentages of the population were recorded to be pursuing other categories of occupation given in the table. Three males from the workers were recorded to be engaged in special occupations like 'tanning and currying of hides and skins' and one was engaged in scavenging which were perhaps the exceptional cases. Such jobs were hardly traditional but at the same time any inhibition to take up such jobs was scarcely imposed upon them. From the census data it appears that 'cultivation' is becoming the core of their economic life.

8. Life Cycle

At the advanced stage of first pregnancy, the enceinte is usually sent to her father's house, where pre-natal care is rendered to her by the experienced mother or some other old women in the household. She avoids to visit places thought to be haunted with evil spirits, like grave yards, cremations and the house where pollution period is yet not over after the death of a person. She also detours from the route if she comes across an issueless woman, lest her shadow should fall on her, which is considered to be inauspicious. Usually an unqualified woman in-midwifery either of their own caste or belonging to the Nai caste attends on her at the time of confinement and gets Rs 5 as her service charges. Other women of the community also assist the parturient for post-natal care of the new born and household duties. Special arrangements for the segregation of the parturient rarely exist. Customarily the 'pollution period' is observed for 40 days. The mother takes her bath after six days and resumes household duties after 2 weeks. Any special ceremony is hardly observed for naming (christening) the child. The name of the child is very often suggested by the parents themselves or by a close relatives.

On the 13th day after delivery the mother goes for offering prayers to the village well together with other women. She pays obeisance by going three times in clockwise direction round the well and throws some grains of rice by prostrating before it. In this way the mother returns home with a pitcher of water and starts participation in household duties. The house is smeared with cow-dung and incense is burnt to purify it. A '*rote*' (sweet chapati) or loaf is also prepared and offered in the name of their deity 'Baba Balak Nath'. After offering a morsel of 'rote' to the fire, the rest is distributed among members of the caste particularly among the children. '*Mundan*' (tonsure) is performed at the temple of 'Jawala Mukhi' in Kangra District, where '*Karah*' (sweet porridge) or goat's sacrifice is offered. Sometimes ration in the form of grains, flour etc., equal to the weight of the child , is offered in charity so as to counteract the evil influence of witches and other supernatural bodies recognised by them.

Regarding marriage the 'Sareras' are an endogamous ethnic group and had reported that there also exist some exogamous groupings. They were however, unable to give satisfactory explanation, on which principle the names of the groupings were based. The exogamous divisions they could name, are, 'sandal', 'Bhattey', 'Hir' 'Chouhan' 'Bariah' and 'Kalmotia'. For regulating marriage, the names of the exogamous divisions are reported to be scrutinized. In addition to

following the principle of village exogamy, they scrutinize the names of division of the 'self', mother, father's mother and mother's mother, of the would be spouses. Cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages are reported to be prohibited. Other conditions being satisfied, marriage, by exchange was also reported to be permissible.

About the age at marriage, perusal of 1961 census data reveals that in the age-group (0—14) out of 2,126 boys and 2,057 girls; 14 males and 66 females were returned as married, which indicates that the system of early marriage prevailed among them to a considerable extent especially of females. In the age-group (15—44) years, out of 1,874 men and 2,133 women, 1,170 men and 1,785 women were recorded as married; 630 men and 244 women were recorded as 'never married', 68 men and 101 women were recorded as widowed', 6 men and 2 women were recorded as separated or divorced, 1 female was returned under the heading 'unspecified status'. In the age group (45 and above) out of 1,046 males and 878 females, 763 males and 587 females were returned as 'married' 36 males and 4 females were recorded as 'never married', 239 males and 287 females were recorded as 'widowed', 6 males were recorded as 'separated or divorced' and 2 males were returned of 'unspecified status'. In case of 3 males and 5 females age was not stated and these 8 persons were returned as 'never married'. In all, 1,947 males and 2,438 females were recorded to be enjoying married life, from which it appears that there were either some polygynous families in the community or some of the male counterparts of married women had migrated to the neighbouring territories at the time of enumeration or vice versa. The exact explanation to this is not forthcoming. However, monogamy is the general ethos regarding the type of marriage.

Girls and boys are usually married, when they are in the middle and later phases of their adolescence, respectively. Marriage at such a stage is thought to inculcate among men a sense of responsibility and an urge to earn for the family. Pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are hardly tolerated. A woman during menstruation is supposed to avoid attending the kitchen duties.

The bridegroom and bride customarily wear the clothes brought by their respective mother's brothers. The marriage party goes to the bride's village. '*Milani*' (introductory meeting) ceremony is performed in which kinsmen of either side are introduced. Customarily the priest of their own community officiates at the time of weddings. A Brahman priest may also be invited, but he is said to accept only raw material and money from them for his services, which is considered to be a costlier affair. The marriage ceremony in case of Hindu Sareras is conducted according to Vedic scriptures; whereas among the Sikhs a '*granthi*' (Sikh priest) officiates to conduct '*lawan*' (circumambulating) four times in clock-wise direction round (Guru Granth Saheb), and the marriage solemnized in this way is called '*Anand Karaj*'. The marriage party is made to sit on the ground and the meals are served to them on leaf plates and cups. Some articles of daily use are given in dowry, by the bride's father, when she accompanies the marriage party to her husband's house after the marriage. The marriage among Sareras is patrilocal. A widow is permitted to remarry.

