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PART VI

VILLAGE SURVEY MONOGRAPHS

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AMWAR

TAHSIL & DISTRICT MANDLA

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DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF CENSUS OPERATIONS,
MADHYA PRADESH
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1961 CENSUS PUBLICATIONS, MADHYA PRADESH

(All the Census Publications of this State will bear Volume No. VIII)

PART I (in Sub-Parts)	General Report including Subsidiary Tables
PART II-A	General Population Tables
PART II-B (in Sub-Parts)	Economic Tables
PART II-C (in Sub-Parts)	Cultural and Migration Tables
PART III	Household Economic Tables
PART IV (in Sub-Parts)	Housing and Establishment Tables (including Subsidiary Tables) and Report
PART V (in Sub-Parts)	Special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
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PART VII	Survey of Handicrafts of the State (A Separate Sub-part for each Handicraft Surveyed)
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FOREWORD

Apart from laying the foundations of demography in this subcontinent, a hundred years of the Indian Census has also produced 'elaborate and scholarly accounts of the variegated phenomena of Indian life—sometimes with no statistics attached but usually with just enough statistics to give empirical underpinning to their conclusions.' In a country, largely illiterate, where statistical or numerical comprehension of even such a simple thing as age was liable to be inaccurate, an understanding of the social structure was essential. It was more necessary to attain a broad understanding of what was happening around oneself than to wrap oneself up in 'statistical ingenuity' or 'mathematical manipulation'. This explains why the Indian Census came to be interested in 'many bypaths' and 'nearly every branch of schorlarship, from anthropology and sociology to georaphy and religion'

In the last few decades the Census has increasingly turned its efforts to the presentation of village statistics. This suits the temper of the times as well as our political and economic structure. For even as we have a great deal of centralization on the one hand and decentralization on the other, my colleagues thought it would be a welcome continuation of the Census tradition to try to invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change. It was accordingly decided to select a few villages in every State for special study—where personal observation would be brought to bear on the interpretation of statistics to find out how much of a village was static and yet changing and how fast the winds of change were blowing and from where.

Randomness of selection was, therefore, eschewed. There was no intention to build up a picture for the whole State in quantitative terms on the basis of villages selected statistically at random. The selection was avowedly purposive: the object being as much to find out what was happening and how fast to those villages which had fewer reasons to choose change and more to remain lodged in the past as to discover how the more 'normal' types of villages were changing. They were to be primarily type studies which, by virtue of their number and distribution, would also give the reader a 'feel' of what was going on and some kind of a map of the country.

A brief account of the tests of selection will help to explain. A minimum of thirty-five villages was to be chosen with great care to represent adequately geographical, occupational and even ethnic diversity. Of this minimum of thirty-five, the distribution was to be as follows:

(*a*) At least eight villages were to be so selected that each of them would contain one dominant community with one predominating occupation, e.g. fishermen, forest workers, jhum cultivators, potters, weavers, salt-makers, quarry workers etc. A village should have a minimum population of 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(*b*) At least seven villages were to be of numerically prominent Scheduled Tribes of the State. Each village could represent a particular tribe. The minimum population should be 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(*c*) The third group of villages should each be of fair size, of an old and settled character and contain variegated occupations and be, if possible, multi-ethnic in composition. By fair size was meant a population of 500–700 persons or more. The village should mainly depend on agriculture and be sufficiently away from the major sources of modern communication such as the district administrative headquarters and business centres. It should be roughly a days journey from the above places. The villages were to be selected with an eye to variation in terms of size, proximity to city and other means of modern communication, nearness to hills, jungles and major rivers. Thus there was to be a regional distribution throughout the State of this category of villages. If, however, a particular district contained significant ecological variations within its area, more than one village in the district might be selected to study the special adjustments to them.

It is a unique feature of these village surveys that they rapidly outgrew their original terms of reference, as my colleagues warmed up to their work. This proved for them an absorbing voyage of discovery and their infectious enthusiasm compelled me to enlarge the inquiry's scope again and again. It was just as well cautiously to feel one's way about at first and then venture further a field

and although it accounts to some extent for a certain unevenness in the quality and coverage of the monographs, it served to compensate the purely honorary and extra-mural rigours of the task. For the Survey, along with its many ancillaries like the survey of fairs and festivals, of small and rural industry and others, was an 'extra', over and above the crushing load of the 1961 Census.

It might be of interest to recount briefly the stages by which the Survey enlarged its scope. At the first Census Conference in September 1959 the Survey set itself the task of what might be called a record *in situ* of material traits, like settlement patterns of the village; house types; diet; dress; ornaments and footwear; furniture and storing vessles; common means of transport of goods, and passengers; domestication of animals and birds, markets attended; worship of deities, festivals and fairs. There were to be recordings, of course, of cultural and social traits and occupational mobility. This was followed up in March 1960 by two specimen schedules, one for each household the other for the village as a whole, which apart from spelling out the mode of inquiry suggested in the September, 1959 conference, introdced groups of questions aimed at sensing changes in attitude, and behaviour in such fields as marriage, inheritance, moveable and immoveable property, industry indebtedness, education, community life and collective activity, social disabilities, forums of appeal over disputes, village leadership, and organisation of cultural life. It was now plainly the intention to provide adequate statistical support to empirical 'feel' to approach qualitative change through statistical quantities. It had been difficult to give thought to the importance of 'just enough statistics to give empirical underpinning to conclusion', at a time when my colleagues were straining themselves to the utmost for the success of the main Census Operations, but once the census count itself was left behind in March, 1961, a series of three regional seminars in Trivandrum (May 1961), Darjeeling and Srinagar (June 1961) restored their attention to this field and the importance of tracing social change through a number of well-devised statistical tables was once again recognised. This itself presupposed a fresh survey of villages already done; but it was worth the trouble in view of the possibilities that a close analysis of statistics offered, and also because the 'consanguinity' schedule remained to be canvassed. By November, 1961, however, more was expected of these surveys than ever before. There was dissatisfaction on the one hand with too many general statements and a growing desire on the other to draw conclusions from statistics, to regard social and economic data as inter-related processes, and finally to examine the social and economic processes set in motion through land reforms and other laws, legislative and administrative measures, technological and cultural change. Finally, a study camp was organised in the last week of December 1961 when the whole field was carefully gone through over again and a programme worked out closely knitting the various aims of the survey together. The Social Studies Section of the Census Commission rendered assistance to State Superintendents by way of scrutiny and technical comment on the frame of Survey and presentation of results.

This gradual unfolding of the aims of the Survey prevented my colleagues from adopting as many villages as they had originally intended to. But I believe that what may have been lost in quantity has been more than made up for in quality. This is, perhaps, for the first time that such a Survey has been conducted in any country, and that purely as a labour of love. It has succeeded in attaining what it set out to achieve: to construct a map of village India's social structure. One hopes that the volumes of this Survey will help to retain for the Indian Census its title to 'the most fruitful single source of information about the country'. Apart from other features, it will perhaps be conceded that the Survey has set up a new Census standard in pictorial and graphic documentation. The schedules finally adopted for this monograph have been printed in Appendices I and II to the Monograph on Village Bendri (Vol. VIII Pt.—VI, No. 2).

ASOK MITRA,
Registrar General, India

NEW DELHI,
July 30, 1964.

PREFACE

Though anthropological and sociological studies were undertaken in some of the earlier Censuses, study of 'Village India' through surveys of the village communities spread uniformly over its entire length and breadth—is an innovation of 1961 Census. The object of this innovation, as so aptly stated by the brain and spirit behind it, Shri Asok Mitra, the Registrar General, was to "invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change" and to find out "how much of a village was static and yet changing and how fast the winds of change were blowing and from where" To what extent has this object been realised is for the reader of this monograph to decide and judge.

Village studies have, of late, become increasingly important in social anthropology, and several such studies have been produced by celebrated anthropologists and sociologists. These village studies in some respects score over the studies of a complete tribal group, divided into several sub-groups and inhabiting different parts of a much wider area. For one thing, tribal customs and rites change slowly but surely from place to place, and accurate recording or cataloguing of the customs or rites, or legends of one whole tribal or sub-tribal group is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible.

For another, collecting diverse pictures obtaining in the tribal group inhabiting different regions, blurrs the picture itself. On the other hand, within the narrow compass of a village study, it is possible to record and catalogue customs, rites and legends fairly accurately.

In the foreward to this monograph, the various stages by which the survey enlarged its scope have been adumbrated. Starting with the modest attempt at making a record *in situ* of material traits like settlement patterns of the village, house-types, diet, dress, ornaments and foot-wear, furniture and storing vessels, common means of transport of goods and passengers, domestication of animals and birds, markets attended, worship of deities, fairs and festivals, the survey gradually evolved into a desire to draw conclusions from statistics, to regard social and economic data as inter-related processes, and finally to examine the social and economic processes set in motion through land reforms and other laws, legislative and administrative measures, technological and cultural change, all this through a set of well-devised statistical tables.

Amwar was one of the 49 villages initially selected for the survey and some work on it was already done when I came into the picture towards the middle of the year 1961. This work consisted of schedules canvassed for each household in the village by the Revenue Inspector of Mawai. The statistical information collected in the schedules related to the period May-June 1961 when they were filled. The gradual enlargement of the scope of the survey had necessitated further investigation and enquiry and this was ably done by Shri B. L. Parganiha, Census Investigator (now with the Directorate of Tribal Welfare of the State). Shri Parganiha checked the statistical information already collected and supplemented it on the basis of a questionnaire improvised by me from the data already collected. The method of study, apart from canvassing of schedules, was a combination of the interview, participant observation and case-history methods. No doubt, owing to my preoccupation with other Census work, I could not stay in the village for longer than a week at a stretch, but Shri Parganiha stayed there for longer durations of seven to eight days, each on four different occasions. I had also visited and stayed in the village three or four times.

Besides field-work, Shri Parganiha has also done the sketches in this report and also the Hindi rendering of the folk-songs. I am very grateful to him for this. In the later stages of printing and proof-reading the burden was shared by Sarvashri H. C. Jain and M. G. Mohril, Research Investigators and Shri Ghosh, Tabulation Officer.

To all of them, and to Shri U. K. Trivedi who read and corrected the final proof and supervised the printing I am extremely beholden.

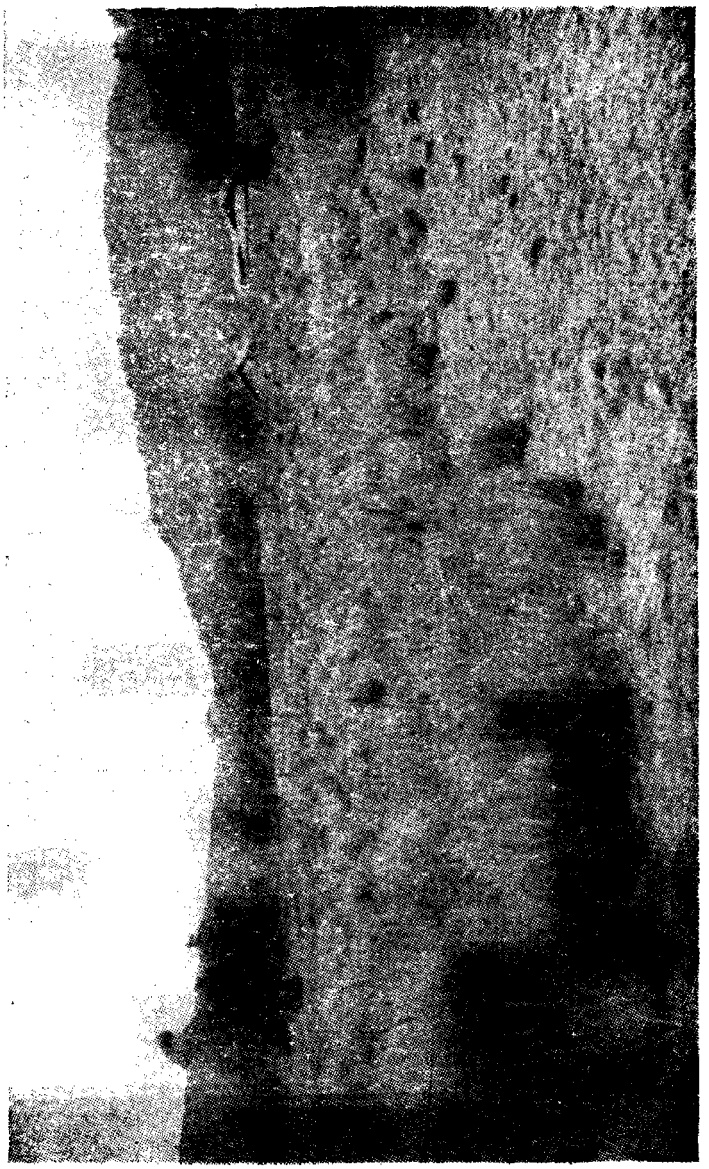
I am deeply indebted to Shri G. Jagathpathi, Superintendent of Census Operations, Madhya Pradesh who guided the survey since its inception and who found time amidst his other pre-occupations to read the manuscript. It stands immensely enriched by his valuable suggestions. Last, but not the least, I am grateful to Dr. B. K. Roy Burman who went through the monograph and offered helpful criticism.

BHOPAL :

28th February, 1966.

G. N. TIWARI

Plate I



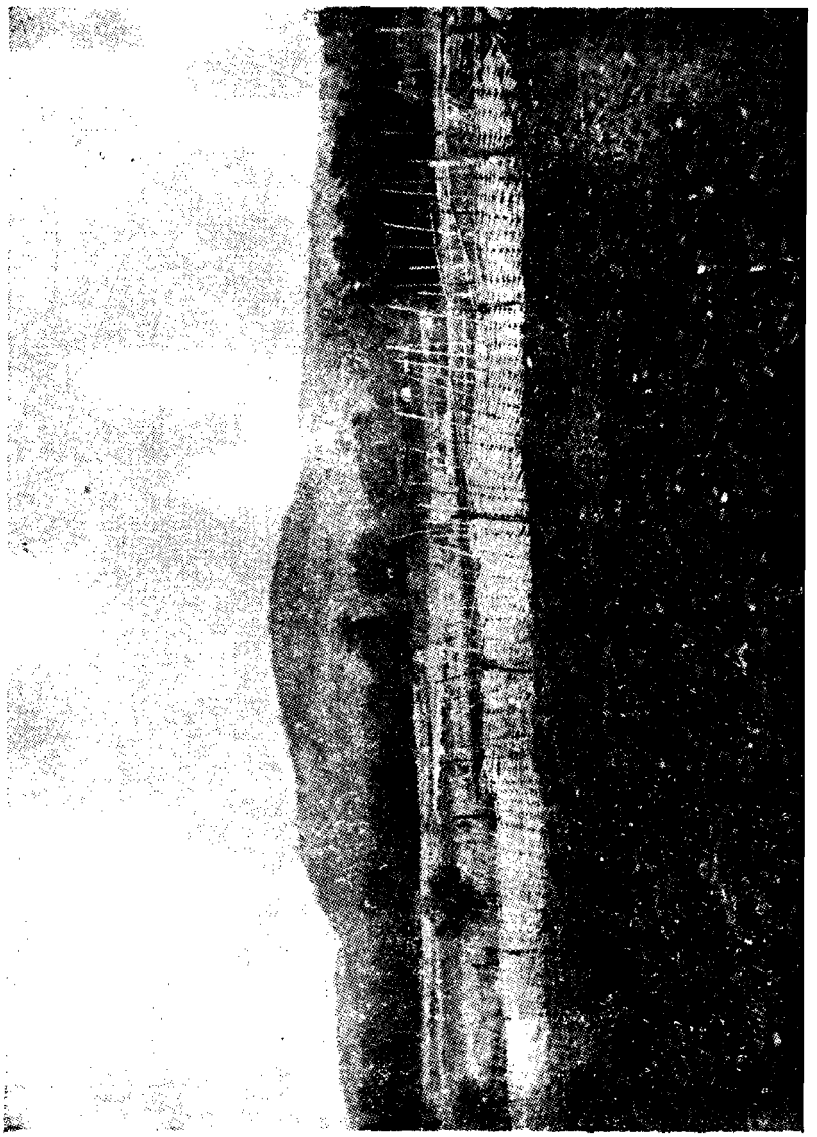
A View of the Village

Plate II



A View of the Village

Plate III



The Village

CHAPTER I

THE VILLAGE

Introduction:

This is a report on a socio-economic study of the communities living in Amwar, a small, tribal village with a population of 140 (1961 Census), smugly hidden in the forest fastnesses of Maikal hills. The region surrounding Maikal hills—whose highest reaches form the great central Indian Water-divide containing the sources of the holy Narmada and the Son—including contiguous portions of Mandla, Shahdol, Bilaspur and Durg districts may be regarded as forming a distinct culture-area distinguished by the very low levels of material culture of the tribal communities—mainly Gond and Baiga inhabiting it, their stark poverty and the more or less complete absence of the mighty winds of social, cultural and technological change blowing elsewhere in the country. Difficultly accessible, many of the interior villages of this area have just a nodding acquaintance with modern civilization having usually seen it moving in the form of a bus, occasionally heard it on the radio or much less frequently seen it flying as an aeroplane. The area still preserves vestiges of the primitive axe and hoe-culture in the form of *bewar*, which though under rules permissible only in a small area known as *Baiga Chak* has, it appears, failed to contain itself within the lawful periphery. Generally typical of this culture-area, Amwar was selected for the present study for following, among other, considerations:

(1) Study of urbanisation in a non-urban setting—The situation of village in a remote, not-easily-accessible corner of the district, in the seclusion of hills and forests shields it from direct urbanising influences. This feature lends a lot of interest to the present study as it enables us to assess the extent to which urbanisation—a force which permeates the very air we breathe—succeeds in making inroads upon the lives of villages far removed from direct urban contacts, and the factors responsible for it. A study of the levels of awareness of the people in the village was also expected to be very interesting.

(2) The population of Amwar includes the tribes Baiga, Gond, Agaria and Dhoba and the non-tribal caste, Ahir, in addition to a household professing Islam. A study of the village from the cultural and sociological standpoints was expected to reveal interesting facts regarding the extent of fusion brought about in the living habits of the various groups owing to mutual culture-contact. More particularly such a study is expected to bring out the degree of interrelatedness and interdependence of the groups in social, cultural and economic matters.

(3) The village affords a good chance of studying a Muslim family living in a predominantly tribal setting.

(4) Amwar is on the fringe of the Baiga chak (or, the Baiga-des, as the Baiga of Amwar prefer to call it), where '*bewar*-cutting' is still permitted by law. The attitude of Baigas of Amwar towards their traditional form of cultivation can, therefore, be studied. In particular, it will be useful to study how the Baiga of Amwar react to settled cultivation, especially in view of the legal ban imposed on their traditional shifting cultivation, and whether, if allowed a free choice, they would revert to it.

(5) From the economic point of view, Amwar provides another useful angle of study. The village was not, till the time of this enquiry, included in any community development block. This study will, therefore, reveal the type and extent of changes brought about in the economy of rural areas outside the sphere of community development programme[1].