Death Rites and Beliefs

The Sareras believe that if death rites are not duly performed, the departed soul finds it difficult to rest in peace, it haunts the other living members of the household. The soul of the deceased is also believed to get annoyed with acquiantances and kinsmen who do not accompany the funeral procession and do not add fuel to the pyre. The infants and children below 3/4 years are buried but the adult are cremated. The body of the deceased just after death is laid flat on the ground. A person who dies after taking milk or if one dies on the cot, is believed to have been denied salvation. Special ceremonies are to be observed at religious places to attain 'salvation' for such cases. For disposal, the corpse is first abluted with water to which either cow urine

or some Ganges water is added in the belief of acquiring sanctity. Some sweet thing is also put in the mouth of the deceased for the last time. The corpse is wrapped in '*kaffan*' (shroud) of coarse cotton cloth and is placed on a bier of bamboo wood. Then funeral procession is taken to the cremation ground provided it is the day time. Ashes and bones are collected on the third day after cremation and are immersed in some sacred river. The mourning period is reported to be observed for 10 days and during this period relatives and friends come for mourning and offer condolences.

On the 11th day '*Kirya*' ceremony is observed, in which relatives and friends are invited to the community feast. Some articles of daily use like cot, '*razai*' (quilt), metallic pots and ordinary crockery are offered in charity to the '*Acharaj Brahmin*'. After this performance the mourning period ends. '*Solha*' is a similar ceremony performed on the 16th day after death and again a community meal is arranged. '*Chavarkhi*' (fourth death anniversary) is also reported to be observed and at '*Chavarkhi*' again a community feast is arranged, and some articles of daily use are offered in charity in the name of the deceased.

9. Religious Beliefs and Practices

According to the 1961 Census out of 10,122 persons, 4,930 males and 4,983 females both from rural and urban areas were returned as Hindus whereas 119 males and 90 females exclusively from the rural areas were recorded as Sikhs. Our enquiry has revealed that they stem their religion from '*Sidhs*' among the Hindus. Guru Nanak Saheb had a religious discourse with '*Sidhs*' in which the latter had to submit as a consequence of which, it is believed that some '*Sareras*' were captivated to return themselves as Sikhs and Guru Nanak Saheb's teachings have been grafted on them. Their nuclear belief rests in the omnipresence of God, and they regard Him a supreme commander of the universe. Rama, Krishna and Shiva are thought to be the incarnations of God and the ancillary beliefs were reported to be linked with the '*Sidhs*'. Beliefs in other gods and goddesses, however fall in the peripheral zone.

The worship of a '*Sidh*' is supposed to fulfill the worldly desires. Agricultural operations like sowing, hoeing, and harvesting were reported to start with the worship of '*Sidhs*'. It is believed that if the '*Sidhs*' are not duly propitiated, women in the household become sterile or barren and there may be on set of disease which is locally termed as '*Khote*' of the Sidhs. Related with the '*Sidhs*' were reported the important ones *as* "*Bawa Balak Nath*' '*Bawa Bharthari*' '*Bawa Luthru*' '*Bawa Polowala*' and '*Sidh Sibbo*'. When the members of the household smell some indications of '*Khote*' of the '*Sidhs*' they prostrate before them by offering '*rote*' or large loaves, and burning incense. Piligrimages are also reported to be made to the '*gaddis*' (seats) of these '*Sidhs*'.

The malevolent spirits manifested are '*Mata rani*' who is believed to spread small-pox; *Bawa Sibbo* is believed to cause eye-sore; Sidh Chano is associated with the disease among animal stock. Malevolence of '*Guga*' (god of serpents) and '*Khawaja*' (god of water) is thought to be evaporated by offering salt and money, and '*dalia*' (sweet porridge prepared from coarse flour) respectively. Cremation grounds are awfully believed to be the abode of evil spirits and ghosts and it is avoided to visit such places. The folk tales and fairy tales about '*chilheras* (thought to be an evil spirit changing its physical forms), '*churel*'(female ghost) are said to be popular among the masses which are passed from one generation to another by the elders. It was also reported that they have faith in witchcraft and sorcery. The sorcerers are locally called '*chelas*'. A '*chela*' is generally required to be duly initiated and undergo a training in exorcism and faith curing disease usually associated with supernaturalism and evil eyeism to seek redressal from the influence of evil spirits, hysterical fits, indigenous cure for barrenness and sterility. Chelas are reported to be expert in curing children and controlling epidemics among the livestock. The '*chelas*' in the hilly areas charge nominal from their patients, whereas

the *'chelas'* officiating at the *'gaddis'* of *'Sidhs'* were reported to charge heavily from such patients. Some *'chelas'* are said to have established their regular clientage to make a permanent source of income.

10. Social Status and Control

Swarnas traditionally have been considering the *'Sareras'* to be of a low social status. They suffered from the stigma of untouchability in the past, and even their physical touch was thought to be polluting and they were debarred from taking water from the common well. They had no access to the places of worship and were not allowed to take meals and refreshments in hotels and restaurants. At present, these social disabilities are less rigidly enforced. Some members of the higher castes even occasionally interdine with the *'Sareras'*. The school-going children of clean castes frequently mix up with Sarera students. Disputes are usually reconciled by the caste elders who are invariably impartial and considerate in delivering the judgements. The complicated disputes are referred to the village panchayat. Sometimes the aggrieved parties take the matter to the court of law if not satisfied with the decisions of the village panchayat. Sareras are normally a peace loving and hard-working caste. They believe in legitimate sources of income and their women folk supplement the earnings by organising small household industries. Existence of any traditional caste panchayat of the Sareras was not reported during the field study.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON

DEHA, DHAYA OR DHEA

A SCHEDULED CASTE IN PUNJAB

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DEHA, DHAYA OR DHEA

1. Identity

In the Punjab State, Deha, Dhaya or Dhea in Patiala, Bhatinda, Mohindergarh, Kapurthala and Sangrur Districts have been declared as a Scheduled Caste *vide* President's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956. The community has also been declared as denotified tribe in the state. The households are sparsely scattered in the state and according to 1961 census 994 persons were returned from the Scheduled areas. A field study was conducted after 1961 census covering some clusters in Patiala District. Some field work was also done in the districts of Karnal, Ambala, Amritsar and Ferozepur. The enquiry has revealed that they are very low in social status and their hereditary occupation is preparation of *Chhaj* (winnowing fan) from reed. The members of the community returned themselves as 'Dhae', which is perhaps a variation in spellings due to local nomenclature or pronunciation. They were reported by others to be at par with Chuhra/Balmiki in social status leading a semi-nomadic life, which was also largely admitted by members of this caste. The informants reported that they call themselves by another name as '*Dhairu*' which is synonym of Dhae, Deha, Dhaya or Dhea. Similarly in Sangrur District they are reported to be known by the local name '*Harnia*' and generic name '*Singikut*' (from, *singi* a horn), i.e. they perhaps earn their livelihood by applying 'singis' (horns) on the aching portions or wounds on the human body. More authentic information about *Harnia* and '*Singikut*' is however lacking. About the etymological significance of name it was reported that the name 'Dhaya' has originated from 'Dhaye' (a local word for river terrace where their ancestors used to live). According to another version, Dhea is derived from Hindustani word meaning 'beaten, depressed or fallen or downgraded". Lest one should get confused with 'Daha', 'Dahiya' and 'Dehia' it is to be noted, as Rose has stated, "Daha—A Rajput clan (agricultural) found in Multan". "Dahiya (1) A Jat tribe found on the north-eastern border of the Sampla and the adjoining portion of the Sonepat Tahsils of Rohtak and Delhi (2) A faction, opposed to the Ahulana, said to be named after the Dahiya Jats. These two factions are found in Karnal, as well as in Delhi and Rohtak" and further, "Dehia, one of the principal clans of the Jats in Karnal . . . Probably the same as Dahia" (Rose H.A. 1911., pp. 219, 220, 233.)

Regarding the origin of the community, it has been reported that they have branched off from where the Chuhras have originated and they also regard '*Balmik*' as their ancestor, and patron-saint. The popular legends in this connection are : That Balmik had created Mathang Rishi (or Thonpra Rishi), from the filth of his eyebrow, and the progeny of Mathang Rishi came to be known by the name 'Dhea'. They claim themselves akin to *Chuhras*. According to another legend, it was narrated that Chhaju and Bhagu were two brothers and both had married their sons in the same family. Both the bridegrooms started living with their in-laws. Once the zimindar of the village asked Chhaju and Bhagu to attend some scavenging work at his house. Bhagu obeyed and did the scavenging but Chhaju refused and the latter was turned out of the house and he started preparing '*Chhaj*' (winnowing fans) for other zimindars. In this way the descendants of Chhaju came to be known as Chhajwala or 'Dhea ' and those of Bhagu came to be known as 'Bhangi or Chuhra'.

They revealed that some other ethnic groups like Barar, Gagra, Sansi, Bhedkut Manesh, and Gandhila or Gandil Gondola, and Chuhra etc. also have similar occupation as Deha, Dhaya or Dhea; and they all have their position in the lower strata of social hierarchy. Their connubial relations however were reported to be restricted within the community whereas commensal relations were reported to exist with the abovementioned ethnic groups. In Patiala District 'Dhae' has been reported to be the popular name of the community and it is identified with the occupation of preparing '*chhaj*' (winnowing fan); but at present they were also observed to be pursuing

occupations like collecting and selling bones, hides and skins, dealing in rags, and pulling rickshaws. They keep donkeys for goods transportation and carrying their household belongings and other material equipment.

2. Population Distribution

At the time of 1961 Census the community was returned only from the four districts of the state, thought it was treated as a scheduled caste in the 5 districts. They were returned in majority from urban areas. Out of a total of 994 persons, 468 were males and 526 were females revealing a sex-ratio of 1,124 females for every 1,000 males. Sex-wise distribution of the community in rural and urban areas is furnished in the table below:—

TABLE 1

Serial No.	Name of the District	Rural/Urban	Population as per 1961 Census		
			Total	Male	Female
1	Kapurthala ..	(R)	..	..	..
		(U)	2	2	..
2	Bhatinda ..	(R)	45	23	22
		(U)	80	29	51
3	Sangrur ..	(R)	97	43	54
		(U)	156	78	78
4	Patiala ..	(R)	183	61	122
		(U)	431	232	199

Source.—C.I. 1961—Pb., Vol. XIII, Pt. V-A).

Further, the distribution of males and females with respect to age-groups is furnished below: —

TABLE 2

Age-Group		Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total	Percentage
(0—14)	..	240	45·89	283	54·11	523	52·61
(15—44)	..	180	47·87	196	52·13	376	37·83
(45 and above)	..	48	51·61	45	48·39	93	9·36
(Age not stated)	..	..	..	2	100·00	2	0·20
Total	..	468	47·08	526	52·92	994	100·00

Source.—(C.I. 1961—Pb., Vol. XIII, Pt. V-A)

The table reveals that in the age-group (0—14) years the population consisting of infants, children, boys and girls preponderates over the population in any other age-group which means the community has a broadbased age pyramid. The segment of population in the age-group (15—44) years occupies the second position. The trend of distribution of population with respect to age and sex appears to be within usual range. In case of 2 females, age could not be actually ascertained at the time of enumeration. The data also reveals that dependency ratio of younger group is much higher.