(6) In Chapter 12 of their report, the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission observe, "To a vast number of tribal people the forest is their well loved home, their livelihood, their very existence". With its preponderating tribal population, and its situation in the midst of a thick forest, Amwar should enable us to make a study of the importance of forest in tribal life and economy.. Particularly, it will be useful to study the attitude of the people towards the new nistar policy of the Government, and to enquire how it compares with the old nistar policy, or the rights and privileges enjoyed by the people in the

[1] Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, 1960-61, Vol. I, p. 125.

village forest prior to the abolition of malguzari.

(7) The Banwasi Sewa Mandal, an organisation working with the avowed object of promoting the welfare of forest tribes and thriving mainly on government help, has recently taken up Amwar for its activities. An attempt, if possible, will, therefore, be made in this study to enable the extent of benefits conferred by a non-official organisation on the village and the attitude, if any, of the villagers towards such an organisation.

Location:

Smugly situated in its hill and forest sanctuary almost due east of Mandla town, at a distance of about 50 miles from it as the crow flies, Amwar is a revenue (old Malguzari) village. Lying approximately on 22° 27′ north Latitude and 81° 7′ east Longitude, the village has an altitude of 2250 feet, and the thick forest in the neighbourhood save the village from intense heat. Its distance by road from Mandla is about 70 miles, 42 miles of which *i.e.* up to village Motinala is negotiable all the year round by a class I metalled road. The remaining 28 miles beyond Motinala consist of a forest road which goes to Mawai. This is jeepable, and open to vehicular traffic in the open months. There is another route from Mandla to Mawai, which is common with the one described earlier upto village Bichhia, but thereafter, instead of going to Motinala, goes direct to Mawai via village Sijhora. This is a fair-weather route, used by buses in the open months, and cuts short the distance by about 12 miles.

From Mawai, Amwar is reached on foot by first walking about a couple of miles on the Mawai-Amarkantak* road, (a class II road under the maintenance of the Public Works Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh), and then taking the village road via Belgaum and Nunsarai. Even this road is jeepable, though with some difficulty, in the open months upto village Nunsarai. Amwar is about 3½ miles from village Belgaum which lies on the Mawai—Amarkantak road. An alternative route from Mawai to Amwar, which is generally used, is via Muria Pat, a somewhat high hillock. This latter is only a foot-path, and though it cuts short the distance by about 2 miles, it runs through thick jungle interspersed by numerous small water channels and nullahs.

During the monsoon, the first obstruction to traffic for Amwar is felt at Mandla itself. This is owing to the removal of the temporary bridge over river Narmada just before its junction with Banjari which has to be crossed in Mandla town. This difficulty is overcome by the stratagem of leaving two or three buses on the other side of the river before the bridge is removed. Even then, as observed heretofore, in rains, buses can go only as far as Motinala, and the distance of about 30 miles beyond Motinala has then to be covered on foot. Even a bicycle is not of any avail in the rainy season, because the road proper is blocked at every hundred feet or so with horizontal logs of wood to check erosion of the earth from the road; while the sides of the road are too muddy to allow even a bicycle to pass.

The revenue boundary of Amwar adjoins on the north, that of village Nunsarai (distance 1½ miles) and on the west of villages Sunehra and Renhanta while on the South-West it is flanked by Dakshina Fen Reserve forest. The erstwhile feudatory state of Kawardha (now a tahsil of the same name in Durg district) bounds the village on its south-east, while village Patpara and Madfa Reserve Forest make a common boundary with the village in the east and the north-east, respectively.

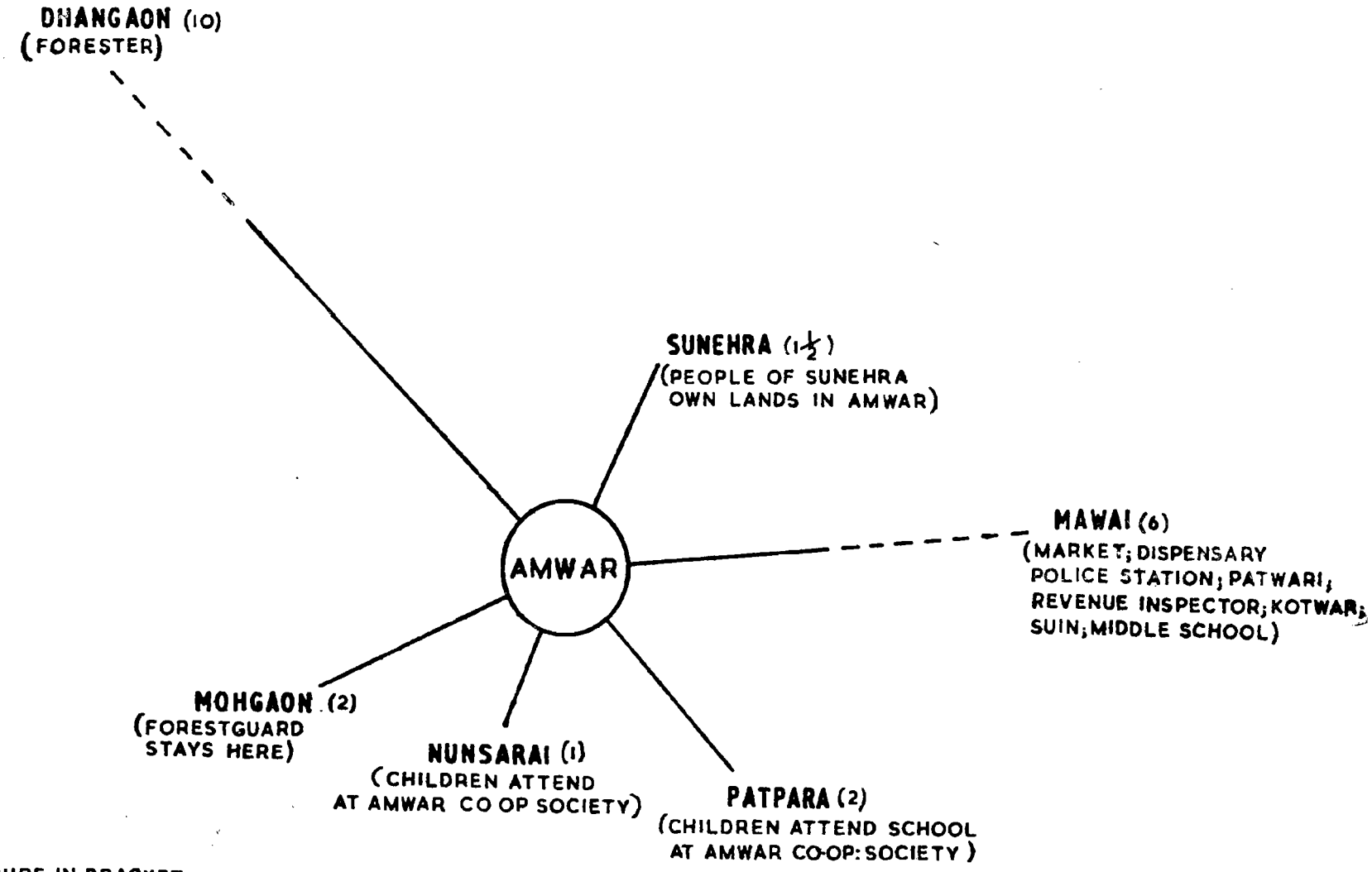
For the purposes of revenue and land records administration, the village is included in Patwari Circle number 136 with headquarters at Mawai. The latter is relatively a big village six miles to the north-west, and has a considerable number of potters engaged in their traditional occupation. It is also the headquarters of a revenue inspector's circle of the same name; the report is that during rains, the revenue inspector stays at Motinala which is connected with Mandla by bus all the year round. Mawai has a police station exercising jurisdiction over many villages including Amwar. For administration of criminal and civil justice, people of Amwar have to go to the criminal and civil courts at Mandla.

Till the time of this enquiry, Amwar was not included in a development block. It is reportedly included in the development block which was to be inaugurated on the 2nd October, 1962† with its headquarters at Mawai. As regards forest administration, Amwar falls in the beat of the forest guard at Moligaon about two miles north of Amwar. The Range Assistant exercising jurisdiction over Amwar lives at village Motinala, twenty-eight, miles from Amwar, and people have to go to him for obtaining permits for bamboos, timber etc.

Bichhia, a big, urbanised village on the Mandla-Motinala road, and the headquarters of a community development block, is about 44(30) miles from Amwar, only 14 miles of which is negotiable by a bus all the year round. Bajag, another village of some cultural and commercial importance, also the headquarters of a development block in Dindori tahsil, is again about the

* Amarkantak is the source of river Narbada and is a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus.

† The block has since been inaugurated.



NOTE: THE FIGURE IN BRACKET REPRESENTS DISTANCE IN MILES

same distance from Amwar. Amwar, however, has little contact with these villages. Economically it is mostly dependent on Mawai, where a market is held on every Saturday. People of Amwar dispose of their products in this market, which also fulfills their meagre needs of food, cloth and other necessaries of life. The diagram shows the relationship of Amwar with villages in its neighbourhood.

Physical Aspects:

Mandla district is mainly covered by overflowing trap, and its geology presents little variety. In the south, in the immediate vicinity of the Banjar and eastward as far as the Kawardha border, there is a narrow strip of country, never more than fifteen miles broad, in which the crystalline formation is upper most. Amwar and the region round about it represents the eastern extremity of this strip because the Mawai group of village in which Amwar lies is described as lying in this crystalline belt. This belt has practically no black soil. Amwar is situated in a forest clearing and like many other Baiga villages of the Maikal hills, its scenery possesses a grandeur and picturesqueness all its own. In any direction the landscape that confronts a person standing in the village is that of fields lined by thick *sal* forests, with hills that surround the village varying in height, and some of them rising even to about 3,000 feet. The hills to the south and east of the village are to be particularly noted for their brown tree-less tops, announcing, to a stranger the extensive practice of *bewar* by persons of Amwar and the neighbouring villages.[2]

The general nature of the terrain is undulating, but there are big, almost level patches of land also. The land surface is not broken up by many brooks or rivulets. Of the three streams in the village, the biggest is the Manai*, which, coming from south-east from village Patpara bounds Amwar in the east and north-east, separating it from the Madfa reserve forest, After meandering northwards through village Nunsarai it joins a bigger stream called the Kaniar. The other two perennial streams of importance in the village are Moto Jhodi and Jalle Jhuri, both tributaries of the bigger stream Manai. The stream Moto Jhodi separates the village fields from the forest in the north, while the stream Jalle Jhuri treads its way through the village fields before it joins Manai. As indicated by the direction of these streams, the slope in the village is first towards the east, while the eastren portion itself slopes towards the north. In general the contours of the inhabited area of the village may be represented by the back of a tortoise—its central and highest portion corresponding to the Gond settlement which gradually slopes in all directions.

Flora and Fauna

The forest surrounding Amwar contains a luxuriant growth of the *Sarai* or *Sal* trees, which is a predominant characteristic of the forests in the south and east of Mandla district. This tree is said to be practically evergreen because it takes on a bright new coat of foliage in April almost as soon as it has shed the old leaves. A drive on the Mawai-Chanra road in the month of April, with thick *sal* forest at a small distance on either side as it runs along the bank of river Burnher is a real feast for the eyes. *Sal* tree is characterised for its height and almost straight growth. Botanically known as *Shorea robusta,* it is never found to grow on low-lying swamps, but on the elevations about them and on the lower eminences of the foot-hills. The tree is of great commercial importance as its timber is used for making railway sleepers. Inhabitants of Amwar, however, use the big leaves of the tree for making their country cigar or *chongi* as it is called by them, and for making leaf-cups and by the Agarias for making charcoal for their kilns. Besides *Sal* trees of various other species are also found in the forest in the vicinity of the village settlement. Important ones amongst these are *haldu* (*Adina cardifolia*). *Saj* which is—regarded sacred by a section of the villagers being the tree chosen by their arch deity for residence, *tinsa* (*Ougeinia dalbergioides*) which yields wood for making ploughs, *dhawa* (*Ahogeissus latifolia*), *dhamin* (*Grewta tilloefolia*), *bija* (*Pletocarpus marsupium*). The wood of *dhamin* or bamboo is used by the Baigas for making their bows. Of fruit bearing species, the forest contains a good sprinkling like *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*), *harra* (*Terminalia chebula*); *aonla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*); *achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*); *Tendu* (*Diospyros tomentosa*). The trees *harra* and *mahua* are important commercially. The dried fruit of *mahua* is collected by the villagers for eating; while its hardened seed is collected for sale in the market, as it yields oil. The dried furit of *mahua* has another important use viz., its corolla yield on distillation the country liquor which is an important item in the social and ritual life of the people. *Tendu, achar* and *aonla* yield fruits which are eaten, and also taken for sale to the market. The delicious *chronji* from the *achar* fruit has got some commercial value as it is an invariable ingredient of many a sweet. Amongst trees of the fig variety, the village contains *ber* (*Ficus bengalehsis*) *Oower or goolar* (*Ficus alomerata*) and *ghui* the last two yielding fruits which are eaten. The tree whose absence in the forest adjoining the village

[2]. Ru lman F.R.R. C ntral Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. 1, 1912; P. 5

* Spelt 'Kanai' in topo-sheets.

is very conspicuous is the teak (*Tectona grandis*). *Koha* (*Terminalia arjuna*) which is sometimes described as the riverside relative of the *Saj*, grows in abundance on either bank of the Manai and the Moto Jhodi, and is valued because of its checking soil erosion from the water current.

In the settled area of the village, trees most commonly found are *am* or mango, from which the village is said to take its name; (these are clustered more particularly on the bank of Jalle Jhuri); *Jamun* (*Eugeinia jambolana*); *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*), *morechhilli*, *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*). All these are trees yielding fruit. Also common in the village fields is the *chhoti chhindi* tree yielding fruits which are eaten, and the saleable surplus taken to the market. The ordinary *neem* (*Melia indica*) was not seen in the village, though a variant of it called *jangli neem* is found. Similarly missed is the *babul* (*Acacia arabica*) tree, which is very common in the rural areas of Jabulpur country. In the *baris* or 'back gardens' attached to the houses, one would see *Arandi* (अरंडी) the seed of which on being crushed gives an oil used medicinally and for oil-lamps; the munga which supplies beans for vegetable. Besides these common vegetable creepers and plants like the goured, *louki*, *semar*, etc. are also grown in the *baris*. Among flowering trees, mention must be made of *palas* or *cheola* (*Butea frondosa*) which grows sparsely in the village waste. The tree blossoms in the months of April and March, and its brilliant orange flowers against a back-ground of velvety green sepals is one of the most gorgeous sights which has inspired many Hindi poets of the past.

Another tree deserving notice is the bamboo which forms an important material of house construction in the village, and is the basic raw material of the basket making household industry of the Baigas. The young shoots of bamboos form a delicious item in the diet of the local population. This tree is often found growing in abundance in the forest.

Fauna: :

The forest in the proximity of the village settlement is the home of a variety of wild animals, like tiger (*Panthera tigris*), *leopard*, (*Panthera pardus*) bear (*Melersus ursinus*) and the *gulbagh* or simply *bagh*. One Baiga resident of the village, cousin of Patel Tenda, was fatally mauled by a tiger in the village fields only a year before the initiation of this enquiry. In the early hours of the night, the panther is a frequent visitor to the village, the objects of his attention occasioning these visits being goats, dogs and calves. It is not inappropriate here to recall that one such nocturnal visit was made even at the time of our stay in the village in connection with this enquiry, and the animal was foiled in its attempt to lift a she-goat from the Baiga quarter of the village by the timely hue and cry made by the villagers. The bear which is not very remarkable for its physical strength is nevertheless considered treacherous and dangerous. It was remarked that the villagers were not afraid of a panther or even a tiger in the forest because these animals avoid getting too near human beings and do not normally attack them. A bear, however, would almost invariably charge when it sees a solitary man. Tenda, the Baiga village Patel was thus charged about two years ago, when he was coming back from his *bewar*, and the animal tore away a good deal of flesh from his thigh. After this encounter, Tenda always carried his *Sang* an all iron spear with him to the *bewar*. On account of the fear of this animal which though almost a strict vegetarian never lets slip an opportunity of attacking a human being—people move about in groups through the forest by night; they also, at such times, carry a *mashal* with them. It was reported that the bear is mortally afraid of fire, possibly on account of its coat of long black hair.

Of the other game, the forest contains *Sambhar* (*Cervus unicolor*), *chital* (*Axis axis*), *kotri* or the barking deer (the correct name is probably *gutri*), rabbits and monkeys. Jungle fowl and peacocks, besides a large variety of other birds, are also found.

In the village proper, domesticated animals are found almost in every house. Buffaloes and cows are reared for the milk-used almost exclusivedy for preparing *ghee*, while bullocks are kept for ploughing. Goats and pigs are reared for ritual sacrifices, but the former are also bred for commercial purposes by a few households. Almost every house has a domesticated dog and cat, and it is not uncommon to see the two smugly juxtaposed, warming themselves in the 'alao' fire in a winter evening. The dog is of immense use to a section of the population in their hunts. Most of the houses nurture hens, while domesticated parrots were seen in a few houses.

Climate :

Like any other part of the district, Amwar also has three well-defined seasons which divide the year into spans of more or less equal length. The monsoon breaks some time about the middle of June, and continues till the end of September and may even extend to the earlier part of October. Later July and the whole month of August are the months of the heaviest downpour. From September, the rainy days start being less frequent, till by the middle of October the weather starts changing. The average

annual rainfall is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of sixty inches. Winter sets in after the cessation of rains, from mid-October, and owing to its average high altitude (250) the climate is cool and exhilerating. The cold weather months are from November to February, with late December and January being the months of the severest cold. Falling of dew is a common phenomenon during the winter months and at times of bitter cold, frost also is common.

Summer sets in from the month of March, April and May being the hottest months. Owing as mentioned earlier, however, to its high altitude and the ring of dense forest, the temperature seldom shoots upto uncomfortable levels. Nights are pleasant even during the hottest of the summer months. In the past, the climate of the district was malarial, but these days, thanks to the launching of the National Malaria Eradication Programme, the disease has ceased to be the scourge it used to be in the past.

The villagers were specifically asked whether they felt that the seasons had been changing over the past few years. They did not feel that the seasons have been changing in any significant respect, though the amount and timing of rains had shown some fluctuation.

Size and number of house-holds:

With its total land area of 2,997 acres, Amwar is definitely bigger than an average village of the district in size, which is 1,504 acres. From the point of view of population, however, it will be characterised as a small village. Its 156 inhabitants live in 37 households, and excepting for one Muslim household, the others belong to the Baiga, Gond, Ahir, Agaria and Dhoba tribes or castes of the Hindus. Baigas numerically dominate the village scene, accounting for 22 of the 37 households. The details of the distribution of the various component groups of the village population are given in Chapter II of this report.

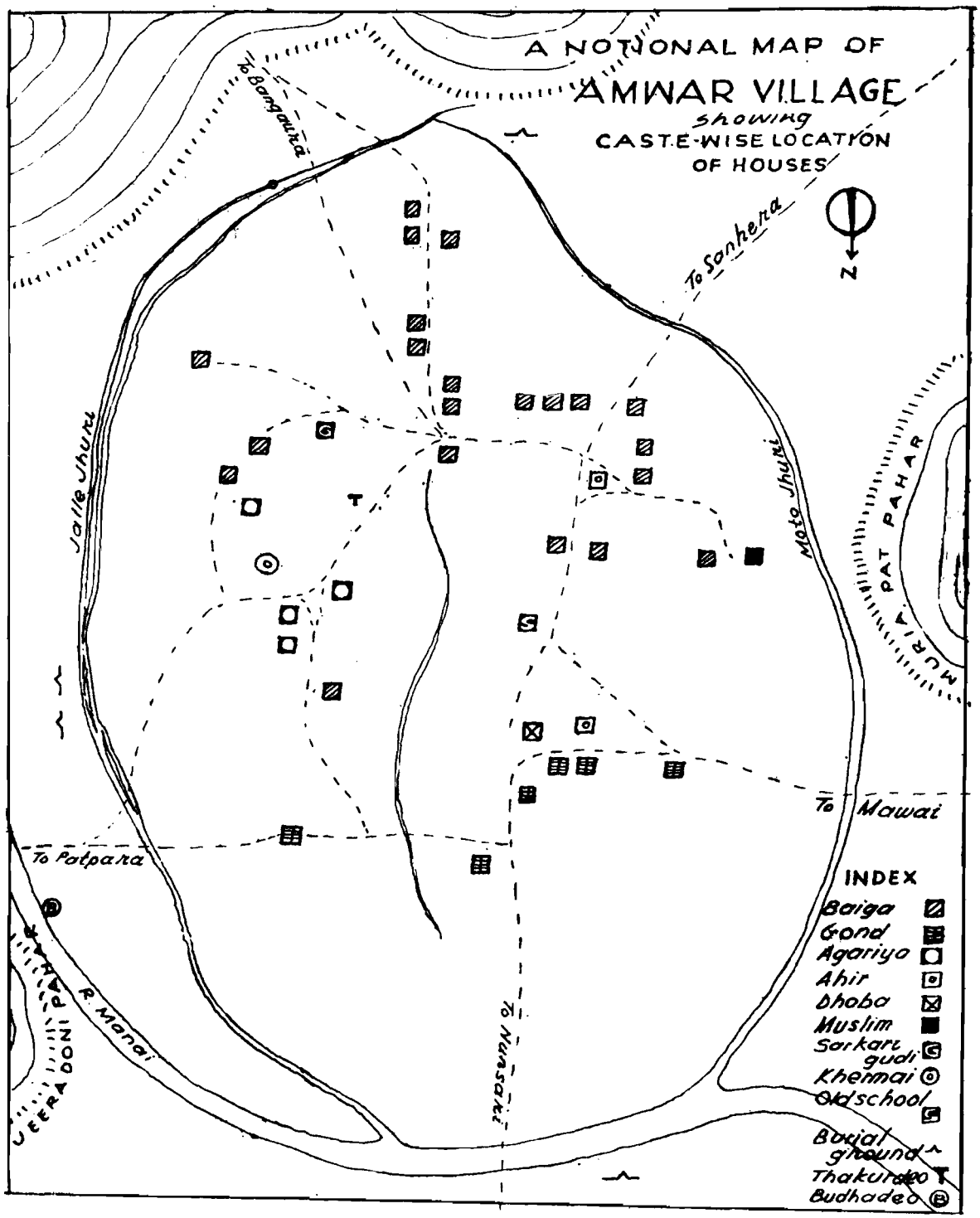
Village and residential pattern:

The settlement in Amwar is neither wholly nucleated nor wholly dispersed. It can be regarded as a combination of the two though it is more dispersed than nucleated. There are no easily recognisable *tolas* or quarters of particular castes; but the notional map of the village on the facing page brings out the more or less castewise pattern of all residential concentrations. These make the most of available land on a higher level. If we exclude the house of Amoli Gond which stands apart on a rising piece of ground in his own field near the stream Jalle Jhuri, the other Gond households occupy the north-east quarter of the village. The sites are generally similar to that of Amoli's house, i.e. each house in a separate enclosure, on a higher level than the *bari* at the back, surrounded at least in the majority of cases by their fields. Our observation in Amwar accords well with Elwin's observation that 'the Gonds build their houses in separate enclosures' (page 23, The Baiga). A similar observation is found in Russell and Hiralal's 'The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces' (Vol. III, page 121). "The Gond does not like to live in a street. He likes a large bari or fenced enclosure, about an acre in size, besides his house." Near the Gond houses, though quite separate from them, on the pathway which goes, to the village school stands the solitary Dhoba household in the village. The Baigas occupy the western half of the settled portion of the village. Within the Baiga quarter, the situation of the houses of the kinship of Tenda, Dukal may be noted. On the fringe of the Baiga quarter of the village, interspersed between Baiga houses, though quite distinguishable from them, stand the houses of the Agarias and the Ahirs. The only Muslim household in the village stands in the mid-northern extremity of the village, by the side of a Baiga house. The general pattern of settlement in the village is governed by proximity to source of water: it would be clear from the notional map of the village, that with the exception of two or three households, all other households in the village are ranged on the sides of the streams the Jalle Jhuri, and the Moto Jhuri. Another significant observation about the village settlement is that the Baiga houses are situated nearer to the hills that contain their *bewar*.

Writing about the houses of Baigas of Eastern Mandla, Ward[3] observes that a Baiga village is 'built in the form of a square, with contiguous huts' and 'there is considerable attempt made at neatness'. Elwin also remarks that "the Bhumia village is built round a large square". During our tours in connection with this survey, we had an occasion to visit a couple of villages—Tantar and Chilfiri—in the Baiga reservation. The lay-out of the Baiga quarter of these villages conformed broadly to the pattern of a large square or rectangle as observed by Ward and Elvin. The Baigas of Amwar, however, have deviated from this pattern. They do not in fact follow any discernible pattern and their houses are situated in five to six dispersed groups ranging in size from one to four. This is an important distinction between the Baigas of the Baiga Chak and those of Amwar.

3. Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by H. C. E. Ward, 1870; p. 36.

Plate IV

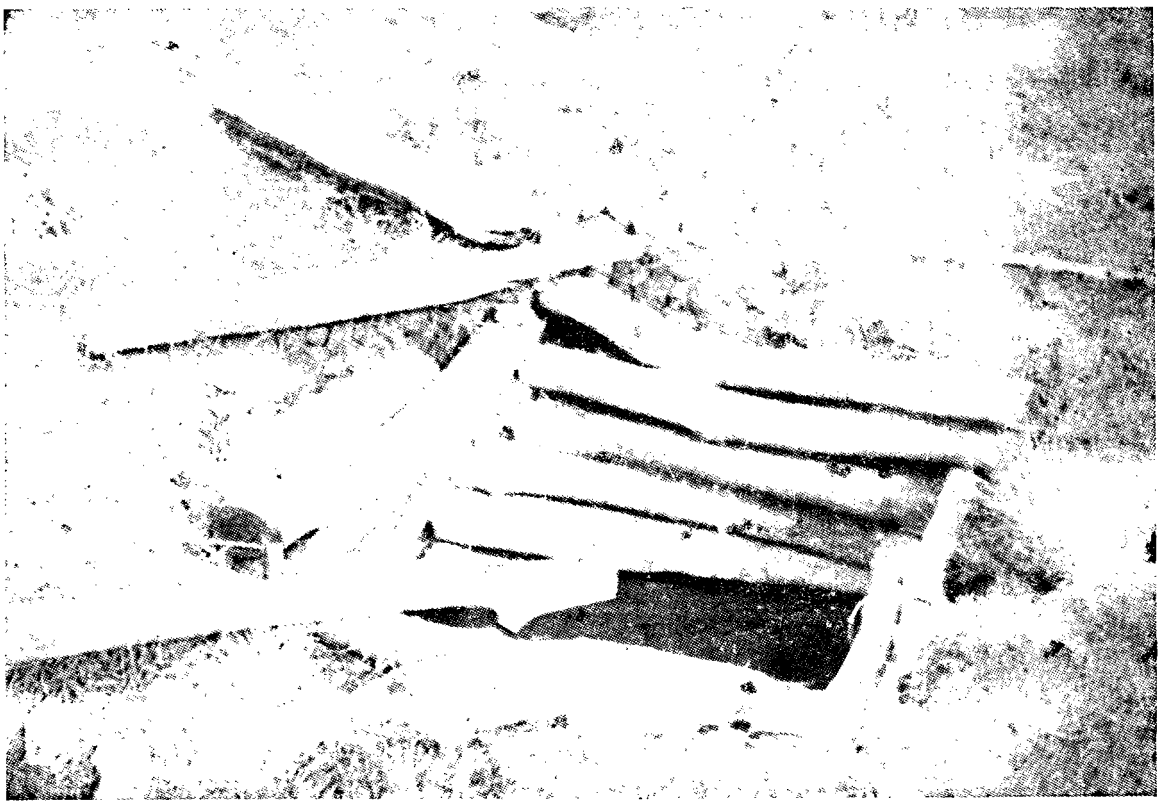


A National Map of Amwar Village showing caste-wise location of houses

Plate V



Village School damaged by a tree



Village Well

Another respect in which the Amwar Baigas differ from their brethren in other areas in the neighbourhood is that other castes are also living almost in their midst. This does not accord with Russell and Hiralal's[4] observation that "the Baigas never live in a village with other castes, but have their huts some distance away from the village in the jungle."

Communications:

There are no regular surfaced roads in the village. Different parts of the village are connected by means of foot-paths which run through fields or common waste-lands of the village. In constructing their houses, people have not restricted themselves to the area reserved for 'abadi' in revenue records. As regards contact with other villages, mention has already been made of the track to Mawai via Nunsarai and Belgaum which is cartable beyond Nunsarai. Other villages are reached from Amwar by pathways which run most of their course through jungles, and in a few cases over hills or ridges. The Manai which runs through the village and other streams are fordable throughout the year and do not result in any serious dislocation of communications. There are no bullock-carts in the village, nor are there any bicycles. Horses are also not used. The normal mode of inter-village travel is walking.

Amwar does not lie on any bus route. In the open season, the nearest station served by buses is Mawai, five or six miles from Amwar. At other times, Motinala about 30 miles from Amwar is the nearest place served by buses. The nearest railway station for Amwar is Mandla, seventy miles away, which is the terminus of a narrow guage branch of the South Eastern Railway, which starts from Nainpur junction.

There is no post-office at Amwar. The branch post office at Mawai, which is in charge of a school teacher, serves Amwar also. Enquiries revealed that the only persons in the village receiving letters from outside are Sunaooram and Sardoo Gond. The former who is a worker of the Banwasi Sewa Mandal regularly receives letters from the office of the Mandal at Mandla, while it is very rarely that Sardoo receives letters. Other villagers do not have any use for the post office.

Public places:

Amwar has got a primary school, started by the Banwasi Sewa Mandal a couple of years ago. In addition to Amwar, the school serves the needs of people of neighbouring villages Sunehra, Patpara and Nunsarai and Renhanta also. The school building was first built in the middle of the village, separating the Gond quarter of the village from the Baiga and other caste quarters. This building, however, has been irrepairably damaged, and was so found during our first visit to the village, by a huge tree falling over it. The villagers have, therefore, constructed a temporary hut in the enclosure of Sunaooram Gond, and it is this hut that is now the school. Besides the school, the only other public building (if we at all can call it a building) is the 'sarkari gudi', a hut meant for the stay of touring government officials. Though the villagers asserted that they have been repairing it every year, it was found in a tottered condition. Apparenly no government official graces the 'gudi' by his stay, and that plausibly explains its present undignified state.

Places of worship:

There are only two shrines, or places of worship in the village. One of these is the shrine of the *Khermai* and other village gods which is located near the house of Bakhti Agaria. There is an earthen platform, with three poles on it, the middle one being much shorter than the outer two. Besides, there is another long pole, which is just outside the platform, and a pair of poles, known as the magician's swing. A detailed description of each of these will be given in the chapter on religion. The place of the village deity Thakurdeo is below a *mahua* tree in the *khirkadand* (a place for village cattle to assemble). Budha Deo or Bara Deo, the supreme deity of the Gonds, is supposed to reside in the *saj* tree in the forest on the north-east of the village.

Crematorium:

Different castes in the village are reported to have their own burial grounds or crematorium. Thus the Baigas cremate or bury their dead in the forest towards the south-east beyond their habitation. They however do not restrict themselves to any particular area for the purpose, but prefer to follow their inclination on the spur of the moment. The burial grounds or crematorium of the Ahirs. Agarias and the Muslim households are towards the south, near the road to village Patpara; while the Gond and the Dhoba use a glade beyond river Manai on the road to Nunsarai.

Welfare and administrative institutions:

Except the schools, which has already been mentioned, there are no other effectively functioning welfare and administrative institutions in the village. The Banwasi Sewa Mandal proposes to establish a *Gramin Sewa Sahkari Samiti*, this year. The society has already been registered and its registration number is reported to be 107. For medical facilities, Amwar has to depend on Mawai which has an allopathic dispensary in charge of an Assistant Medical Officer.

Amwar has no shop, not to speak of a market. One of its Gond inhabitants, Sardu, however, occasionally sells *biris*, kerosene and other articles but he does not expose these articles for sale in the manner of a shop. The nearest market for Amwar is at Mawai. People of Amwar visit the weekly market at Mawai on every Saturday

[4]. Russell, R. V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces, of India, Vol. II, 196 p. 88.

for obtaining their supplies of food and other articles and also for disposing of their goods. Mawai has also got a liquor shop, which is annually leased out. At the time of this enquiry the contractor of the liquor shop was one Panika of Mawai. The shop sells country or *mahua* liquor of two strengths. The stronger variety, known as *dubara* is sold at Rs. 1.75 per bottle excluding the price of the bottle. The liquor of lower strength is called *rasi*, and this is sold at Rs. 1.25 per bottle.

Sources of water:

The Manai and the other two streams, the Moto Jhodi and the Jalle Jhuri, are perennial and supply drinking water to the villagers all the year round. Besides these streams, there are three small wells in the village. All of them are *'kachcha'* dug in the low-lying portion of the fields. The one in the field of Sunaooram Gond is also used by Mangal, Dhansingh and Sardu Gonds and Ramhai Dhoba. The other two wells are in the fields of Kangli Baiga and Amoli Gond and are in the exclusive use of the households. The cattle drink the water of the streams. No shortage of water for drinking or other purposes was reported by the villagers.

Village sanitation:

Extolling the neatness of a Byga village in the heart of the 'Mykul' hills, Captain H. C. E. Ward remarks that "their village conservancy is most praiseworthy[5]". This observation holds good not only in case of Baigas but of the Gonds and other castes also. It appears that in selecting sites for settlement in the village, a rising piece of ground is generally chosen so that there may be good drainage of the rain-water during the monsoon. Amwar does not give the impression of being an unclean and dirty village. In fact, Amwar should not be judged from the standpoint of a nucleated village with houses bunched together in a small space, and with narrow roads on which are dumped the refuse of the houses. It has no dearth of space and there is therefore no problem such as found in slum areas.

There are no *pucca* latrines in the village. The fields are used as lavatory grounds.

History of the village:

Mandla district which was ceded to the British in 1818—was formed in 1851 and attained its present shape in 1851. Originally there were only two tahsils in the district, Mandla and Ramgarh or Dindori. Village Amwar was then included in the Chapartala group of villages of Mandla tahsil. At the time of the Settlement of 1904—1910, village Amwar was owned by the firm of the late Raja Seth Gokuldass. The state of development of the village at that time can be inferred from the following extract taken from the Settlement Report[6].

> "The wealthy firm of the late Raja Gokuldas owns a large estate of 89 villages, mainly in the North of Mandla tehsil (the Lakhanpur and Maniri states); but also including a compact block of twelve jungly and semi-developed waste land purchase villages in the Chapartala group and a few villages elsewhere. The latter are left pretty much to their own devices".

It would thus appear from this extract that in 1904, village Amwar was a jungly and semi-developed village, left by the proprietor "much to its own devices".

In 1914, a third tahsil, with headquarters at Niwas, was constituted and Amwar was then included in the Mawai group of villages in the new Dindori tahsil. At the time of settlement of 1927—30, it was included in the Dindori tahsil. The settlement Report of Mandla District of 1927—30 describes this group in these words. "The wildest part of the district. A poor group extremely unsettled and backward tenantry situated in the crystalline belt in the extreme south-east of the district". Thus, even about 30 years ago, the tenantry of the Mawai group of villages —Amwar included—was extremely unsettled and backward.

About the year 1950, there was a redistribution of villages in the district, and Amwar was now included in the Mandla tahsil. It continues to be in this tahsil since then.

Regarding the exact or approximate year of settlement of the village, no records unfortunately are available. The earliest report of settlement that was available in the Collectorate at Mandla was of the year 1903-04. If we could get hold of the settlement misl of the village—which must have been prepared at the settlement conducted by Ward—probably a reasonable estimate of the age of the village could be formed. As it is, we have to depend upon the available settlement records of 1903-04, and on the oral enquiries made from the villagers. The latter take us back to about 90 or 100 years. The families of Tenda, Dukal, and Bhukan and Lula Baigas with the family of Bakhti Agaria are the first settlers of the village. Their grandfathers had first settled in the village. The other Baiga families in the village have settled here for the last five to forty years.

The settlement misl of the village of 1904, however, gives us a picture which shows that about 58 years back, there were as many as six Gond families in the village, four Agaria families, one Mohamadan family and only one Baiga family. The present Baiga families of Amwar do not identify this solitary Baiga cultivating family

5. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by H. C. E. Ward, 1870; p. 26.

6. Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mandla District, 1904—1910; p. 37.

as being the forerunner of any of them. Similarly the present eight families of Gonds in the village have not descended from the six families which are mentioned as landholding tenants in 1903-04. In fact, the oldest Gond family of Amwar today is that of Mangli—who came here from Banjara, 9 miles away, about 28 years ago. The conclusion is, therefore, irresistible that the Gond families mentioned in the misl of 1903-04 must have left the village. In fact, as would be clear from the extracts from the Settlement Report of 1904—10, such migration is not at all surprising, because at that time Amwar was in a semi-developed stage, and the tenantry must have been extremely mobile. In fact, the landlord had left this, and other villages like it, much to their own devices.

Since in the year 1903-04, Amwar did have a tenantry, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it must have existed from at least 20 to 30 years before that. It was a waste-land purchase village and naturally could not be a very old village. All these considerations should justify the conclusion already drawn that Amwar is about ninety to hundred years old. It could not be older than that.

We can, however, be sure that village Amwar, which is a waste land purchase village did not exist in 1868—i.e. at the time of Ward's report. The Settlement Report of 1904-05 (page 65 para 116) contains the following Statement, about the waste land purchase villages, "The assets shown as those of Summary Settlement include a sum of Rs. 6,927-7-2, the survey assets of the 52 Waste Land Purchase villages, which were not settled in 1888, and were not even in existence, as such in 1868". This quotation shows almost conclusively that Amwar was in existence in the year 1888—at the time of Summary Settlement, but was not in existence in 1868.