3. Settlement and Dwelling

It was reported by the members of the community that they prefer to live in urban areas so as to escape the hostility of rude section of the rural people. They usually erect their huts on unoccupied plots in suburbs. They have a tendency to stick to such areas for years together if left undisturbed. Their hut or *'jhungi'* is a sort of mobile house and can be erected or dismantled in a couple of hours. The huts are usually erected in the form of a constellation on some elevated portion of ground to avoid onslaught of rainy water. Some space is left in between for common use by all. The Dhea hut normally consists of one room having erected a *'banni'* (surrounding wall of one foot height) either of mud or *kachha* bricks. The material for the roof consists of bamboos and rags, but sometimes thatched roofs are also provided. The bamboos are bowed and fastened together on a few perpendicular bamboo or wooden sticks erected along the *'banni'* and the rags are stretched on the bamboo bows thus appearing in shape like an inverted semi-cylindrical structure. The covered area approximates to 40 sq. ft. For easing, both men and women invariably go outside in the open fields. Amenities like tap water and electricity rarely exist. During incessant rains they take shelter in some public places like railway platform or verandahs of schools etc. The material for erecting huts is usually available locally. The cost of erecting such a hut is fifty to sixty rupees. Those who also deal in hide and skins have got some 'Kholas' (walled enclosure without a roof) for storing them lest dogs should drag them out.

4. Food Habits

According to informants they are non-vegetarian as far as their dietary habits are concerned. Chapatis both of wheat and maize flour with salt, onion and pickle, form their staple food. Pulses and vegetables are also consumed if economic conditions permit. Meat of wild animals like cat, jackal, deer, iguana, tortoise and birds like partridges, quails, fowls, eggs, and fish is taken. Meat of goat and sheep is also consumed. Beef was reported to be abjured. The enquiry had revealed that in the past they used to take carrion ; but not now. The informant expressed their attitude by a saying, *"Bakre da mas bak-baka-goh di poonchh karari"* English version of which is that the meat of a he-goat is not tasteful whereas the tail of an iguana is relishing. Liquor is also consumed on festive occasions and social get-togethers.

5. Dress and Ornaments

'Kamiz' or *'Kurta'* (shirt) forms the traditional dress of a *'Dhea'*. To cover the pubic region they either tie *'chadra'* or *'tahmat'* (sheet of cloth) or wear *'pyjama'* (trouser). During household duties they normally use *'kachha'* (under-wear). A *'safa'* (turban) of muslin cloth forms the head-wear. The females normally wear *'kamiz'* (shirt) and a *'salvar'* and a *'dupatta'* (scarf) to cover the head. In some areas of Karnal District,the use of *'ghaghra'* was also reported to be prevalent. Usually they beg or purchase second-hand clothes. Their children are observed to be half-clad and old women are dressed in worn out patchup clothes. Only light jewellery is used by them. Men use *'murkian'* (rings) of either gold or silver in the ears. The women wear *'koka'* (nose-stud) of gold in the nose and *'kangan'* (bangles) of silver and ivory on the wrists. *'Haar'* (necklace) of silver is worn in the neck. *'Pazebs'* fitted with miniature bells of silver are worn in the ankles. Tattooing is also prevalent among them. Females get tattooed impressions of variety of floral patterns, designs of beautiful birds like peacocks, at their bodies with a view to add charm to their beauty. Males get their names engraved on the forearms.

6. Literacy and Language

According to 1961 Census, out of a total of 994 persons, only 3 persons were recorded as literates, giving a very small percentage of literacy; whereas the percentage of literacy among the scheduled castes as a whole throughout Punjab State approximates to 9.64. The break-up of their population into illiterates and

literates with respect to educational level in rural and urban areas is given in the table below :—

TABLE 3

Area	Total		Illiterates		Literates without educational level		Educational Level			
							Primary or Junior Basic		*Matriculation and above*	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Rural ..	127	198	126	197	1	1	..	..	..	..
Urban ..	341	328	340	328	..	..	1	..	..	..
Total ..	468	526	466	525	1	1	1	..	..	.

Source.—(C.I. 1961—Pb., Vol. XIII, Pt. V-A)

Ignorance on the part of parents coupled with poverty, and semi-vagrant way of life were reported to be the main reasons for the low level of literacy. Simultaneously they are feeling that they are lagging behind in education but feel helpless to send their wards to schools on account of their migratory character.

Dheas are reported to speak Panjabi in their homes; but with the outsiders they would talk in Hindustani mixed with Urdu, Panjabi and Hindi. The enquiry revealed that they have some code words which were perhaps used at the time of some criminal activities in the past. The code words of their dialect are quite unintelligible to the outsiders. Some of their code words were collected during the enquiry, which are furnished below along with their English and Punjabi equivalents :—

As spoken by Dheas	Punjabi	English
Dof	Goh	Iguana
Nuaru	Giddar	Jackal
Gonkhari	Gau	Cow
Khiti	Roti	Chapati
Galana	Marna	To kill
Neetu Kheh	Chupkar	Be quiet
Reond	Aurat/Janani	Woman
Dhing	Nasana	To run
Jeebna	Peena	To drink

As spoken by Dheas	Punjabi	English
Kuaran	Gharwali	Housewife
Kuadami	Khasam	Husband
Lukhari	Lumbari	Fox
Nutla	Kutta	Dog
Rongla	Khargosh	Rabbit
Pondhi	Gadhi	Donkey
Kaja	Siana Admi	Wiseman
Dhebra	Billa	Cat
Nuani	Pani	Water

There is hardly any script exclusively of their own dialect.

7. Economic Pursuits

Preparation of *'chhaj'* (winnowing fan) is the hereditary occupation of Dheas but at the time of survey, they were found to be engaged in diversified occupations like collecting and selling hides and skins, dealing in rags, pulling rickshaws, working as agricultural labourers and keeping donkeys etc.