Explanation of the village name:

Amwar has a fair scattering of mango trees especially on the bank of the stream Jalle-Jhodi and it was said that the village has taken its name from these trees—because the Hindi equivalent of mango is *Am*. This explanation may be correct because, as the foregoing discussion has shown Amwar is a comparatively new village, and the person who purchased it may have given this name to it from the occurrence therein of wildly growing mango trees. This is also supported by the Gazetteer of Mandla District which remarks that "a large number of Mandla villages have received their names from the particular species of tree which is most prolific in their neighbourhood". As examples of such names the Gazetteer quotes Harrai or Harratola from Harra tree; Piparia from Pipar; Amgaon from Am or mango, Kosamdongri from Kosam and so on.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

Ethnic composition of the village, and brief notes on each ethnic group

Amwar is an ethnically heterogeneous village. Its small population of 155 persons represents as many as four tribes, one Hindu caste and the Muslim. The racial heterogeneity typifying the village assumes added importance because the constituent groups are at varying levels of material and aesthetic culture. Tabulated below is a break-up of the village population by tribe or caste, and by sex. The percentages that the number of households in, and population belonging to, a particular caste bear to the total number of households in the village and to its total population are also given:

Sl. No.	Name of tribe or caste	Number of households	% of total households	Population			% of total population
				P	M	F	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	6)	(7)	(8)
1	Baiga	22	59·5	81	43	38	52·6
2	Gond	7	18·9	36	22	14	23·1
3	Agaria	4	10·8	19	9	10	12·2
4	Ahir	2	5·4	13	6	7	8·3
5	Dhoba	1	2·7	2	2	..	1·3
6	Muslim	1	2·7	4	2	2	2·5
	TOTAL .	37	100	155	84	71	100

These figures show that the Baiga who live in about three-fifths of the households account for a little more than half the population. They thus dominate the village scene in numerical strength. Gonds, locally known as *Kisan,* constitute the second largest group; living in a little less than one-fifth of the households, they form approximately one-fourth of the population. Agaria, contributing about 12 per cent to the population, take the third place, while the fourth position goes to the Ahirs, whose two households make up 8 per cent, of the population. Though small numerically, the Ahirs are still significant as a group. The Muslims and the Dhobas consist of a household each, and together make up less than 4 per cent of the population. Amwar thus presents an interesting admixture of tribal and non-tribal groups. In the following paragraphs, it is proposed to study these tribes and castes in their ethnological and ethnographical background, on the basis of published material, and the information gathered during this enquiry. We will begin this ethnic study with the Baigas.

The Baiga:

The etymology of the word 'Baiga' is not clear. Sir H. C. E. Ward, writing ninety-two years ago in the Settlement Report of Mandlah district, observed that the word 'Byga' (as spelt by him) was a corruption of the Sanskrit word 'Bagin'—which is compounded from words "bagh" tongue, and 'in' light, "signifying that from their tongues, the rest of the people should obtain light and wisdom". Continuing his discussion on the etymology, Ward observes, "This word Bagin has now been corrupted into Byga; but the fact remains, that the Bygas are the acknowledged superiors of the Gond races to this day; are their priests the authorities on all points of religious observances, and also in many temporal—the decision of the Byga on a boundary dispute being almost always accepted as final". The derivation suggested by Ward was based on what was described by him as the "Bhagwut theory"—as propounded by an 'Ojha' Brahmin family of Mandla. I personally feel that the derivation is conjectural.

According to Sir H. Risley, Elwin and others, the word 'Baiga' means a 'sorcerer' or 'medicine man', and is applied in this sense to the priests of the Khairwar tribe of Chhota Nagpur plateau. It is an observed fact that 'in the tract where the Baigas live, they, as the most ancient residents, are usually priests of the indigenous gods. But in villages, where there is no Baiga

by caste, a person from another caste—Gond, Bharia etc., is appointed as Baiga. The use of the word Baiga for the office of the village priest or sorcerer—irrespective of the tribe to which he may belong—strongly suggests that the tribe now recognised as Baiga has been given this designation on account of the past employment of its members as 'Baigas'.

Origin and racial affinity:

Russell and Hiralal regard the Baiga tribe as a branch of the primitive Bhuiya tribe of Chhota Nagpur plateau[1]. It is to be noted that all Baigas of Mandla district alternatively call themselves as Bhumias, which according to Russell and Hiralal is a variant of the word 'Bhuiya'. Apart from this etymological similarity of the tribe names, they have adduced various other reasons in support of their view, for which the reader is referred to pages 310 to 314 of their monumental treatise "The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces". Sir G. Grierson also states that the language of the Baigas of Mandla and Balaghat is a form of Chhattisgarhi[2], a fact confirmed by this enquiry also, which increases the probability of their migration to their present habitats from Chhota Nagpur plateau—which is the home of the Bhumiya—via the Chhattisgarh plain. Elwin also is inclined to accept the view taken by Russell and observes that "the Baigas appear to be a branch of the great Bhuiya tribe, which still numbers half a million in Bengal and Bihar, and is to be found chiefly in Jashpur and Serguja in the present neighbourhood of the Baiga". Stephen Fuchs remarks that certain elements of the material culture of the Bhumia-Baigas of Eastern Mandla, like the use of the bamboo-plaited rainhood (*khumri*), the manner in which their women arrange the loin-cloth, their social organisation, the name of their chief god, Thakurdeo, suggest that they have migrated into Mandla from the East. Local enquiry at Amwar supports these observations of Stephen Fuchs regarding the identity of certain elements of the material culture of the Baigas with the inhabitants of the Chhattisgarh plains. This resemblance between certain elements of the material culture, Stephen Fuchs observes, "tallies well with the assumption of Russell and Hiralal that the Baigas are an offshoot of the important Bhuiya tribe". He sees no geographical difficulty in this supposition, because 'with the Bhuiyas of Bihar, the Bhumiya Baiga are geographically connected through the former Rewa State where they are still numerous and from where, according to their own traditions, they later immigrated into Mandla district". It is rather unfortunate that "for lack of anthropometric data, this connection cannot yet be proved".

From the preceding discussion, it appears that though it cannot be claimed with anything approaching certainty that the Baigas of Mandla are ethnically of the same stock as the Bhuiyas of the Chhota Nagpur plateau, yet all the available evidence points to such connection; this much however is certain that the Baigas are not autochthonic to Mandla, and that they have come to the district from the East; and that this immigration is older than the Gond immigration.

In 1901 there were, in round numbers, 14,000 Baigas in Mandla district or somewhat over four per cent of the total population of the district. In 1931, they numbered 20,000 or 4.5 percent of the population, while in the last census 31,769 Baigas (4.6 percent) were counted in the district. Besides Mandla district, Baigas are concentrated in portions of Shahdol, Bilaspur, Balaghat, Durg and Jabalpur districts which are geographically contiguous to Mandla district.

Physical appearance and character:

The following extract about the Baiga is taken from the "Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of Mundlah district, 1869" by Captain H. C. E. Ward and is probably one of the earliest, if not the earliest, description of them:

> "One sect, the Mundiya, is known by the head being shaven all but one lock. The Binjwars, on the other hand, wear their hair long, never cutting it, and tie it up in a knot behind; so do the Bhiranthiyas. In stature some are taller than Gonds; but, as a rule they are all very much below the average height of the Europeans. The Baigas to the eastwards, on the Maikal Range, are finer specimens of humanity than those near Mundlah. In habits too they are superior, being a manly race, and better looking than their brethren near Mundlah. They have not the flat head and nose, and the receding forehead so common among the Gonds—the head is longer, the features more equiline, and the hands are peculiarly small. Some among them have, however, all the types of low civilization—flat heads, thick lips and distended nostrils, but, on the whole, the appearance of these Baigas of the Eastern Ghats is striking, as compared with that of other wilder tribes. In character too they differ much from the more degenerate aboriginal races. Fearless, trustworthy, independent, ready enough to give their opinion, and very willing to assist, they manage their communities in a way deserving of high praise".

Elwin agrees with Ward as far as the men are concerned. He observes:

> "Baiga men are far better looking than their women The young men are often strikingly handsome, with strong, slim, shapely bodies, fine but gentle features, magnificent black glossy wavy hair, and a great vitality. The older men have a certain distinction both in their bearing and appearance".

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1. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 310.
2. Quoted in the Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 311.

Tribal divisions :

According to Captain Ward there were three sects of the Baigas, the 'Binjwars, Mundiyas, the 'Bhironthiyas'—corresponding to the new spelling 'Binjhawar', 'Muriya' and 'Bharotia'. Reverend Sherring, writing after Ward, does not add to this list. Russell and Hiralal mention the names of seven sub-divisions or sub-tribes of the Baigas : Binjhawar, Bharotia, Narotia or Nahar, Raibhaina, Kathbhaina, Kondwan or Kundi and Gondwaina. "Of these", Russell and Hiralal observe, "the Binjhawar, Bharotia, and Narotia are the best known". Elwin adds to this list the names of Kurka Baiga, the Sawat Baiga and the Dudh Bhaina, Bhumia and Mudia, while Stephen Fuchs enlarges the list by adding one more name the Bharia. Elwin finds it curious that Russell omitted the important and characteristic Bhumia. Colonel Ward also, who according to Elwin was 'well acquainted with the Bhumia country, fails to mention them. It is important to note that Russell and Ward were not altogether unfamiliar with the fact that the name Bhumia was also used for Baiga. In the chapter on 'Bhuiya', in "The Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces Volume II" Russell and Hiralal write: "The Baigas of Mandla are also known as Bhumia, which is only a variant of Bhuiya, having the same meaning of lord of soil or belonging to the soil". Captain Ward also states that the two words "Byga" and 'Bhumia' are in Mandla synonymous and interchangeable. From these facts, there is reason to believe that when Ward was doing his land revenue survey of Mandla district, the term Bhumia was used for Baigas as frequently and as commonly as the word Baiga itself. This interchangeability of the words 'Baiga' and 'Bhumia' continued right upto the time of Russell and Hiralal. Enquiries made in this connection at Amwar and at two villages of the Baiga reservation seem to confirm that this interchangeability of the words Baiga and Bhumia continues right upto this day. When the Baigas of Amwar who call them Bharotias were asked to name the sub-tribes of Baigas, they named many such sub-castes except the Bhumias. On their attention being pointedly drawn to the caste name Bhumia, they asserted that they were also the Bhumias. The Baigas of villages Tantar in the Baiga Chak on similarly being questioned first said that they were Baigas and also Bhumias. Elwin tries to explain the omission from Ward's list of Bhumia as a sub-caste of the Baigas by saying that in Ward's day "there was no very careful distinction drawn between Bhumia and Bharotia". Actually, Ward held the names 'Bhumia' and 'Baiga' to be interchangeable in Mandla district. This supposed absence of a clear distinction between Bhumia and Bharotia was observed even by Elwin who states: "Even today in parts of Baiga Chak some Bhumia Baigas are known as Bharotia". Enquiry at Amwar seems to confirm this statement, for as already observed, the Baigas of Amwar who first gave Bharotia as the name of their sub-caste also claimed to be Bhumias. Elwin has not explained away the omission of Bhumia as a sub-caste by Russell and Hiralal who on the other hand seemed to support Ward's view that in Mandla district the words Bhumia and Baiga were both used for designating the tribe. I am, without meaning any disrespect to so great an authority as Elwin, would venture to look at the facts from another angle. It appears that the word 'Bhumia' is in fact interchangeable with 'Baiga' even today, and there is a section of the tribe who have not adopted any sub-designation denoting a sub-caste of the main tribe. This section gives as its caste name Baiga or Bhumia, while other sub-sections name their particular sub-caste, in addition to calling themselves Baigas or Bhumias. A conclusive statement on this point can be made only after a wider and more detailed enquiry, and till that is done, I would be inclined to disagree with the theory of 'confusion' put forth by Elwin. As already observed, it appears probable that the original name of the tribe was Bhumia, but that they were alternatively called Baiga by their Hindu and Gond neighbours on account of their employment as the 'Baiga' or 'sorcerer' of the village. The latter word which actually is the designation of the office, come subsequently to be used universally for the tribe itself, while the original name itself faded away to some extent.

Fuch's inclusion of Bharia as a sub-tribe of Baiga goes counter to Russell and Hiralal, who regard Bharia as a branch of "the great Bhar tribe who were once dominant in the eastern part of the United Provinces, but are now at the bottom of the social scale, and relegated by their conquerers to the degrading office of swineherds". Referring to the group known in Mandla as 'Bharia-Baiga' and which possibly led Fuchs to include Bharia as a sub-tribe of Baiga, Russell and Hiralal say "In Mandla there is also found a group called Bharia—Baigas. These are employed as village priests by Hindus and worship certain deities and not the Gond gods. They may perhaps be members of the Bharia tribe of Jubbulpore, originally derived from the Bhars, who have obtained the designation of Baiga, owing to their employment as village priests[3]". This quotation, however, shows that Russell and Hiralal's view is also conjectural, and the correct picture may well be very different from that presented by them. Even, Russell and Hiralal admit that "they (the Bharia—Baigas) now consider themselves a part of the Baiga tribe and say they came to Mandla from Rewah".

3. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 78.

4. Ibid., p. 78.

Russell and Hiralal's omission to include Muriya as a sub-caste of Baigas should not cause much surprise because of their apparently confused notion about them as Bharotias, who partially shave their heads. They state : "The Bharotias partially shave their heads, and in Mandla are apparently known as Mundia or Mudia or shaven". The position of Mudia as a Baiga subcaste is, however, well-established, because as early as Ward's enquiry, the Mudiyas were distinguished from the Bharotias.

People of Amwar knew about all the subcastes of Baigas referred to above except Kondwaina or Kundi and Gondwaina. It is somewhat interesting to observe that even the indefatigable Elwin was not able to locate the Kondwan Baiga. This is what he has to say about the Kondwan Baiga:—

> "The Gondwaina and the Kondwan Baiga of Balaghat eat monkeys and beef, and are looked down on by other Baiga in consequence. These two *jats* are said to live in Baihar and on the Kawardha border, but I have been unable to locate them. Exhaustive enquiries by the Deputy Commissioner and Forest Officer failed to discover any in Balaghat"[5].

Amwar Baigas' ignorance about them, therefore, is not surprising.

Baiga of Amwar

It has been pointed out earlier that the Baigas of Amwar refer to themselves as belonging to the Bharotia sub-caste of Baigas, holding at the same time that they are also the Bhumias. Amwar village is in Eastern Mandla, and is not very far from Baiga chak. If Elwin's remark that 'even to this day some Bhumia of the Maikal hills are known as Bharotias" is correct, then in view of what has been stated above, and the fact that most of the Baigas of the *chak* are Bhumias, it would follow that the Amwar Baigas are the same as the Bhumias of the Baiga-*chak* though they call themselves also as Bharotias.

Social gradation of the sub-castes of Baigas

The Baigas of Amwar were of the view that the Binjhwars are the highest sub-caste of the Baigas. Thereafter, they say, all other sub-castes are of the same status.

Exogamy and totemism:

The sub-tribes of the Baiga mentioned earlier represent endogamous divisions. Persons belonging to a sub-caste may not marry outside that caste. As each caste usually lives separately from others, there is seldom any temptation to infer marry. In village Amwar, there is only one case in which the rule of caste endogamy is broken. The Patel of Amwar—Tenda Baiga has given his daughter to a Binjhawar youth Amri. This is an instance of hypergamous union. This fact accords well with Elwin's observation. "In Mandla the Bharaotia desire inter-marriage with the Binjhwars". "We give our daughters to Binjhawar[6]", they say. But examples of such marriages are, according to Elwin rare, and the "endogamous rules, enforced as they are by geographical conditions, are generally observed[7]".

Each subcaste of the Baiga is segmented into exogamous septs—which are patrilineal—known as *goti*. In Amwar, the sept-names are Dhurua. Maravi (pronounced by the villages as Marai), Markam. These are all Gond sept-names; Russell and Hiralal[8] and the District Gazetteer of Mandla[9] have also referred to the identity of Baiga sept-names with the sept-names of Gonds. This identity has even led some writers to think that *goti* exogamy is not an indigenous Baiga institution, but has been borrowed from the Gond. The Baiga of Amwar have also, as observed by Russell and Hiralal, "adopted from the Gonds prohibition of marriage between the worshippers of the same number of god[10]". However, though they profess to be following the system of exogamy according to the number of gods worshipped, there appears to be a considerable gulf between profession and actual practice. This would follow from the fact that some of the families did not know the number of gods worshipped by them. The *goti* of Baiga, though identical in name with the *gotra* of Gonds, differs from it in one very significant respect; that is, while the *gotras* of Gonds are totemic in nature the Baiga *goti* are not so. In fact, as observed by Elwin Amwar Baiga also do not subscribe to totemism. This further confirms, the view that among Baiga, *goti* is not an original institution, but is borrowed from the Gond. The table on next page gives a division of the Amwar Baiga families according to their *goti* and the number of gods worshipped.

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5. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; pp. 7-8.
6. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 173.
7. Ibid.
8. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 81.
9. Rudman, F.R.R., Central Provinces Gazette rs Mandla, District, Vol. I, 1912; p. 75.
10. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p 81

Sl. No.	Name of *goti*	No. of families	No. of gods worshipped
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Maravi	6	7
2	Dhurwa	12	Not known
3	Gad-Dhurwa	1	Not known
4	Markam	1	7
5	Kusro	1	3
6	Karait	1	Not known
		22	

Baiga garh :

Besides their sub-division into exogamous *goti* which are identical in name with the *gotra* of Gonds, the Baigas of Amwar follow another system of division into sub-groups, which are exogamous. Each Baiga household belongs to a particular *garh* which appear to be territorial. The marriage of persons belonging to families having the same *garh* also prohibited. These two—the *goti* and *garh* is also prohibited. These two the *goti* and *garh* may cut across each other, and our enquiry at Amwar shows that while marrying, the parties to marriage see that they do not belong to the same *garh or goti*. A study of 17 marriages in the village tabulated in the statement below confirms this.

Sl No.	Name of person	Husband's *garh*	Wife's *garh*	Husband's *goti*	Wife's *goti*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Bhursu	Gadiha	Adhod	Dhurwa	Maravi
2	Dukal	Adhod	Chandrani	Maravi	Dhurwa
3	Suklal	Adhod	Not known	Maravi	Dhurwa
4	Nandlal	Adhod	Chandrani	Maravi	Dhurwa
5	Tenda	Adhod	Not known	Maravi	Not known
6	Jhitu	Adhod	Not known	Maravi	Dhurwa
7	Mangli s/o Tenda	Adhod	Not known	Maravi	Not known
8	Netu	Not known	Jilang	Dhurwa	Maravi
9	Samaru	Not known	Ningoni	Not known	Ningunia
10	Nangu	Not known	Not known	Not known	Dhurwa
11	Panku	Not known	Adhod	Dhurwa	Maravi
12	Amri (Binjhwar)	Dewaran	Adhod	Dhurwa	Maravi
13	Kangli	Jilang	Not known	Dhurwa	Maravi
14	Rouwan	Adhod	Not known	Maravi	Not known
15	Bhukan	Adhod	Ningo	Maravi	Dhurwa
16	Aghnu	Jilang	Not known	Maravi	Not known
17	Keju	Jilang	Not known	Maravi	Not known

The above statement shows that persons belonging to the Maravi *goti* generally belong to the 'Adhod' *garh* but in three cases, they belong to the Jilang *garh*. Again, it verifies the claim of *goti* and *garh* exogamy of the Baigas.

It would appear to be somewhat odd that the *goti* or *garh* of the wives in quite a few cases, and of the husband in a small number of cases, were reported to be 'not known'. The informants, however, were emphatic that whatever they might be, the rules of exogamy were not broken by them.

According to Elwin, "The garh, which are the more important of the two, are based on residences. The idea is that every Baiga originally belonged to a particular hill or jungle, and that he must marry his daughters to men belonging to a different hill or jungle The *garh* were made to prevent brother and sister from sleeping together[11]. "This arrangement", Elwin declares, "undoubtedly makes for health and variety, and protects from incest, to which the Baiga seem somewhat prone"[12]. The *garh* of the Baigas are numerous. The Amwar Baigas named the following *garhs*:—

(1) Gadiha. (2) Adhodia. (3) Chandrania.
(4) Jilangia (5) Ningoni (6) Dewarai (7) Amthuria
(8) Nandia (9) Kathuria (10) Karkutia (11) Ratrangia (12) Udaria (13) Mundakia.

11. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 173.
12. Ibid.

The District Gazetteer of Mandla, and Russell and Hiralal do not say anything about the division of Baigas in *garh* or their practice of exogamy based upon it.

Distribution of Baigas in the State:

The present distribution of Baigas in the State is appended as Appendix 'A' to this report.

Mother-tongue:

The Baiga of Amwar have returned 'Baigani' as their mother-tongue. This seems to be a variant of Chhattisgarhi, and an investigator whose mother-tongue was Chhattisgarhi was quite at home with it. It may be stated, none-the-less, that everyone in the village speaks this language which the Baiga have returned as 'Baigani'.

Gonds: Distribution and variation of population:

Regarded as the principal tribe of the Dravidian family, the Gonds are concentrated in Bastar*, Durg, Mandla, Balaghat, Chhindwara, Betul, Hoshangabad, Shahdol and Bilaspur districts of the State. There are, however, few districts in the State which do not have some Gond inhabitants. The population of the tribe in the various districts of the State is given as an Appendix 'B' to this report. Mandla district has, for a long time in the past, been the home of the tribe. At present, the tribe accounts for 50.8% of the population of the district. The Statement furnished below shows the variation of their population in the district for the past seven decades:

Year	Population			Percentage increase in total population	Sex-ratio
	T	M	F		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1891	174,977	N.K.	N.K.	..	..
1901	159,949	77,822	82,127	−8·6	1,055
1911	191,466	93,489	94,977	+19·7	1,048
1921	185,784	91,335	94,449	−3·0	1,034
1931	219,136	107,351	111,785	+17·9	1,041
1941	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	..	..
1951	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	..	..
1961	423,096	209,021	214,075	..	1,024

Though today considered as a wild and backward tribe, they were ruling till about a century and a half ago a large territory in the State, and after them, the territory under their sway was known as Gondwana. The capital of the Gond kings of Gondwana was at first Garha, now a village included in the Jabalpur city. Hirdeshah—who ruled from 1650 A.D. to 1706 A.D. shifted the capital to Ramnagar in Mandla district and thereafter Mandla district has been a stronghold of the tribe.

Etymology of the caste name; origin:

About the derivation of the word 'Gond', a number of views are current, none of which has so far gained general acceptance. In fact, such is the divergence in the views regarding the origin of the word that Russell and Hiralal had to conclude that "the derivation of the word Gond is uncertain[13]". Captain Ward gives a story, claimed by him to be from the Hindu Puranas, which traces the origin of the tribe from 'Nikad' (the correct spelling would be Nishad). The story is to the effect that "the Gonds originally sprang from Rajah Benoo, who lived in the Golden period of the world, or Sutyog, and was distinguished for his wickedness, which became, finally so objectionable to the deities that they destroyed him; and then finding difficulty about a successor, made up figures of earth mixed with Benoo's flesh which they endowed with life". Continuing this story Ward observes, "The first was a particularly ugly, very black specimen of the human race, to which the Gods gave the name of 'Nikad' meaning the acme of all evil, and from him the Gond race is said to have descended". The etymology of the word Gond is explained—by considering it "to be derived from the two sanskrit words 'go' and 'un', the earth and body; the Gond being considered especially a man of the earth, having been made of the earth and remains of Rajah Benoo's body". Rajah Ven (वेण) is a mythological figure, and the story related by Captain Ward does occur in the Hindu scriptures; but tracing the origin of Gonds to him is, taking a very charitable view, an attempt of clever non-tribal Hindu minds to integrate the aborigines by ascribing to them a Puranic origin. The Gonds of Amwar were not in the know of this story, and their ignorance significantly demonstrates that the story is an invention of non-tribal Hindus.

* If we count the Muria, Maria, and Dorla of Bastar as Gond tribes.

13. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III, 1916; p. 42.

Rev. Stephen Hislop regards the word 'Gond' as having been derived from the word 'Konda'—the Telgu equivalent for a mountain. In the words of Mr. Hislop, "The name of Gond, or Gund, seems to be a form of Kond, or Kund, the initial gutturals of the two words being interchangeable as in 'gotal ghar'; an empty house from Kotal a led house, and ghar a house. Both forms are most probably connected with 'Konda', the Teloogoo equivalent for a mountain—and therefore will signify' 'the hill people'. And no designation could be more appropriate to the localities which the majority of them inhabit[14]". Russell and Hiralal consider that the name Gond is given to the tribe by the Hindus or Muhammadans, as 'their own name for themselves is Koitur or Koi'[15]. This latter assertion does not seem to be correct generally, for only the Madiyas and Mudiyas of the Bastar district, and the neighbouring districts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh States call themselves 'Koitur'. The Gonds of Mandla or the neighbouring district of Jabalpur do not call themselves 'Koitur'. They call themselves 'Kisan'—which is hardly a caste name, but refers to the fact that they have been cultivators traditionally. If H.C.E. Ward is to be believed, 'Kooeetur' is the Gondi word for cultivaltor (page 148 of Ward's Settlement Report of Mandla District); it is then not difficult to see why Gonds of Bastar call themselves 'Koitur'. The word, 'Koitur' like the word 'Kisan' used to designate the tribe in Mandla and Jabalpur only denotes their being traditionally cultivators. The identity, however, of the designations used for the tribes living in tracts separated by hundreds of miles is quite significant.

General Cunningham thought that 'Gond' is probably derived from 'Gauda' a classical term for some parts of the United Provinces and Bengal, but which Cunningham regarded as the western part of Malwa. There is, however, not much difficulty in discarding this view because on the available knowledge about the tribe, it can be said that the parts of the country mentioned by Cunningham have never been the home of the tribe. Having considered the varying versions on the derivation of the tribe's name one is led to think that the derivation given by Rev. Hislop appears to be the most probable, in as much as it is supported by facts of history and tradition. The question as to from which part of the country the Gonds migrated into their present habitat in the district is now almost well-settled. They are not the original inhabitants, or even the earliest settlers of the districts. The Gondi language—including its dialects—belongs to the Dravidian family. Grierson states (page 485 of Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. IV) that Gondi language is more akin to Tamil and Canarese, thus suggesting that they formerly lived in that part of south India where they were in greater contact with Tamil and Canarese speaking people. Stephen Fuchs also supports the theory of southern origin of the Gonds, as is clear from the following extract from his "The Gond and Bhumia of eastern Mandla".

"The traditions of both Gond and the Oraon, as well as cultural evidence, support the assumption that these tribes indeed lived at one time in southern India. A connection with Kannada is supported by the fact that the Kanarese share a number of folklore elements with the Gond. But there is also some evidence of a connection with Telgu-speaking people. For some gold coins have been found, issued by king Sangramshahi, the first great king of Rajgond dynasty of Garha-Mandla, which bear a Telgu legend. They date from the years 1513 and 1541 A.D.[16]". The fact that Gonds are not found in large numbers in the Indo-Gangetic plain and other parts of northern India also confirms the assumption of their origin in the south.

While there is unanimity of opinion on the point of migration of the Gonds from the south of India, considerable divergence of views prevails concerning the length of their residence in their present habitats. The view favoured by Russell and Hiralal is that the Gonds settled in Gondwana between the 19th and 13th centuries A.D. They have discussed threadbare the arguments in support of this view in the chapter on Kol in "The Castes and Tribes of the Central Provinces, Vol. III", extracts *in extenso* from which have been quoted in the report on village Jaitpuri by the present writer. Recently, Shri Rambharos Agrawal, in his book "Garha-Mandla ke Gond Raja" has controverted the view propounded by Russell and Hiralal, and has hinted at the antiquity of the line of Garha—Mandla kings. His suggestions—which is not backed by firm evidence, but which he says should be investigated by research workers—is that two dynasties were simultaneously existing—one the Hindu dynasty of Kalchuri or Haihaya-bansi kings with their capital at Tripura, and the other the Gond dynasty of Garha with their capital at Garha,[17] hardly six miles from Tewar, the present site of Tripuri. The suggestion, apparently, is very improbable.

Social divisions :

The number of endogamous sub-castes of the Gonds is not precisely known. Different authors on the tribe have given differing descriptions of such divisions. In fact, the Gond provides an

14. Hislop, Rev. Stephen, Papers Relating to Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces, 1866; p. 3.
15. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III, 1916; p. 42.
16. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960, p. 12.
17. Agrawal, Bambharos, Garha-Mandla ke Gond Raja; p. 40.

example of a tribe on which much has been written but about the social organisation of which no single work gives a precise picture. Captain Ward writes that in Mandla Gonds are divided into two classes, the Rajgond and the 'Rawunbunsee'; each of which is again sub-divided into 42 different castes or 'jotes'[18]. Fortunately, he has given a list of the *jotes* from which it becomes quite clear that the so called *jotes* are only the *gots* (corruption of Sanskrit Gotra) misspelt. Ward was obviously wrong in calling the forty *gotras* as castes; they are simply the exogamous sub-divisions of the tribe. Reverend Hislop states that the Gonds adopt a classification "into twelve and a half castes or classes, in imitation of the Hindus"[19]. Hislop has given a list of these twleve and a half castes, which runs as follows: (1) Rajgond (2) Raghuwal (3) Dadave (4) Katulya (5) Padal (also known as Pathadi or Pardhan) (6) Dholi (7) Ojhyal (8) Thotyal (9) Koilabhutal (10) Koikopal (11) Kolam (12) Madyal, and an inferior sort of Padal as the half-caste. Of these he regarded only the first four, with the addition of 'Kolam' as 'Koitor' or Gonds *par excellence*. The others, according to him, may more properly be called sub-tribes allied to the Gonds. Sherring supports Wards—probably he might have used Ward's report as his base—and says that "the Gonds of Mandla belong to two tribes, the Rajgonds and Rawanbansees". According to Mandla District Gazetteer also, the bulk of the Mandla Gonds are known as Rawanbansis, that is belonging to the family of Demon, Rawan, who was slain by Ram". It was, however, found that most Rawanbansi Gonds are shy in admitting to strangers that they are Rawanbansis probably because they fear that such admission would lower them in the estimation of their non-tribal Hindu brethren. Russell and Hiralal classify Agarias, Ojhas, Pardhans, Sotahas, Koilabhutis, Parjas, Mannewars, and Kolams as castes which have developed from the Gonds. They also, however, mention only three sub-divisions of Gonds proper i.e. the 'Rajgonds, the Khatolahas, and the Dhur or dust Gonds. The first two represent the aristocratic section of the tribe, while the Dhur or 'dust' Gonds, also known as Rawanbansis are the ordinary Gonds in most districts. In Chanda district of Maharashtra, a sub-division of Gonds known as Darave (probably the Dadave caste mentioned by Hislop) or Naik is found; the alternative name Naik signifying their employment as soldiers. Muriya and Maria (which term includes both the Dandami or Bison—Horn Madias and the Abuj or hill Madias) are regarded as two important sub-divisions of the Gond tribe in Bastar District, while Larhia and Lanjhia are local sub-divisions in the Chhattisgarh country and Balaghat district, respectively.

According to Stephen Fuchs, in Mandla district, four sub-sections of Gonds are met with: the Deogond, who are highest in social rank; Surjabansi Rajgond, who are supposed to be the descendents of Suryabansi or Surjavanshi (the elder brother of Rawan, the demon king of Lanka)* who in the fight with Lakshmana hid behind his mother, the sun-goddess; the Suryabansi Deogarhia Gond, the sun-born Gond of Deogarh, an old capital of a Gond kingdom near Chhindwara; and fourth, the Rawanbansee Gond, the lowest section. It may be remarked that no other work on Gond, so far as is known, mention the three sub-castes of Gonds, Deogond, the Suryabansi, Rajgond and the Suryabansi Deogarhia which are enumerated by Fuchs.

The Gonds of Amwar belong to the Nagbunsee sub-division, which according to Gazetteer of Mandla district lives in the hills of southern Satpura. The Gazetteer observes that like the term Rawanbansee, the term Nagbansi also is derogatory in its origin, but now it has ceased to carry the original opprobrious signification. The only other writer on Gonds who has referred to the Nagbunsi sub-division of Gonds is Ward, who has recorded a story concerning their origin. The Gonds of Amwar professed to be ignorant of this story; still I reproduce it here for what it is worth:

> "Regarding the Nagbunsee division of Gonds the following story is told; they are said to be of much later origin, and descended from Raja Kirm, a brother of Doorjodhun, king of Delhi, in this way: Raja Kirm when visiting the Puchmuree hills, went to bathe in a tank, sacred to the Nag, whose daughter, during the day, used to take the form of a beautiful woman. Kirm fell in love with her, and the result of their connexion was a son, to whom the name of Bhooarao was given; her father, the Nag, as a punishment for his daughter's illicit loves in the day time ordained that her progeny should be called Nagunsees until the end of time or the offspring of the snake; and that, instead of being the same caste as the father, Chuttrees, they should be Gonds and wander over the face of the earth: so the progeny of this Bhooarao became the Nagbunsee sect of Gonds".

At Ward's time there were no Nagbunsee Gonds in Mandla district, their home being in

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[18]. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by Captain H.C.E. Ward, 1870; p. 130

[19]. Hislop, Rev. Stephen, Papers Relating to Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces, 1866; p. 4.

* The correct name according to Ramayan is Vibhishan.

Chhindwara district and country to the south. The Nagbunsi Gonds of Amwar claim to be an endogamous sub-caste, and there is reported no inter-marriage or inter-commensality between it and other sections of the Gonds. It is said that at the ceremony of mingling the soul of a dead person in Baradeo, the latter God sends the soul of the deceased to Naglok, from where, if found fit, it is passed on to Bhagwan. They worship 'Nag' or the cobra on the Nag-panchmi every year.

Sardoo and Amoli Gonds of Amwar mentioned in addition to Nagbunsee, Rawanbansi and Rajgond, Soorajbansi, Rajpootbansi and Chandrabansis as other sub-castes of the Gonds. Of these, they said, Rajgonds are the highest in status; while Soorajbansis—who also call them Gond Thakurs—come next to them. They claimed that their caste was higher than the remaining Gond castes. It may be remarked here that the castes Rajpootbansi and Chandrabansi are not, to my knowledge, mentioned in the available literature. The caste Soorajbansi was identified by me at Jaitpuri village in Jabalpur tehsil who also call themselves Gond Thakurs and also in some village near Motinala. In Part I of the Report of Census of India, 1931 (page 409), the Surajbansis have been described as a clan among the Mandla Gonds. The report says that this clan does not eat beef or chicken and that is why it has been accorded a higher social status. Besides Soorajbansi, the Report mentions three other endogamous clans of the Gonds, the Jhalarias, the Porabias and the Ravanbansis. As would be clear, the devision Jhalarias and Porbias are not mentioned in the works of Ward, Hislop. Russell and Hiralal and many others. The Gonds of Amwar were also ignorant about them.

Company and Totemism:

The Gonds have retained their primitive clan organisation even to this day. Our informants in Amwar stated that their endogamous caste Nagbunsee was divided into a number of septs—which are exogamous. This division into exogamous sub-septs is two-fold. The primary classification into clans is according to the number of gods worshipped, i.e. there are one god worshipping clans, two god worshipping clans, etc., the maximum number of gods worshipped being seven. Each of these primary clans is further classified in sub-clans called *got*. These *got* are generally totemic. Existing works—i.e., Russell and Hiralal, the District Gazetteer, Hislop and others certain descriptions which point to the prevalence of the *gotra* exogamy and that based on number of gods worshipped in their times as well. About the three, two or one god worshipping septs, both the District Gazetteer and Russell say that these have disappeared. Enquiries at Amwar run counter to this because the families belonging to Kusro *got* there style themselves as worshippers of three gods only. It was also disclosed by the Gond informants there that clans worshipping two and one god also existed. Russell and Hiralal's remark that "many Gonds have forgotten all particulars as to the gods, and say only that those septs which worship the same numbers of gods are *bhaiband*, or related to each other and therefore cannot intermarry" holds good even to this day. In fact the ignorance of the Gonds as to the names and other particulars of the gods worshipped by their clans is very widespread, and in Jabalpur district also, they were unable to name their clan gods. It seems to support the view that the division according to the number of gods worshipped is purely a division for regulating marriages and has no connection with the actual worship of gods; or even if it had any, nothing is remembered of it today.

The table below furnishes a break-up of the Gond families in Amwar according to *Gotra* with information as to the number of gods worshipped, and totem, wherever available.

Sl. No.	Gotra or clan	No. of families	Number of gods worshipped	Totem
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Dhurwa .	3	Not known	Not known
2	Mesram .	1	Not known	Not known
3	Markam Menko	2	6	Tortoise
4	Kusram Kusro.	1	3	Tortoise/ Tiger.
5	Koliha .	1	..	Jackal
		8		

Sunaooram Gond—who can be considered to be well-read and well-informed amongst the Gonds of Amwar—has arranged the Gonds into five groups of clans, so that the clans belonging to the same group do not intermarry, being related to one another as brother clans. Persons belonging to a clan or *gotra* are said to be *sag* (descending from the same ancestor). The five groups of clans are shown on page 19.

No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5
Markam	Maravi	Dhurwa	Parteti	Neti
Kusram or Kusro	Sayam	Patta	Karcho	Otti
Tekam	Pandro	Udde	Thalko	Si dram
Netam	Masram	Uika	Ajko	Turyam
Keram	Sarutu	Udale	Chicham	Wadiwa
Ayam	Koliha	Urveti	———	Nareti
Tilgam	Kunjam	Orkara	5	———
Malgam	Kukadia	Pendo		6
Sirso	Mashkole	Kusram		
Singo	———	Armoo		
Suri	9	Wadde		
Taram		Dhumketi		
Marpachi		Bhalawi		
Sindrani		Kodoya		
———		Saima		
15		Dhurgond		
		Balkaria		
		———		
		17		

One peculiarity about these groups is that they are mutually exclusive. It will thus be seen that the smaller clans in any group do not serve any purpose as far as regulation of marriage is concerned and are more or less family names. Another thing which is remarkable about the first group is that it includes clans worshipping three (Kusram) and six gods (Makram). This would show that clans worshipping three and six gods have become united in one exogamous group. This may, as suggested by Russell and Hiralal,[20] be due to their being 'much inconvenienced by the paucity of their numbers, for purposes of communal worship and feasting.