For preparing *'chhaj'* they pruchase *'sirki tillan'* (peeled off upper twigs of reed) at the rate of rupees ten per maund and bamboos are purchased at the rate of one rupee per babmoc. The bamboos are further split up to form thin splinters. For making winnowing fans, the reeds are twined and fastened together with the help of wet strings of *'tandi'* (thong) which they prepare themselves by cleaning intestines of dead goats or calves. However, they hardly make shoes from their skin. The winnowing fan is first made in the form of a *'chack'* and then its two edges are bent so as to give it the shape of a spade; and then the bent edges are fastened with the help of bamboo splinters and thongs. From one maund of reed about 50 winnowing fans are prepared and are usually sold in the neighbouring villages at the rate of rupee one per *'chhaj'* and also in exchange of grains weighing one to two kgs. per *'chhaj'*. An adult male on an average prepares two such winnowing fans per day. For their reed industry, *'chhuri'* (knife) dao, needle and *'adda'* (wooden block) are the important tools. The women also participate in the preparation of *'chhaj'*. Regarding their work of bones, it was reported that they collect bones of the dead animals by visiting the known places in the periphery where corpses are thrown. The bones are sold either to the contractors or directly to the companies dealing in this business. It is to be noted that in the former case the bones are sold at the rate of rupees 5 per maund and in the latter case at the rate of rupees 7 per maund and that only three-fourths of the weight is chargeable as the bones are usually fresh and 1/4th of the weight is deducted as discount to make good the loss eventually going to occur on account of their getting dry later. Further it is also worth mentioning that those who prepare *'chhaj'* claim themselves to be higher in social status than their brethren dealing in bones. Similarly they collect rags and sell them. Their women were reported to beg and were lax in sexual matters. The distribution of population by industrial

categories as recorded in 1961 census, is given in the table below :—

TABLE 4

Status	Total			Total Workers		Workers			
						As Cultivators		As Agricultural Labourers	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rural ..	325	127	198	32	27	..	..	..	..
Urban ..	669	341	328	199	130	..	..	..	..
Total ..	994	468	526	231	157	..	..	..	..

Workers									
In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Plantation, Orchards and allied Activities		At Household Industry		In Manufacturing other than Household Industry		In Construction		In Trade and Commerce	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
..	..	30	27	2	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	172	129	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	202	156	2	..	..	..	..	..

Workers				Non-workers		Workers in Special Occupations			
In Transport, Storage and Communications		In Other Services				*Tranning and Curry-ing of Hides and Skins*		Scavenging	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
..	..	..	..	95	171	6	5	..	..
..	..	27	1	142	198	2	..	1	..
..	..	27	1	237	369	8	5	1	..

Source :—[C.I. 1961, Pb. Vol. XIII, Pt-V-A].

Out of 994 persons, 388 persons were recorded as workers, i.e., 39·03 per cent of their population constitutes the working force; and the rest 60·97 per cent constitute the non-workers. 40·46 per cent of the workers constitute the females, from which it is evident that their females sufficiently augment to the income of the household by working with their male counterparts in the household industry of '*chhaj*' making 18·15 per cent and 49·18 per cent of their population in rural and urban areas, respectively, constitute the working force. The reasons for the higher participation rate of working force in urban areas is that there exist better facilities of procuring raw-material for their household industry in urban areas as compared with rural areas. Break-up of

60·97 per cent non-workers is not available. From the census data it is revealed that an overwhelming majority (92·27 per cent of the working force is engaged in household industry of *'chhaj'* making etc. The percentages of working forces engaged in household industry in rural and urban areas are 91·49 per cent and 96·61 per cent, repectively. About 7·22 per cent of the working force was recorded engaged in 'other services' comprising, employment in hotels, or *'dhabas'* including Govrernment jobs. 8 males and 5 females were returned to be engaged in 'Tanning and Currying of Hides and Skins' and one male was returned doing the job of scavenging. Only 2 males were returned engaged 'in manufacturing other than Household Industry'. The census data of 1961 reveals that their economy is looming largely on their household industry of *'chhaj'* making.

8. Life Cycle

Generally the enceinte continues to perform household duties right upto the advance stage of pregnancy. Usually the old women of the caste render the pre-natal care *dai* (mid-wife) either of their own caste or of *chuhra* caste attends the delivery case. The birth of a male child is preferred as it is thought to continue the ancestral line. The birth is marked by hanging an onion at the door. The *dai* traditionally gets Rs. 1¼ and a piece of cloth as her remuneration. However the amount varies with the sex and parity or order of birth. Other women of the *biradri* render assistance to the parturient in post-natal care of the new born and household duties. The parturient is hardly segregated, but pollution is reported to be observed for about 40 days. The child is fed on mother's milk. It is reported that urine of pig and some bones are offered to the fire with the belief that their fumes would scare away the ghosts or evil spirits from there and this process is continued for about a fortnight. Any special naming ceremony is rarely observed and any name suggested by the *dai* or some close relative is generally approved by the parents.

Purificatory rites consist of sprinkling drops of cow urine on the new born and the mother. The hut is leeped with cow dung from inside and the deities like *Balmik* and *Lalanwala* are propitiated. *Gur* (Jaggery) is offered to the fire and virgins are feasted on *'krah'* (a sweet preparation of ghee, flour and jaggery).

Regarding their matrimonial alliances, the community is an endogamous groups and further it is reported that there also exist some exogamous groupings. Some of the exogamous groupings reported by them are *'Banbi'* *'Kalian'* *'Mattu'* *'Ghusar'* *'Marar'*, *'Sadharh'*, *'Jhoonjh'*, *'Sarsar'*, *'Auderey'*, *'Jhajar'*, *'Kalyaney'*, *'Kandiarey'*, *'Sahotrey'* etc. For negotiating a marriage, the social groupings of the spouses only need to differ by names. Bride-price was reported to exist but its monetary value could not be ascertained, and was reported to vary according to the sanctions of caste panchayat. Local endogamy is preferred.