Garh:

Enquiry at Amwar revealed that the Gonds there subscribe to another system of exogamy viz. one based on *garh*. Literally *garh* means a fortress, but it also means a territorial division. Rambharos Agrawal refers in his recently published book "Garha-Mandla ke Gond Raja" to numerous *garh* of the Gond. Stephen Fuchs also has written about the *garh* exogamy of the Gonds. Russell and Hiralal have, however, not made any mention of this system of division of the Gonds. It is, however, significant to note that with the exception of Amoli Gond who gave out his *garh* as 'Khajoria' *garh*, no other household in the village had any knowledge of the *garh* to which it belonged. Similar ignorance prevailed about the *garh* of the wife's family also except in case of Sardu Gond who has married Amoli's daughter. This ignorance shows that the Gond families of Amwar probably do not seriously subscribe to this system of exogamy.

Totemism:

Totemism is practised by some Gond families of the village. The Markam *goti*—named after the mango tree regard the tortoise as their totem; so does the Kusro family regard the tiger. Sardu who is of Markam *got* stated that he does not revere the mango tree. He, however, would not even touch a tortoise—let alone kill it. According to him, the Tekam, Netam, Telyam and Pusam *gots* also do not touch the tortoise—not because they revere the animal but because they intensely hate it. The story narrated by him in this context is reproduced below:

"Tradition has it that the progenitors of these clans, along with others were going somewhere when on the way, they met a river. Others crossed the river, but the five progenitors started cooking their food on the bank of the river. When they finished their meal, a great flood came up in the river. A tortoise then offered to take them across the river, having solemnly assured them about their security. However, when the tortoise had reached midstream, it changed its mind and declared its intention to eat them. The forbears were, however, saved by the timely arrival of the vulture named *Raigindhni* who took them in its beak and safely landed them on the other bank. From that time, the descendents of these five progenitors hate tortoise and refrain even from touching it.". It is to be noted that the story given by Sardu differs in some details from the one given by Russell and Hiralal (page 61 and 62, Vol. III), wherein it is stated that gods Markam and Tekam had sat on a crocodile and only Pusam and Telangam had sat on the tortoise. They do not mention Netam in the story.

Tigar worship:

The Kusro clan to whichever caste it may belong i.e. Gond, Agaria, Baiga or Ahir follows the cult of tiger worship. The tiger is called 'bagheshwar' literally meaning 'tiger-god'. At the time of marriages persons belonging to the Kusro *gotra* observe a peculiar ritual. The afflatus of the tiger-god descends on a person of the household, who imitates the tiger by walking on all fours and who moves about in the frantic manner of a hungry tiger. A kid of a goat is then offered to the 'tiger-god'—who pounces upon the kid and after killing it sucks its blood. Later on the person possessed of the god is given rice beer to drink in a bowl. The explanation for this strange custom was not forthcoming from the informers. Dalton has referred to this cult of tiger-worship in the section of Gonds of his "Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal"[21]. Sunaooram Gond of Amwar and Pardesi Agaria (both belonging to the Kusro clan) of the neighbouring village Nunsarai, however, concurred about the prevalence of a belief

20. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol. III, 1916; p. 66.

21. Dalton, E.T. Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, p. 230.

that if persons belonging to Kusro *got* omit to propitiate the 'Bageshwar' in this manner, either the bride or bridegroom is sure to be eaten by a tiger.

Traditional occupation:

The Gond of Amwar claim cultivation to be their traditional occupation; and this claim is supported from the designation *kisan* by which other castes address them.

Language:

The language spoken by a large number of Gonds in the Mandla district as mother tongue is Gondi-parsi. It is, however, significant that Gonds of Amwar do not know the language spoken by their brethern in other parts of the district. In common with other people, they speak the language prevalent in the region, which is a form of Chhattisgarhi. The grown-up males can also understand, though with some difficulty, urban Hindi.

Agaria:

The Agaria, who live principally in the region of the Mykal hills in the Mandla, Shahdol, Bilaspur and Surguja districts should not be confused with the 'Agharia caste'—a cultivating caste belonging to the Sambalpur district and the adjoining erstwhile feudatory States of Orissa. They are a caste of indigenous iron-smelters living scattered usually in Baiga and Gond villages. Russell and Hiralal observe that the name of the caste signifies a worker with *ag* or fire[22], one view on the etymology of the caste-name connects it with the Hindi word *'agey'* (which itself is a corruption of Sanskrit *agra*) or before, and it is said that the Agarias are so called because they were born before the world came into existence.[23] Another view of the caste-name regards it as having originated from *'agar'*, the name applied to the local iron mines in the Rewa State. It must be stated that the Agaria families in Amwar did not seem to be in know of these. According to their statement to our investigator, they came out with a new version on the possible origin of their caste name; which regards the name Agaria as having come from *'agar'* the name for the furnace in the Balaghat district.

Origin:

Earlier writers regard it as a branch of the Gond tribe. The Ethonological Committee of Central Provinces, in 1868, referring to 'Agaria' as "Agharia Gond" classified it as a Dravidian tribe. Ward, a contemporary writer, included 'Agaria or Mookie' (Mukhi is the name of the Agarias living in Dindori tahsil of Mandla district) as a caste of Gonds.[24] Sherring described the Agaria (spelt by him as Agharia) as "the laziest and most drunken of all the Gonds"[25], an observation on their character which is negatived by our enquiry at Amwar. Elwin, rightly considered as an authority on the tribes of Mandla and various other districts in Madhya Pradesh, disagrees with the earlier views on the origin of the tribe; and is inclined to think that "the Agaria are something more than a branch or a collection of branches, of another tribe, or tribes."[26] Arguing from the fact of a distinct physical and cultural resemblance between all sections of the Agaria and Asur tribes of the Chhota Nagpur plateau—a common professional technique, a common mythology, a more or less common pantheon and magic Elwin remarks that the various groups who call themselves Agaria and Asur "are descendents of a tribe which is represented by the Asura of Sankrit legend[27].

The population of Agaria was distributed in the State as follows at the time of the 1961 census[28]:

Name of district	Population	percentage of total Agaria population of the State
(1)	(2)	(3)
1 Shahdol	6,799	22·5
2 Sidhi	4,979	16·5
3 Chhatarpur, Satna and Rewa	15	N
4 Jabalpur	250	0·8
5 Mandla	1,734	5·7
6 Balaghat	122	0·4
7 Bilaspur	4,139	13·7
8 Surguja	9,552	31·6
9 Raigarh	2,407	7·9
10 Raipur	212	0·7
11 Durg	73	0·2

The population for the State is 30,262 (Sex ratio 985). There are not many Agarias outside the State of Madhya Pradesh, and the few that are, are found in the Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh and the Palamau district of Chhota Nagpur plateau in Bihar.

22. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 3.
23. Ibid.
24. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by Captain H.C.E. Ward, 1870; p. 131.
25. Sherring, M.A., Hindu Castes and Tribes, 1879; p. 187.
26. Elwin, Verrier, The Agaria, 1942; p. 12.
27. Elwin, Verrier, The Agaria, 1942, p. 12.
28. Based on unpublished Census data.

Sub-divisions:

Russell and Hiralal have named only two sub-divisions of the Agarias: the Patharia and the Khuntia, named from the manner in which members of the two sub-castes fix the bellows to the ground. The Patharia use a stone, or a 'Pathar' for the purpose, while the Khuntia employ 'khoontis' or pegs. The Agaria of Amwar belong to the Patharia sub-caste which lives in the Dindori and Mandla tahsils of Mandla district, in the Shahdol district, Sidhi district and parts of the ex-zamindaris of Kawardha (Durg district) and Pandaria (Bilaspur district) that adjoin Mandla district. They are also known as Mukhi, from their mythological ancestor Jwala Mukhi. The Khuntia or as described by Elwin, the Khuntia-chokh live in the Bilaspur and Kawardha Zamindaris. A few other sub-divisions of Agaria tribe are (a) Khalha Agaria living, as the name suggests, in Khaloti or lowlands of Chhattisgarh (b) Mahali Asur or Asurs Agaria of Bilaspur and (c) the *god-dhuka* Patharia Luhar of Raipur. All these sub-castes are endogamous and observe taboos on commensality. The Amwar Agaria were ignorant of all these sub-divisions except the Khuntia Chokh.

Clan organisation :

As in case of the Gond and the Baiga, the Agaria also follow clan exogamy. Their clans also are known as *gotra* and are identical with Gond clan-names. The clans are patrilineal and totemic. Of the four Agaria households in the village three belong to the Dhurwa *got*, having no totem and the fourth belongs to the Purteti *got* with the crocodile as its totem. Other sept names identical with Gond sept-names are Uika, Tekam, Kusro, Markam, Marai, and Sonwani. This identity of the sept-names of the Gond and Agaria sept-names has led many to infer that the Agaria have sprung from the Gond tribe. This is not a valid inference. For one thing, the indentity of sept-names exists in the Baiga and Gonds also, or for that matter between the Ahirs and Gonds; but no one would suggest that the Baiga are a branch of the Gond. For another, there is considerable local variation in the sept-names of the Agaria, and if the list of sept-names given by Elwin[29] or by Crooke[30] is any guide, it would appear that the Agaria generally adopt the sept-names of their neighbours for their own sept-names. The Amwar Agaria did not confirm the sept-names Ahindwar, Ranchirai and Rathoria, given by Russell and Hiralal,[31] which are different from Gond sept-names.

Occupation:

The Agaria are indigenous iron smelters and smiths. Theirs is probably the most primitive technology in iron-smelting. They usually work in the Baiga and Gond villages. Of course, they have also taken to agriculture, agricultural labour and forest labour whenever their traditional occupation has failed to absorb the extra hands not needed at the forge and the kiln.

The Agaria do not have any language of their own, but speak the language prevalent in the region.

Ahir:

This is the caste of cowherds, milkmen and cattle-breeders. According to Russell and Hiralal, "The name Ahir is derived from Abhira, a tribe-mentioned several times in inscriptions and Hindu sacred books". "Goala, a cowherd, from Gopala, a protector of cows, is the Bengali name for the caste, and Gaoli, with the same signification, is now used in the Central Provinces to signify a dairyman as opposed to a grazier". In Part II (page 35) of the chapter "The Caste system in Bengal" of the Census Report of West Bengal, Sailendra Nath Sengupta says that "the Goalas (Gopas) claim to be Yadava Ksatriya since 1924 —of the clan which was in ancient times headed by Lord Srikrishna". "The modern Ahirs have a sub-division called Jaduvansi or Yaduwansi, that is, of the race of the Yadavas, and they hold that Krishna was of the Ahir tribe". The Koanra Ahirs of Amwar and other places too (Motinala for example) also claimed to be Yadavas, and to have descended from Lord Krishna; though how they could simultaneously claim descent from the arch-god of the Hindus, and from the Gonds is a mystery. (Russell and Hiralal), Vol II page 21). Russell and Hiralal have, however, remarked that "though the Ahir caste takes its name and is perhaps partly described from Abhira tribe, there is no doubt that it is now and has been for centuries a purely occupational caste, largely recruited from the indigenous tribes". About the Ahirs of Central Provinces, the Ahirs are largely recruited from the unions of Ahir Gonds and other tribes. Enquiry at Amwar tends to support this observation of Russell and Hiralal. Baisakhu Ahir of Amwar stated during the enquiry that originally Ahir and Gond were one tribe and it is only afterwards that they have separated. In support of this, he said that the Ahirs regard Baradeo as their supreme deity, and also perform the rite of mingling the soul or "kunda" in the Baradeo as the Gonds do. He was, however, not able to disclose how, if they were originally one tribe, the Gond and Ahir came to be separated.

29. Elwin, Verrier, The Agaria; pp. 59-60.
30. Crooke, W. The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. I, 1896; p. 2.
31. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 3.

Dudh-Kaonra:

The Amwar Ahirs belong to Kaonra division of Ahirs, who are descended from the union of "Ahirs either with the Gonds or Kawars, and many of them are probably pure Gonds". The statement of Russell that "the Kaonra Ahirs of Mandla are considered to belong to the Nandwansi group" does not appear to be correct as the Ahirs of Amwar were ignorant of any subdivision of their caste of the name of Nandwansi. The Rawats of Chhattisgarh are allied to the Ahirs, and the Ahir families of Amwar gave out Jhadia, Kosaria, Kanojia and Thethwar as the names of sub-castes of the Rawats. Of the various other sub-castes of Ahirs, the families of Amwar knew only about Narwaria (from Narwar near Gwalior), and Dauwa or wet nurse Ahirs, said to be descended from the illegitimate offspring of Kisan (Gond) fathers by Ahir mothers.

Exogamous Divisions:

The Kaonra Ahirs living in Amwar belong to the Jhagarkharia and Karent *gotras*. Bhainso, Kusro and Sonwani are the names of a few other *gotras* disclosed by them. The Sonwanis are supposed to rank highest; and it is a head of this *gotra* who officiates at the ceremony of readmitting into caste a person who had developed vermin in a wound. The clan-name Kusro is also found among the Gonds, Agarias and Baigas. The clan-names appear to be totemic or territorial in nature, but no positive evidence was available to infer that the Amwar Ahirs observe totemism. They practise clan exogamy. Members of the Kusro *gotra* are followers of the tiger-cult. The tiger known as Bagesur is propitiated at the time of marriages; the afflatus of tiger descends on a man, who has then to be offered the young of a pig before the tiger-god is pacified.

Dhobas:

About the Dhobas, Russell and Hiralal observe that they are a small caste belonging to the Mandla district, apparently an offshoot from one of the primitive tribes and that they have never been separately classified. Agreeing with Russell and Hiralal that the Dhobas are a small caste peculiar to the Mandla district apparently of aboriginal origin, the District Gazetteer of Mandla states that "they are extremely ignorant and parochial and either cannot or will not give any account of their origin and relationship with other castes". The Dhoba family of Amwar does not acknowledge any connection with Dhobis. Russell and Hiralal have mentioned a story said to have been furnished by one Dhoba to Rev. E. Price which is to the effect that the progenitor of the caste was a foundling boy, by appearance of a good lineage, who was brought up by some Dhobis, and marrying a Dhobi girl made a new caste. This story however cannot be taken to be evidence of the common origin of the Dhobas and the Dhobis. It is interesting to note that Dhoba is the name of the washerman caste of Bengal and Orissa. The following extracts from "The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal" (1953) show this:

I. "Dhobas previously claimed to be sukla Vaidyas. Later they claimed to be Vaisyas" (page 32).

II. "Chasadhobas claim to be 'Chasidhavas' & premier among cultivator)... Most authorities think that the Chasadhobas are Dhobas who have taken to agriculture". (Page 35).

To establish whether there is affinity between the Dhobas of West Bengal and Orissa who have taken to cultivation and the Dhobas of Amwar requires detailed enquiry. Russell and Hiralal as well as the District Gazetteer of Mandla describe the Dhobas as taller in stature and dark in complexion. The Dhobas of Amwar answered only the description of being tall, but otherwise, he is of fair complexion. Rambharos Agrawal, has given a description of the physical appearance of Dhobas of Mandla, which is somewhat at variance with the description given by Russell and Hiralal. According to Shri Agrawal, "the Dhobas look fully a north India caste. They are earlier inhabitants than the Gonds. They are not short-statured and dark complexioned, like the Gonds, but are tall and fair"[32].

Exogamous—Divisions:

Twelve septs of the Dhobas are mentioned in the Chapter of 'Dhoba' in Russell and Hiralal's "The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India".[33] The District Gazetteer of Mandla also mentions the same sept-names. These are: Bagmar, Bagcharia, Gada Mudia, Tumrache, Sunwani, Son-Sunwani, Baranga, Chhata, Danda-Karain, Kat-nagar, Marehta and Mara-luhati. The Dhoba family of Amwar belongs to the Bhoyeer clan which is not included in this list, and this fact justifies the apprehension of Russell and Hiralal that their list was probably not complete.

Ramhai Dhoba of Amwar stated that their caste was sub-divided into a number of clans which are exogamous. Besides his own clan, he could name only nine more. These are: Bagmar, Gada Mudiya, Chhanta, Marathia, Mara-lauthi,

32. Agrawal, Rambharos, Garha-Mandla ke Gond Raja; p. 61.
33. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 515.

Bag-sanichar, Kath-nangar, Sonwani and Painkhwar. Six of these names are included in the clans enumerated by Russell and Hiralal; the clans Maratma, Bagsanichar, and Painkhwar are apparently additions to Russell and Hiralal's list.

The clan-names appear to be totemic or territorial. Regarding the clan-names Bagh-mar and Mara-lauthi, Ramhai narrated a story which is to the effect that the ancestors of Bagmar and Maraluathi once quarrelled as to who had killed the 'bagh'. The 'bagh' was in fact killed by the ancestor of the 'Baghmar' clan. Anyway, a caste-panchayat was convened to decide the dispute. The panchayat declared in favour of the ancestor who had in fact killed the 'bagh' and he, and after him his descendents came to be known as Baghmar. The other person who lost was called 'Mara-luathi, (probably signifying that he had also struck the 'bagh' with a *lathi* and after him the name stuck to his progeny). Another version of the explanation of the *gotra* names 'Baghmar' and 'Bagcharia' was given by a Dhoba of village Sunehra belonging to the Baghcharia *got*. Thus, it is said that his progenitor had killed a tiger but simple as he was he forgot to keep with him any part of the tiger's body as evidence of his killing the tiger. A person of the *got* which is now known as Baghmar, on seeing a dead tiger cut up its tail and ears. Later on, when both of them claimed to have killed the tiger, the dispute was taken before the caste panchayat which naturally demanded proof from both the contenders. The ancestor of the Baghmar *got* at once produced the tail and ear which he had cut from the body of the dead tiger, while ancestor of the Bagcharia *gotra* were not able to produce any. The panchayat therefore declared in favour of the ancestor of the Baghmar *got;* and after him his progeny came to be known as Baghmar. Since our ancestor had killed the tiger, its soul rides on occasions on heads of persons of the Bagcharia *gotra.* That is why our *gotra* is known Bagcharia. The Gada-mudia sept, stated Ramhai, was so known because of its traditional occupation of plying the cart. Ramhai, however, stated that now the Gada-mudias have given up their traditional occupation. About the clan-names Chhanta and Marathia, our informant had no knowledge. About the sept Bagh—Sanichar, he disclosed that in the marriages of this clan, the afflatus of Bagheshwar descends upon the head of some one from the family, and the god is not propitiated until the offering of some animal is made to it. It may be recalled that a similar practice is found in persons belonging to the Kusro *gotra* in Gonds, Baiga, Agaria and Ahirs. The 'Bagh sanichar' sept as per Ramhai's information thus is the same as the 'Bagh-charia' (which literally signifies the possession by 'bagh') of the list of Russell and Hiralal to which our Dhoba informant from Sunehra belonged.

Regarding rules of marriages, Ramhai said that the only rule was to marry outside one's *got.* This statement does not, in terms, agree with what the District Gazetteer says. According to the latter, marriage is forbidden in the Baghmar and Bagcharia, (could it be due to the traditional hostility between the two septs as appears from the story reported earlier), Marenhta and Katnagar or Maraluahti, and the Sunwani and Sonsunwani *gotras,* because these are supposed by the caste to have been originally sub-divisions of the same gotra"[34]. Russell and Hiralal also make an identical statement. Ramhai's statement therefore is suggestive of relaxation in caste rules possibly because the present descendents of the *gotras* in question have lost touch with the tradition relating to their common descent.

The sept-name Sonwani is said to have been derived from Sona-pani or gold water, and Russell and Hiralal therefore regard the Son-sunwani sept as the aristocratic branch, or *'creme de la creme'* of the Sonwanis. There is unanimity regarding the fact that the Son-sunwani and the Sunwani sects occupy the highest position in the caste hierarchy of the Dhobas. Thus Ramhai Dhoba states that the Sonwani are the highest of all Dhoba clans, having certain specified roles assigned to them in caste meets. This fact was independently corroborated by a Bhoeer Dhoba from village Tantar of the Baiga reservation. Thus, only a person belonging to the Sonwani sept can settle caste disputes, and readmit to the caste-fold persons ousted from caste for commission of breaches of caste norms. For this, the ritual prescribes the headman of the Sonwani sept to rub gold in water, and with the water thus sanctified the person of the outcaste is sprinkled, as also all parts of his house. A more or less similar account of this is to be found in Russell and Hiralal's treatise[35] also. Again, in a feast, it is the Sonwani sept who are to take the first morsel, and no other person may start eating till that is done. A similar custom exists in the Kaonra Ahirs also.

The Painkhwar sept of the Dhoba is reportedly at the bottom of the caste ladder Persons belonging to this sept are not admitted to the privilege of dining with persons belonging to the superior *gotras* in the same sitting, on the occasions of the life cycle rituals. They are fed the next day. The Sonwanis are also divided into two-sub-septs.

Language and occupation:

Like Agaria, they have no language of their own but speak the language of the region in which they live. The traditional occupation of Amwar Dhoba appears to be cultivation.

34. Rudman, F.R.R., Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. I. 1912; p. 78.
35. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 517.

Muslim:

There is only one Mohammadan household in the village. It belongs to the Khoja sect of the Shia division of Islam. The Khojas are described by Russell and Hiralal as 'a small Muhammadan sect of traders belonging to Gujarat who retain some Hindu practices'[36]. It is said that their forbears were 'converted Hindus of the Lohara trading caste of Sind, who are probably a kin to Khatries'[37]. The Khoja of Amwar has no knowledge about his ancestry. He also did not seem to know that "The Khojas belong to the Nazarian branch of the Egyptian Ismaila sect"[38]—and that His Highness the Agha Khan is their religious head. The Khoja family of Amwar has taken to cultivation, and as will be seen later, has adopted many traits of the dominant culture in the village.

Material culture—Housetypes:

As has been observed in the first chapter, settlement in village Awmar is more or less a combination of the nucleated and the dispersed types. There is ostensibly no plan in the design of the settlement other than that dictated by factors of site etc., (and proximity of kin-groups and proximity to water source); otherwise the houses appear to be agglomerated in a chaotic manner. Even in this chaos the effect of social factors is discernible in the spatial separation of the houses belonging to the different castes. The effect of environmental factors is also seen in the rather free use of bamboos in the construction of the walls, the roof and the fencing-enclosure. There being no dearth of space in the village for the small population it supports, and consequently the necessity of houses being concentrated in a particular central locality i.e., markets etc., being absent, the houses in the village are built as separate units—there being considerable distance between a house and its neighbouring house. The site of the Gond households is generally on a piece of rising ground. This peculiarity of Gond houses has been adverted to in the Mandla District Gazetteer also.[39] Another characteristic feature of a Gond house in the village is that it stands in a separate compound, enclosed by a bamboo-fence, admittance into the compound being gained by a gate. This gate is made by passing three or four poles horizontally into holes in two vertical posts. The Baigas do not build any enclosure round their houses in the Gond fashion, though they also construct a *bari* at the back of their houses.

Houses in Amwar admit of classification from at least three different stand-points i.e. the roof-types, the materials used in constructing the wall and decorations etc., in the wall, and the number of rooms in the house. From the point of view of roofs, houses in Amwar fall into two categories, viz., houses with roofs having two slopes, and houses with roofs having four slopes. Except two houses, both of Baiga, all houses in Amwar fall in the first caegorty i.e. have two slopes. The two-sloped roof is known in local parlance as *dandaria* or *duithatia*. The roof with four slopes is called *choukharia*. The roof is made of a framework of split—bamboos, kept on poles descending on either side of a central horizontal beam. The framework—which is tied to the supporting poles with bark-ropes is covered with grass or thatch and to protect it from being blown away by wind, the thatch is again kept pressed by poles called (*ladna*) which are tied to the poles on the lower side of the split-bamboo frame-work. The central beam known as *baderi* or *barendi* is itself supported on three vertical poles. It is observed that the roofs of the Baiga houses are generally done carelessly, while in contrast the better looking roofs of Gond houses easily catch the eye. There is only one house in the village having a roof of country tiles. This is the house of Amoli Gond. It is reported that the tiles were locally prepared by his son-in-law Sardoo, possibly in consideration of being allowed the privilege of marrying Amoli's daughter.

From the point of view of walls, basically all houses in Amwar have walls of bamboo wattle. with mud coatings of varying thickness and nicety. Roughly we can classify the houses into two categories: those having walls only of wattle, without any or with very perfunctory daubing of mud, and secondly houses with wattle walls with a mud-plastering. The Gond houses, the Ahir houses, the house of the Dhoba, and Mohamadan, and two or three houses of the Baigas belong to the second category. But in all houses, the room for the cattle has walls of wattle only, without any mud plastering. All the houses in Amwar are plinthless. The mud-coating is thickest, and with a better finish in the Gond houses. The walls are painted first with cowdung and then white earth. The Gond houses can be signled out from the rest in that they contain a number of decorative designs—made by mud in rectangular shaped depressions in the mud-plastering of the wall. The designs of some of these ornamentations disclose a level of artistry as is clear from the line—drawings. The subjects chosen for engraving are generally animals or birds, but comparatively modern subjects like aeroplanes were also found decorating the walls. Leaving the

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36. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III. 1916; p. 461.
37. Ibid p. 461.b.
38. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III, 1916; p. 461.
39. Rulman, F.R.R., Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. I, 1912; p. 92

houses belonging to the Gond families, no attempts at ornamentation of the walls were observed in the houses belonging to other castes and communities. The door of Bhursu Baiga's house contains artistic carvings which are shown in the photograph.

In the houses of the second type the walls are either not coated with mud, or even if they are coated from inside, the layer is very thin and finish very poor. To this category belong all but three of the Agarias and the Mohammadan.

Finally we come to the classification of the houses according to the number of rooms they contain. From this criterion, the houses at Amwar admit of division into three classes—(*i*) houses with a single all-purpose room, (*ii*) houses with two rooms, and (*iii*) houses with three or more rooms. The table below gives the distribution of the houses according to this criterion, as well as the average area covered per household.

Name of community	No. of houses with one room	Average covered area per house hold (in sq. ft)	No. of houses with 2 rooms	Average area per household (in sq. ft.)	No. of houses with 3 or more rooms	Average area per house-hold (in sq. ft.)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Baiga	13	165	7	262	2	517
Gond	2	145	3	327	2	66(
Agaria	1	182	3	344	..	..
Ahir	..	..	2	431	..	..
Dhoba	..	..	1	420	..	..
Mohammadan	..	..	..	..	1	468

It may be observed from this table that in Amwar houses with a single all-purpose room and houses with two rooms occur with equal frequency and the two types together make up 86% of the houses. Another significant observation is that roughly 72% of the Baiga houses belong to the smaller type, an observation which accords well with Elwin's remark that "the Baiga generally have only one house to a family, and every one must cook, sleep and eat in the same place".[40] As against this, the Gonds do not appear to like to cook and sleep in the same room.

Description of houses:

The single-room type of house is entered through a door in the middle which, in majority of cases, does not have any wooden planks so that it cannot be closed by means of a lock or cannot even be chained from outside. It is shut by means of rectangular bamboo wicker work known as *tathi*—sliding on a horizontal bamboo pole fixed above the door-frame, by means of two bamboo loops or hooks. As one enters through this door, one comes to the portion of the room which is roughly half of the total area, used by the family for living and sleeping purposes. In this same portion, one would see two or three bamboo poles (known as *adagsani*) suspended horizontally from the roof by means of ropes. These poles serve as hanging-places for the bamboo utensils of the household, as also for such bedding articles as they may possess. The other portion of the room is separated from the portion used for sleeping by one or two earthen grain-bins. These grain-bins, as their name suggests, are used for storing grain. This portion which we may call the kitchen contains the hearth in a corner, with an earthen horse-shoe shaped fireplace fixed to the floor. The household utensils are also kept near the fireplace. The interior of the room, particularly the kitchen portion of it, is dark and rather gloomy in aspect, for there are no windows or ventilators in the houses (except in the case of Amoli Gond's house—which has two holes called *Jharokha* in the wall of one of the rooms, so that there is nothing to admit light except the door. In all houses, on the wall of the room, there are one or two small circular protrusions, going by the name *Pathera* which are meant for keeping the small kerosene lamps, and incidentally of course, of beautifying the wall.

By the side of the house, projecting from one of the side-walls, is a roof, which serves as shelter for the fuelwood stock of the household. This place is called *lakaddan* by the people. In front of the house is a courtyard—which is in a vast majority of cases without an earthen parapet boundary; and in the courtyard, there is a rectangular shade called *maria*. The top of the *maria* is frequently a storing place for a variety of household articles which are not in immediate use, and for which there is natually no space in the already congested house. The *maria* at the same time provides a shade for sitting purposes—where the guests are received, and also where

[40] Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 29.

people sit and chitchat in the evenings. There is usually no verandah in this type of house (In fact, of the 37 houses in the village, only three have a verandah).

There is, in every house, a place behind the kitchen, going by the name of *'deothana'* (corruption of sanskrit देव स्थान meaning place of gods). There is however no earthen platform as was found in the case of village Jaitpuri[41] in Jabalpur tahsil, nor are any images kept at the *'deothana'*. It is particularly meant to be the seat of 'Dulhadeo'—who is probably their god of cooking, but all other household gods which do not have any particular place assigned to them (e.g. the threshold for the Narayandeo) also reside in the *'deothana'*. An invariable feature of every house is a wooden stand called *ghinauchi* for keeping the earthen and metal pots of water; this is located in the first half of the room. The explanation for locating this stand in the overcrowded room and not outside appears to be the taboo—which decrees pots touched by any person not belonging to the caste of the household as polluted. Pots which are so polluted are discarded outright if they are of earth. but metal pots are simply bereft of their contents and thoroughly washed. The kitchen of every caste in the village is also treated as sacrosanct. Outsiders are permitted. though not encouraged, to enter the first half portion of the room subject of course to the taboo regarding non-touching of the pots. Entry into the kitchen proper is, however, forbidden.

Among other features of the house may be mentioned the *'jata'*—meant for the preliminary husking of rice located in the other half of the room and the grindstone; there is also in every house an *'okhli'*—a cylindrical cavity in the floor used for husking the rice or millet. In two houses, one of a Gond and the other of an Ahir, there was a *dhenki* for husking the rice. If the household own cattle, a separate room for cattle is attached to the house—which almost in all the cases is structurally quite separate from the living unit.

Houses with two or more rooms:

These are houses belonging generally to households having more than one married couple or a parent and a married couple. One of the rooms—which contains the kitchen is more or less similar to, and answers the description given above. The other room which is generally sub-joined wall-to-wall with the first room is used for sleeping of one couple, while the first couple sleeps in the other room. In houses with more than two rooms, the third room, which is structurally quite distinct from the main portion is called *bangla*. It serves as a sitting place, and also for sleeping.

In some of the Baiga houses (e.g. house of Tenda and Suklal Agaria) there is a pig-sty where the sacrificial pig of *larukaj* is kept. The ceremony of *larukaj* is however common to the Gonds, Agarias, Ahirs and Dhobas also.

Prices of houses:

The prices of houses returned at this enquiry show considerable variation i.e. the minimum price of a house is Rs. 10 returned by a Baiga, while the maximum is Rs. 500 returned by Bakhti Agaria. The price returned by Amoli Gond—whose house is probably the biggest, and has the unique distinction of having a roof of tiles is only Rs. 320. The table below gives a distribution of the houses according to ranges of price variations:

Name of Community	Number of houses in the price-range						
	Rs. 0—30	Rs. 31—50	Rs. 51—75	Rs. 76—100	Rs. 101—150	Rs. 151—200	Rs. 201 & above
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Baiga	6	4	1	4	2	3	2
Gond	1	..	..	..	3	2	1
Agaria	..	1	..	..	2	..	1
Ahirs and others . . .	..	..	..	1	1	..	2
TOTAL 37 .	7	5	1	5	8	5	6

41. Tiwari, G.N., Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 6, — Jaitpuri (1967) p. 15.

Allowing for some error of judgement in computing the prices by individuals, this table does help us in appreciating the relative prosperity of the communities living in the village. With more than two-thirds of the families living in houses with prices below Rs. 100 and of those roughly half living in houses estimated to cost less than Rs. 30, the Baigas stand out apart as the most backward community in the economic sense. The Gond and the Agaria appear to be on the top rung of the economic ladder.

Some general observations about houses:

The obvious and significant points of difference between houses of Gonds and Baigas have already been adverted to. Another salient feature apropos this is the general cleanliness of the Gond houses. The houses of Baigas and other communities living in the village are also kept tolerably clean, but they do not stand comparison with the Gond houses. The Gond housewife apparently takes considerable pain in keeping her house spotlessly—almost enviably—clean, and in decorating the walls. In the matter of structure also, the Baiga house has what Elwin has remarked "a tumbledown and dilapidated"[42] look about them. Elwin ascribes the miserable look of the Baiga houses to their indifference—a necessary concomitant of their nomad blood.

Construction of new houses:

There are tests for judging the auspiciousness or otherwise of the site for construction of a new house. The one frequently followed by the people of Amwar as reported by the informant Sardu Gond is as follows: A string is tied round the four corners of the site, it being kept in position by means of stones—three each—placed on it at the corners. The string is allowed to remain there overnight, and examined again in the morning. If in the morning it is found to be undisturbed, the site is regarded as lucky. Other methods, which are also followed by the people of Amwar are described below :

(1) A few paddy grains are kept on four stones placed at the corners of the rectangular plot selected for the house construction, and they are left overnight. If the grains are found scattered or eaten up in the morning, the site is regarded to be inauspicious. If they are found in tact and in the condition in which they were left the previous evening, the site is taken to be auspicious.

(2) The four corners of the rectangular plot for the site are first fixed, probably by eye-measurement. Diagonal measurements are then made with a rope. If the measurements for the two diagonals agree, the site is regarded suitable, but otherwise it is given up as unlucky.

The construction of a new house does not present much of difficulty in the village. A single-roomed house does not take more than three or four days for the husband and wife to construct. The raw materials, viz. wood, bamboo, thatch, bark-ropes etc., are easily available in the village forest. The walls are primarily of a bamboo frame, and no foundation is therefore dug. Services of a carpenter are not availed of—they are as a matter of fact not available in the village—and the rudimentary works of carpentry like cutting poles of the requisite size are done by the villagers themselves.

The construction of a new house starts on an auspicious day—which is either a Monday, Wednesday or Friday. The local *guniya* is also consulted, if necessary. First of all, vertical poles or *thunhi* of *saja* or *sarai* are erected in a symmetrical manner, followed by the fixing of the *dharan thunhi* in the centre. The central beam known as *barendi* or *mangranti thunhi* is then fixed; and two beams parallel to it known as *patiya thunhi*. Thereafter are fixed the bamboo wicker-work of the walls, known locally as *thati*, followed by the cross-beams *karwa*. The *karwa* are tied on one side with the *barendi* or central beam and on the other with the *patiya* beams. The *that* or framework of bamboo is then prepared and placed on the *karwa* beams; and on this *thati* is arranged the thatch known as *khadon* which is tied to the *thati*; in order to ensure that the grass is not blown away by a strong current of wind, the thatched roof is pressed by means of poles tied to the cross-beams. These are known as *ladna*.

Before entering into the new house, which takes place on an auspicious day, the household deities from the old house, i.e. Dulhadeo, Narayandeo, Ratmai, etc., have to be formally brought and installed in the new house. For this, they go to the old house, burn incense at the seats of the various household deities and request them to accompany them to the new house. The earth thus brought is then fixed by them in the new house, at their respective places, plastered and smeared with cowdung. The gods are then asked to take their seats in the new house with offerings of a coconut, and at least a goat, betel and areca nuts, and burn incense of *gumgun* (Sarai incense), and then it is regarded that the deities have entered the new house

[42], Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 29.

On this day, the *samdhi* and other relatives from the village are invited and feasted with *dar bhat* and bottle or two of liquor. The house has generally an eastern or northern facing probably because people then get the advantage of the rising sun. According to Fuchs, in Bhumias, this has a religious significance also, because an eastern frontage gives them a daily opportunity "to stoop before the rising sun[43]". As observed by Fuchs, 'no house should have a southern frontage, since the south is the region of the Yama, the God of Death, nor a western direction, since the direction of setting sun is called 'mara mukh' or the face of death[44]. The Burhadeo, principal deity of the Gonds has his seat in a *saja* tree towards the north-east and this probably accounts for the north or eastern frontage of the Gond houses in the village. Apart from the religious significance, at any rate, the very real material advantage of basking in the rays of the rising sun is also probably the reason for the eastern and northern frontages of the houses.

No house in Amwar has a bath or latrine attached to it.

Repairs:

Houses are repaired as and when necessary. Generally after the rains, the walls of the houses are plastered to the extent necessary, and painted first with cowdung and then with *Chhui* (white clay) but repairs to the roofs are carried on before rains. Repairing, even complete replacement, of the houses is no problem in Amwar. In fact, sixteen houses are reported to have been completely reconstructed within the last twenty five years, as per the following details :

Caste	Details of houses completely reconstructed—No. of time, reconstructed within the last 25 years						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Baiga	1	3	1	..	..	..	1
Gond	..	1	1	1	..	..	..
Others	1	2	2	1	1	..	..
TOTAL . .	2	6	4	2	1	..	1

Routine repairs of the house do not entail any expenditure. The expenditure, if any, is generally involved in purchasing the necessary wood and bamboo poles from the forest authorities.