According to 1961 census in the age-group (0—14) years, out of 240 males and 279 females, only four females were returned as married which establishes that the impact of the practice of child marriage was an insignificant one. From the age-group (15—44) years out of 180 males and 196 females, 118 males and 179 females were recorded as 'married' ; 56 males and 12 females were returned as 'never married'. Six males and 4 females were returned as widowed' and one female was returned of unspecified status. In the elderly group of 45 years and above) out of 48 males and 45 females, only one male was returned as 'never married'. 40 males and 25 females were recorded as 'married'; 7 males and 20 famales were recorded as 'widowed'. In case of 2 females, age was not stated; but they were recorded as 'married'. Out of a total of 468 males and 526 females ; 158 males and 210 females were recorded as 'married' at the time of 1961 enumeration, revealing that there were either some polygynous unions, or some of the male counterparts of married women had temporarily migrated to the neighbouring places or some married women without their male counterparts had immigrated from neighbouring places. Which of the above factors alone or in combination were responsible, is difficult to substantiate for want of detailed information

Marriages are normally arranged in the age group (15—18) years. For matrimonial alliances some relative acts as a go-between and when the preliminary talks mature then, boy's father goes to the girl's father for final negotiations. If both the sides agree, betrothal is performed in which Rs 1¼, coconut, sugar candies are offered to the boy by the girl's father in the presence of caste elders and jaggery is distributed among virgins The boy's father offers *'gur*, *'mauli'* (tinted cotton thread) and wine to the girl's father. Gur and wine is distributed among the members of the community. Marriages are normally solemnized after the harvesting and the date is fixed after consulting the 'jantri' (almanac) *'Batna'* (oil baths) are administered both to the boy and girl. *Batna* paste prepared from turmeric powder, barley flour, mustard oil is rubbed on the boy's body for 7 days by his sister, mother, or brother's wife and similar process is repeated for 5 days in the case of girl. The purpose of rubbing *Batna* is primarily to add charm to the complexion. One day before the departure of *'Barat'* (marriage party) the community brethren are served with lunch. Relatives and other close associates offer money to the groom. Marriage party usually comprises of 30 to 40 persons, in which women accompany sparingly. The marriage party leaves for bride's house where bride's father along with other members of the community and relatives receives the marriage party by offering a turban, and one rupee to the groom's father and *'milani'* (introductory meeting) is held between the close relatives of corresponding status on either side. A 'Chuhra' priest or a priest of their own caste known as *'sarbangi'* officiates to conduct marriages. In the absence of *'sarbangi'*, bride's elder sister's husband or her father's sister's husband popularly known as *'dhiana'* officiates as a priest to conduct the marriage ceremony. The ceremony is performed by conducting 7 *'pheras'* (circumambulation) round a wooden seat underneath which an improvised lamp is lit Any scriptures or 'mantras' (hymns) are hardly recited ; but 'Ram Ram' is usually uttered and women sing songs from which an important couplet was noted and reproduced below :—

"Baman ji" de deo Kanya de phere"
"Baman ji" Kharian de reh gae godey"

English rendering of the above couplet appears like—

"Oh respected Brahmin, conduct the circumambulation of the virgin".
"Oh respected Brahmin, by standing, our knees are tired "

It is interesting that even without a Brahmin 'pandit' at this occasion they address their own caste priest as *Brahmin*. The members of the marriage party are made to sit on the ground and meals are served to them in leaf plates and cups Liquor is freely consumed among all of the 'bradri' present there on this occasion and traditionally it is considered essential as a part of hospitality even though the bride's parents may have to mortgage their utility articles of the house to meet this requirement of marriage party. Articles of daily use like clothes, utensils including some outfits, a box and one or two ornaments etc. form the dowry of the bride. Marriage is partrilocal. Divorce may occur and deceased brother's wife is allowed to marry her husband's younger brother. If the husband and wife cannot adjust, the wife leaves the husband to join her parents, and in due course she remarries some one else. In such a case the former husband is entitled to get some compensation from his divorced wife's father or the latter husband as decided by the caste panchayat. It was reported that divorce is generally initiated by the females in this caste.

Death Rites and Beliefs

Dheas bury their dead irrespective of age or sex as reported by the informants. The corpse wrapped in *'kaffan'* (shroud) is carried by four persons on a cot. Friends and relatives accompany the funeral procession The *'kandhis'* or bier carriers stay at deceased's hut for 3 days and remain idle and avoid taking bath during this period. *'Taiyya'* (from three) is observed on third day by cooking rice in a new vessel by the bier

carriers, provided by the survived members of family. Some of the cooked rice is divided into six shares. Two of the carriers get 2 shares each while the other two, get one share each. All the four '*Kandhis*', wash their heads with milk. Then they carry the '*pattals*' (leaf plates) of their shares to the burial spot. Four of the 'pattals' are placed at each of the corner of the grave whereas the two shares are placed in the middle. After that they return home and take rice in the same pot and the surplus food, if any, is offered to dogs and birds. The deceased person's wife's brother or daughter's husband offers chapatis and '*dal*' (pulses) on the hands of the members of the community and the 'kandhis', which marks the stoppage of mourning. They have the belief that there is circle of life and death. It was reported that a layer of sand or wheat flour is spread near the grave and the next morning there appear the foot-prints of the species in which the deceased had taken a re-birth. It could not be confirmed by the informants as to how many had actually seen such foot-prints to establish their belief but they were emphatic that there exists a circle of life and death and only the devout worshippers of God and pious souls get salvation from this vicious circle and are blessed with a permanent abode in Heaven.

9. Religious Beliefs and Practices

The 1961 census figures reveal that out of 994 persons, 992 were returned professing Hindu religion, and only 2 males were returned as Sikhs. Their nuclear beliefs were associated with Lord Rama whom they regard the supreme being and 'Ram Ram' is the popular common denominator exchanged for salutation. The ancillary beliefs are linked with '*Sakhi Sarwar*' also synonymously known as '*Lakhdata*' or '*Lalanwala*'; Balmik, and *Guga*, They also believe in other Hindu gods and goddesses.

For propitiating 'Lalanwala' they offer '*churi*' (a preparation from chapatis of wheat flour mixed with jaggery) as vowed for worldly wishfulfilments like seeking a male child, freedom from illness and recovery from ailments, physical fitness and improvement, in financial soundness, etc., etc. The altar of the deity is known by the names of *pirkhana*, *thaan* or '*nigaha*' and one such altar of the deity is reported in village Jaraut near Ambala City. Balmik is worshipped on Balmik Jayanti in the months of Asuj-Kartik (October-November). Guga is worshipped by offering '*mithi roti*' (sweet chapati) on the day of 'Guga Navami' in the month of (August-September) and both males and females observe fasts to celebrate this festivity.

Malevolent deities like Kalka, Matarani, Masani, evil spirits called 'bhoots' or *prets* are believed to cause destruction and miseries and when some body is believed to be under their evil influence, then '*bhagats* or '*ojhas*' are consulted who are thought to be the sorcerers having a strong grip over such deities and spirits. Sometimes urine is sprinkled at the face of believed affected person and his/her nose is touched with a footwear and '*Kalaam*' is read out to ward off the evil spirits. They also worship Sun and Moon and on the occasion of eclipses, etc., they beg alms and pray for meals twice a day. They celebrate important Hindu festivals like Dussehra, Dewali, Holi and Lohri, etc. in accordance with the local customs and beliefs.

10. Social Status and Control

The twice born castes traditionally have been considering the 'Dheas' to be of the lowest social status like Chuhras and Bangali and physical touch with them was considered to be polluting. They were prohibited from drawing water from the common village well. Usually they have got a separate source of water which is shared by Chuhras also. They have also been suffering from the stigma of pilfering in the past. The informants reported that Dhea, Chuhra and Bangali can interdine and smoke together but the connubial relations are limited within the caste. Further it is to be noted that Bangalis consider themselves superior to both Dhea and Chuhra as they claim their descent from Jogis and also because the Dheas deal in bones and preparing 'tandi'

(thongs) from the intestines of calves, goats, etc. and Chuhras doing scavenging and carrying night soil which constitute the lowest offices of all the occupational classifications. At present the social disabilities are lightly enforced as the members of the so called upper castes are aware that untouchability is an offence under the law.

There exists a traditional body functioning in principle in the form of panchayat. Ordinary family disputes are settled by the caste elders. Disputes between different households and colonies are settled through caste panchayat. The popular office bearers are 'lamberdar', *'panch'* and *'Sarpanch'*. Normally every social grouping is said to have a lamberdar from the same lineage. The grievances are first reported to the respective lamberdars. The offices of the *'panches'* are more or less hereditary unless and until a 'panch' is impeached for partiality and gross-injustice by the caste members unanimously. The disputes generally relate to loans, bride-price and instability of marriage, etc. The parties first refer the dispute to the lamberdar of the respective lineage. For throwing open their grievances and allegations against the other party the plaintiffs call upon four important persons of the *biradri* and approach *lamberdar* and place rupees three before him in the presence of four arbitrarily selected men. In case the other party wants to stress its own stand, it accepts the challenge and also places rupees three from its side before the *lamberdar*. The *lamberdars* and *'panches'* examine the statement and the parties are asked to deposit some more money which is adjustable after imposing fine, etc., if any. Evidences are heard, precedents are cited and then verbal judgments are pronounced. If panchayat's decision is not honoured by the defeated party, then panchayat supports the victorious one in the court of law. If perchance the court of law decides the case in favour of the defeated party, the caste panchayat enforces social boycott. It was reported that an approach to the court of law is an exception rather than the rule.

In case of ordinary disputes the person at fault are made to submit and apologise before the panchayat and fines ranging from Rs 25 to 50 may be inflicted. In case of serious offences heavy fines are also inflicted. In case of a woman refusing to co-habit with her husband the father of the woman has to pay the marriage expenses and price of the woman to the husband ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000. It is to be noted that meeting of the panchayat is held away from the habitat lest the others should be disturbed by noise during the trial. Women do not participate in the panchayat meetings unless summoned specially to get some points of dispute clarified. The proceedings of the case are rarely recorded, and outsiders are hardly allowed to watch the proceedings of the panchayat. If a case hangs in balance before the caste panchayat, it is referred to the regional panchayat and the expenditure is borne by the appellants.

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ANNEXURE

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

I. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name ; synonym ; sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order and as in other published sources such as census reports, monographs, etc., grouping with other castes and tribes during various censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.

2 Etymological significance of the name ; names by which the community is referred to by (a) others and (b) itself.

3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.

4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments; historical references and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and Population Trend

1. Area where found ; population and concentration in the State and outside; physical aspects of the areas of concentration.

2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variations during 1901—1961; sex ratio ; age-groups and rural-urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical Characteristics

1. Racial Stock ; appearance and affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, Clan, Kinship and Other Analogous Divisions

1. Family; size (observed and published); types, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic and religious function and inheritance.

2. Clan/Gotra and sub-clans ; names, etymological meaning, clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin, status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (Preference and probibition) occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan and food (restrictions, prescriptions, etc.).

3. Others : Phratry, Duel organisation, like moieties, etc., as in 2 above.

V. Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornaments and other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community

1. Settlement: Village site, location, settlement pattern (agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated, amorphous, star-shaped, horse-shoe-shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring-shaped, etc.) and variations ; regional pattern, vis-a-vis pattern of the community.

2 Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of religion, castes (Caste Hindus; untouchables) and tribes etc. with segregations, if any, and the basis thereof.

3. Dwelling unit : Compound, entrance, source of water, the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle shed, isolation huts, etc.) ; shape (square, round, irregular, etc.) storeys ; nature of floor, plinth ; wall ; roofing ; thatching ; ventilations and doors ; materials used ; decorations and embellishments ; temporary structures.

4. Dress, including head-gear and foot-wear used—ordinarily, on ceremonial occasions and special occasions, sex-wise and according to majority or minority; dress of priests and office bearers; variations.

5. Ornaments : use ; material used; from where obtained ; variations according to sex and age.
6. Personal decoration : Tattooing ; mutilation (chipping of teeth, etc.) hair cutting, how done, purpose, attitude and variations according to sex and age.
7. Food and drink : Materials (staple and other), prescriptions and prohibitions, fuel, utensils and mode of preparation ; practices connected with serving and taking of food; preservation of food and rituals, if any.
8. Equipments connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual, how procured; mateiral used, construction, manipulation and purpose.
9. Other household equipments. As above.
10. Equipments connected with recording of time, space and weight and their methods of use. As above.

VI. Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment

1. Environmental sanitation, settlement, disposal of night-soil, garbage, etc.
2. Hygienic habits : cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, houses, utensils, etc.
3. Diseases : Incidence ; local names; interpretation of the causes ; symptoms ; diagnosis and cure persons and methods involved.
4. Modern systems of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VII. Language and Education

1. Ancestral Language : Classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language and literature.
2. Mother tongue : classification according to Grierson ; bilingualism and multi-lingualism, regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 Census on language and literature.
4. Education and literacy: Traditional and modern attitude, information collected during 1961 Census literacy and levels of education.

VIII. Economic Life

1. Economic Resources : Land, Community Land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilized.
2. Forest wealth : Flora and fauna, nature and extent of right in the forest, forest utilization.
3. Fishery, Livestock and others.
4. Working force : Sex-wise, urban and rural variations and comparisons of the same with the region.
5. Non-worker.
6. Industrial classifications : Details as collected in the field and comparison with that of the 1961 Census figures ; traditional occupation and changes in the pattern ; main and subsidiary occupations.

7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (*jajmani*), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation : recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement : Cycle and occupational pattern.
10. Shifting cultivation : method, implements and equipments, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation : As above.
12. Income and expenditure : Sources of income, extent, expenditure on food, clothing, house, education, social functions and others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. Life Cycle

A. Birth

1. Beliefs and practices connected with conception, barrenness, still birth, miscarriage, abortion, child death, regulation of sex, etc.
2. Pre-natal and natal practices : Residence, diet, work, taboos etc., delivery place, assistance, equipments used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post-natal practices : confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child; preference about sex; preference about number, segregation of sex, etc.

B. Initiation

1. Initiation ceremony ; descriptions.
2. Pre-marital sex relations within the community, outside the community, sanctions and taboos.

C. Marriage

1. Age at marriage for both sex ; prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow remarriage (preferences and taboos).
2. Civil Status and Social Status.
3. Types of marriage : Monogamy, polygamy (Polyandry and Polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse : Qualities valued (for bride and groom) mode of selection, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring mate : by negotiation, force, intrusion, elopement, etc.
6. Terms of settlement : Payment of bride price, dowry, service, exchange, adoption, etc.
7. Ceremonies connected with marriage : details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.
8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.
9. Divorce : Reasons and procedure.

D. Death

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well-being of the soul, measures to avert ha by the spirits.
2. Methods of disposal : Burial, cremation, exposure, floating on water, etc.
3. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit, etc., for disposal ; how carried, who carry, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.
4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.
5. Death rites : Details.
6. Monuments : Tombs, megaliths, etc.
7. Pollution : duation, restrictions in work, food, dress, shaving, hair cropping, sex life etc., removal of pollution.
8. Mourning : mourners and duration.

X. Religion

1. Deities : supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deities of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clans, gotras, etc.
2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical and other traditions.
3. Rituals and concepts associated with the pantheon.
4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.
5. Religious functionaries.
6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.
7. Concept of soul, hell, heaven, rebirth, transmigration of soul, etc.
8. Sects and denominations : Name, distribution, beliefs and practices, etc.
9. Statistical information.

XI. Leisure, Recreation and Child Play

1. Use of leisure time : For male, female children and adult ; seasonal variation in leisure time.
2. Recreation—their mode and extent, for males, females and children.
3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. Relation Among Different Segments of the Community

Recognised segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social, prestige, religion, sect, education, age, etc.) Inter-relationship among various segments; status of the segment, status of women.

XIII. Inter-community Relationship

1. Ceremonial relationship : Service by Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen, etc.

2. Pollution by touch or proximity to high Caste Hindus, use of well; admission to temple.

3. Secular relationship : Model for other communities ; dominance due to economic resources, political status, social status, etc.

4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonism of the community.

IV. Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership

1. Social control : levels of social control, community level, regional level, hereditary, special functionaries, etc., social control by other agencies.

2. Mode of acquiring offices.

3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community, etc., at the regional level and local level.

4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.

5. Leadership : For social change for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities at the community level, regional level and local level.

6. Social prestige : method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, merit of feast, associating with historical association, etc.) symbols of social prestige.

XV. Social Reform and Welfare

1. Social reform movements : intensity ; reasons (for raising social status, establishing traditional norms for westernisation, etc.) ; History and import of the movements.

2. Social Welfare : Agency, religious organisation, community as a whole, Government official and non-official, role of the social welfare measures and impact.

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