Household possessions:

It would be too much to expect majority of families in Amwar to have anything like a long list of household articles. Most of them are at a very low level of material culture, and the only material possessions they are fortunate enough to have are the numerous artifacts of bamboo made by the people themselves, or the iron implements of shikar or agriculture made by the local Agaria. Other household goods include their metal and earthen utensils for cooking and for storing water, the improvised cots of wood and hemp string prepared by themselves, the apology in the name of bedding articles, if any; earthen containers or bins for keeping foodgrains. Most households possess a bottle or two of glass with ropes tied round their necks for keeping the kerosene which is one of the few visible signs of civilization that have managed to sneak into the lives of the village people. It is proposed below to discuss the household possessions of the people of Amwar, giving in case of each class of possessions a caste or community-wise differentiation. This will enable us to form an idea of the relative levels of material well-being of the classes of people living in Amwar.

Metal and earthen utensils :

In a discussion of this type metal and earthen utensils possessed by a family have a first claim for consideration. For one thing these possessions next to clothes show the degree of sophistication introduced into the living habits of the people, and for another, they can be fair indicators of the economy of the house. The table given below attempts to present the number of metal and earthen utensils owned by the households of various castes in the village:—

[43]. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond—and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 26.

[44]. Here Fuchs is perhaps wrong. Maramukh or Marmuhu is the name given to the southern direction.

Name of tribe or caste	Number of families possessing utensils in the ranges											Remarks
	Metal					Earthern				Wooden		
	1—3	4—6	7—9	10—14	15+	3—6	7—10	11—14	15+	1—2	3	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Baiga	11	5	3	3	..	9	10	3	..	21	1	
Gond	..	..	4	2	1	4	1	..	2	3	1	
Agaria	..	1	1	2	..	1	2	1	..	4	..	
Others	..	..	2	..	2	1	2	1	..	4	..	
TOTAL	11	6	10	7	3	15	15	5	2	32	2	

The poverty of the Baigas is apparent from the paucity of metal utensils with most of their families. Fifty percent of the Baiga families own less than three metal utensils; while more than 80 percent own less than 6. The Gonds appear to be quite well off in respect of the possession of metal utensils, and so are the Agarias and other castes including the Muslim. The Gonds naturally own fewer earthen utensils.

The earthen utensils procured from the 'kumhars' of Mawai include a *handi* for boiling *pej*, a small earthen pitcher styled *dohania* for storing *pej* or milk; a shallow earthen vessel, almost semi-spherical in shape called *tilai* used for cooking vegetables; the *paina* a deep vessel for making rice. The *parai* is used for covering the *handi* when *pej* is being prepared. *Bajra* or *gor* is a big earthen vessel with a constriction at the neck, and it is used for storing water or buttermilk; while *durhwa* is a smaller utensil for keeping oil.

Brass or iron utensils common in the village are: *batuwa* of iron for cooking rice; *kaseri* or *gund*, a big brass pitcher for fetching and storing water; *thali*, a brass utensil with low rims, circular in shape used for eating food or for kneading the flour; *lota* and *gilas* of brass for drinking water and the *katori*, a small utensil, used for keeping things while eating. The wooden utensils possessed by most of the households is the *chatuwa* (wooden ladle) used for serving *pej* or *dal*. The Baiga used a *tuma* or dried goured for drinking water and a ladle prepared from *tuma* for taking out water.

Bedding articles and furniture:

In the name of furniture, the only articles possessed by most of the households are cots, locally called *khatia* and *machis*. The former is a simple frame of wood with a mattress of string or bark-ropes. The latter i.e., the *machi* can be said to be the counterpart of the more fashionable *macholi* without which many an urban drawing room is not complete. The *machi* is a short square of tightly plaited bamboo splint on a small square frame of wood with short legs. The seat of the *machi* is sometimes woven with strings of 'sun hemp' or coconut coirs. Almost all the Gond houses, and most others have small *pirhas* or wooden planks used as seats at meal times. A few households may also possess a *chatai* or bamboo matting which takes the place of carpet and *dari* of the urban households. The statement given below shows the number of families possessing certain articles of bedding and furniture:

Name of article	Number of families owning the article mentioned in column 1, with number of pieces owned as per the following ranges :															
	Baiga				Gond				Agariya				Others			
	1	2—3	4—5	6+	1	2—3	4—5	6+	1	2—3	4—5	6+	1	2—3	4—5	6+
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)		(13)	(14)		(15)
Cot	10	4	..	..	3	3	3	1	..	..	2		1	1		..
Machi																
Pirha																
Mats or *Chatai*	4	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..		..	..		..
Gadda or Mattress	3	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..		1	..		..
Khatri	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..		1	..		..
Rajai or blanket	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..		..	..		..
Bedsheets	7	2	..	1	1	3	1	..	..	..	..		2	..		..
Dhoti	1	3	..	..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..		1	..		1
Sari or *lugda*	2	12	2	..	1	1	1	2	..	1	..		1	1		—

The table again brings out the shocking conditions under which most of the people in the village live. Again the Gonds appear to be comparatively better off, while the Baigas seem to be the most penurious class in the village. One-third of the Baiga families in the village do not own even a cot. This is not because cots of the type met with in the village are costly; but because of the dearth of bedding articles, people use the husk of paddy or *kodon* as bed. No Baiga family is fortunate enough to possess a *rajai*. Apparently people sleep on the beds made of the stalks of the rice or millet, and use either a bedsheet to cover them. A very large number use the *dhoti* if a male or the *sari* for the purpose. Pillows are unknown in the village. On the whole, the picture of the village community as it emerges from this table is a picture of stark poverty of a community where possibly people are still bundled together on the wintry nights so that the warmth generated by their bodies may protect them from the pervading chill. Possibly, they also keep a fire burning in the *gursi* in their rooms, as an extra safeguard against the biting cold.

Iron implements :

A number of iron articles are found in almost all the households. These include the *tangia* or axe, which is at once an article of the utmost utility in the pursuit of their occupation, as well as a weapon of defence against attacks of wild animals. The *tangia* consists of an iron blade, thick at one extreme and getting narrower as the sharp edge is approached. It is used for cutting trees and wood. The *larsa* an instrument particularly used for cutting bamboos differs from the *tangia* in having its edge shaped as an arc. The *gainti or kuderi* (pick-axe) are used for digging hard soils, while the *'sabar'* is an iron rod about four feet long used for digging pits. *Khanta* is used for digging up roots and tubers and thorny bushes and is a pointed blade fixed on to a wooden bar about 4 feet long. *Datri* corresponding to the *Datra* of villages in Jabalpur and other western districts of the Narbada valley is the sickle. Since there are no carpenters in the village, or in the neighbouring villages, all works of carpentry are done by the villagers themselves, for which purpose most of the households own a *bassula*. Besides these, most of the households own the *hal* (plough) and the *bakhar* (horrow) along with their accessories of wood and iron. All these articles are, of course, made by the local Agarias. The payments for the iron accessories of a *hal* and *bakhar* and repairs to them are made in kind, while other articles are purchased on cash payment.

Articles of hunt and chase:

The Baigas generally possess some articles of chase. Most important of these are the bow and arrow, the *sang* and the *bhala* or *barchhi*. Statement given below shows the number of families possessing the articles mentioned above. It will appear from it that while the bows and arrows are fairly common, the *sang* is possessed only by two households of Baigas.

Name of article	Number of families owning the article mentioned in column 1			
	Baiga	Gond	Agaria	Others
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Bow and Arrow .	19	..	..	..
Barchhi or spear .	..	..	..	..
Sang .	2	..	..	..

It is significant to observe that no other caste except the Baiga owns bows and arrows or *sang*. The bow of the Baiga is about four to five feet long with its stave made of *dhamin* wood and the string of bamboo. The arrow, called by the villagers as 'तीर' *tir*, is made of *katai* wood and tipped at the striking end with an iron-blade, conical in shape. The arrow head is treated with a deadly poison, named *mitha* poison, which is said to be procured from persons belonging to the *jogi* caste. The spear known as *barchhi* is the common type—a bamboo shaft with an iron spearhead attached to it. The *sang*, however, is made entirely of iron. The *sang* procured from the local Agaria at a cost of Rs. 8 is considered costly and that is why only two of the twenty-two Baiga families possess it.

The Baigas of Amwar do not use the fishing nets for catching fish. Instead, they use bamboo traps for the purpose. The bamboo traps used by the Amwar Baigas include the *jhitka* and the *jhuma*. The *jal* and the *palud* are traps made of rope-strings.

Articles of bamboo :

The Baigas are adept in making a variety of articles of bamboos. Every Baiga house at Amwar contains the *jhapi, sikosi, supa, mora, chulgi, pitla, dhuti, dalia*. A basket called *gobaraki* is used for collecting *gobar* or cow-dung.

Other household possessions :

Other articles possessed by some households are the *mandar*, a musical instrument used at the time of dancing, the *khumri* or rainhood and the *Kanwar* are possessed by all households. The last mentioned is an apparatus of a bamboo pole with a rope work for carrying load at the other end.

Articles representing intrusion of the forces of urbanisation on the people are the torch, the lantern, the umbrella, boxes of iron, mirrors,

combs, etc. In the following table families owning these articles are indicated castewise:

Name of article	No. of families owning the article			
	Baiga	Gond	Agaria	Others
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lantern	6	4	1	2
Torch	..	1	..	..
Umbrella	3	3	1	2
Iron box	..	1	..	2
Mirror	..	7	4	4
Comb	..	7	4	4

Dress and ornaments:

In its dressing habits, the small population of Amwar may broadly be divided into two types, the Baiga type and the Gond type. To the former class belong of course all the Baigas in the village and the Agaria, while the rest of the inhabitants, dress more or less in the Gond fashion. In the paragraphs that follow, the two types of dresses will be described briefly.

Baiga dress—Males:

In conformity with the orthodox tradition to wear as little as possible, the grown up Baiga male of Amwar puts on a small piece of cloth, called *lingoti*, one end of which hangs down as a flap in front. Generally, in the village, their bodies above the waist remain bare—but while going out to the market those who have, put on a *bandi*, or a shirt with or without collar purchased ready-made from the Mawai market. In cold weather months, they wrap their shoulders with a *chadar* or bedsheet, or with a coarse blanket, if they chance to possess one. Exceptionally, a *dhoti*, is also put on as a lower garment; and whenever that is done, the Gond style is adopted. In Amwar, I found only one case of a Baiga male putting on a *dhoti*. The top of the head is generally covered with a turban, called *phenta*—which is simply a piece of cloth wrapped round the head a number of times in a careless majority of the people move about unshod, and as a flap at the back. As regards foot-wear the majority of the people move about unshod, and only a few put on shoes called *bhadai* (a word from the Chhattisgarhi dialect), purchased from the market at Mawai.

The dress of the young Baiga man is similar to that worn by his grown up counterpart with the difference that he is generally more rigorous in conforming to the ancient Baiga tradition of wearing exceedingly little. The Baiga children also put on next to nothing to cover themselves. Very young children upto three to four years of age are allowed to roam about naked; but when they are a little older, a thin, usually torn, piece of cloth is tied round their loins—with a strip tucked in behind and in front to cover the private parts. It is hardly necessary to add that the children do not put on any foot-wear.

Hair-dressing:

As would appear from the photographs, the Baigas of Amwar generally wear their hair long, which is either, usually at home, allowed to hang loose, or is coiled into a bun. Older persons like Bhagwan prefer to keep their hair hanging loose. Most of them shave the front part of the crown. Dukal, Tenda and a few other Baigas have got their hair cropped, but even they keep the hair longer at the back than in the front. The longer tuft or hair at the back is called, *chutiya*. The hair of the children is also cut, leaving a longer bunch of hair at the back. It is significant that the people of Amwar do not requisition the services of a barber for getting the hair cropped. Mutual help is sought sometimes for the purpose, but generally a person himself does it with a razor, procured from the local Agaria. Almost all adult Baigas grow moustaches, and few of them have beards also. It did not seem that the Baigas of Amwar, even the younger sort, who should be expected to be very particular about their personal appearance, use the comb for arranging their hair in a tidy manner.

Dress of women:

In their dressing habits, the Baiga women are like the women of the Chhattisgarh plains. Like them they put on only a single cloth, known as *lugda*—which is a short *sari*. This is tied round the waist in the manner of a skirt and then one end of it is taken across the chest over the right shoulder and then tucked in at the back. No other garment is worn above the waist, not even a bodice or *choli*. The *lugda* is so worn that the portion of the legs below the knees is exposed. The head is left bare. They do not generally put on any foot-wear. Young girls, who have not come of the age of understanding also put on a small *lugda* called *patku*, but they put it on simply in the manner of a skirt. Young girls who have attained puberty start taking the *khandela*—i.e. throw the loose end of the *lugda* across their chest over the right shoulder—in the manner of the grown-up women. In Baigas of Amwar, as of the surrounding villages, taking of this *khandela* the word appears to be derived from *kandha* meaning shoulder is a sign of maturity, and girls who put on their *lugda* in this manner are spoken of as *khandelahin*.

Women wear their hair long. The hair are combed by means of a *kakai* or wooden comb,

parted in tne middle, and tied at the back into a bun by means of a coloured *phulera*.

Gond dress—Male:

For lower garment, Gond men wear a *dhoti* or lion cloth, also kown as *pardhani* in their dialect. This loincloth is wrapped round the waist, and then one end of it is taken from between the legs and tucked in at the back. This is called *kanch lagana*. The other end is allowed to hang in front as a flap, in rather a careless manner. The *pardhani* is short with the result that the calves generally remain exposed. Above the waist they generally wear a sleeveless *bandi*, which also does not have any collars. Sometimes, especially on the occasion of formal visits, shirts with collars, are also put on by the young man, who also put on the tight-fitting under garment—the *baniyan*. The head is covered by a turban more or less in the manner of the Baigas. Some young men remain bareheaded also. As footwear a few put on country-made shoes purchased from cobblers in the weekly market at Mawai but majority go unshod. Young children are allowed to go about naked till the age of about three years, but beyond that age, their private parts are covered by a *lingoti* in the Baiga fashion.

The hair is cropped. A tuft of hair—narrower than in case of Baigas—is left at the back. Self-help is the rule in the matter of cropping of the hair. The chin is shaved, and short moustaches are grown. The young man appeared to be keeping their hair clean.

Female :

The Gond women also put on the *lugda* but their manner of wearing it differs substantially from that of the Baiga women. The Gond women take the *kanch*—somewhat in the manner of the Maharashtrian or south-Indian women. This consists in taking one end of the *lugda* from between the legs and tucking it at the waist. Another important point in which the Gond women differ from the Baiga women is that unlike the latter who take the other end of the *sari* from across the chest to the back—the former bring the end of the *lugda* from behind across their right shoulder, and after spreading it so as to completely cover their chest and the abdomen, the loose corner is tucked in at the left side of the waist. In the process of bringing one end of the *lugda* from their back towards their chests, they cover the head also. They differ from Baiga women in yet another respect; they put on a loose-fitting blouse in the upper part of their body. Another significant difference in the dressing habits of Gond and Baiga women is that the former like coloured dresses—red, blue and green being the favourite colours—while usually the *lugda* of the Baiga women of the village is white, turned into grey on account of constant wear and dirt. This preference of the Gond women for colours can be seen at its height at the weekly market at Mawai where women outnumber the men in attendance and which, therefore, is a veritable festival of bright colours. It is observed that the Gond women when they come to the market bring a spare new dress which they put on in place of the dress with which they leave their homes as soon as they reach the outskirts of the market village. This weakness for showing off—which the Gond women share with members of their sex anywhere else adds to the brightness of colours in the market.

The Gond women also bestow considerable attention to their hair. The hair is parted neatly in the middle and tied into a *jura* at the back.

Dress of other communities :

The Ahir dress after the Gond fashion. Inside their houses, the Agaria of Amwar also dress in the Gond fashion; but put on a *lingoti* or put on a very short *dhoti* when out of their houses. The Dhoba appeared to be more liberal in his dress, putting on a coloured jacket over his shirt. His manner of putting on the *dhoti* resembles more or less the Hindus of a lower stratum in the villages. The Mohammadan also puts on the *dhoti* almost in the same style as the Gonds. But he puts on a shirt, in place of the Gond's *bandi*. His young son puts on a half pant or a pyjama, and a shirt.

Women of all other castes except of Mohammadan put on dresses similar to those of the Baiga women. The women of the Mohammadan household, however, put on a *sari* and a *kurta* in the upper part of their body.

Dresses on ceremonial occasions :

No special types of dresses are prescribed for festive occasions—except at dances. The dancing costume will be described later.

Urbanisation in dress :

Situated scores of miles away from a town, Amwar is not naturally exposed to forces of sophistication and urbanisation as regards dressing habits. Even then, it has not been immune from the effects of urbanisation in this respect. As has been observed earlier, the Mohammadan young man puts on a half pant or a pyjama and a shirt. A Baiga young man—Aghnu son of Lula —was also found putting on a half-pant and a half sleeved *baniyan*. He had also his hair cut after the fashion of the town. However, it is the Gond households in the village who are carriers of urbanisation in dress. Dhansingh Gond, Sunaooram and Sardu Gond put on shirts, have their hairs cropped and parted in a more or less

urban manner and dress their children in urban dress. The hair of Lula, son of Amoli Gond are also cropped in the urban style. The cousin of Sunaooram Gond, who is a teacher in the local school puts on a long pant and a bush-shirt, like any other young man about the town. In the dresses of the children also urbanisation is being introduced by Gond children. The small school going daughter of Sardoo Gond puts on a frock, and so does the daughter of Sunaooram Gond. Among Baigas, only Dukal has purchased a frock for his daughter. These examples bring out clearly that the people of Amwar are not unresponsive to change in the dressing habits—even though the change is very slow. Urbanisation is more pronounced in the Gonds; probably because of their higher level of material culture. Sunaooram Gond is an office bearer of the Banwasi Sewa Mandal which has its office at Mandla. He is educated and has to go to Mandla and other places in connection with his work. It is therefore no wonder that his family is the pioneer in the matter of introducing urban dresses in the village. Sardu Gond has modicum of education but has travelled quite a lot in comparison to others in the village, having gone to Mandla a number of times and also to Raipur. He also is, therefore, responsible for introducing urban dresses in the village. The case of Agnoo Baiga, however, stands on a different footing. He is illiterate, and has never gone to a town. On being questioned in this regard, he answered that he had earned money while working as a labourer in the forest, and with that money he purchased a half pant and a half sleeved *baniyan* for him. There is no manner of doubt that he considered the urban dress superior to his traditional dress, and only waited to have enough money in his pocket to be the proud owner of it. Though the case of young Aghnu does indicate the future trend, it is to be noted that the Baigas as a community are the least affected by urbanisation in their dressing habits. Their tradition in addition to poverty may be responsible for this resistant attitude to change. Describing the Baiga tradition in connection with their meagre dressing, Elwin says that "Bhagwan gave Nanga Baiga a piece of cloth nine hands long, but Nanga Baiga returned all but a hand and a half as unnecessary[45]". Some of the older Baiga, according to Elwin, trace their present poverty to the wearing of clothes and shoes"[46]. With this attitude, one should not be surprised at the slow pace of urbanisation in them. It is however to be noted that urbanisation has not been able to have any effect on the dresses of the women in the village.

Ornaments :

Though the women of Amwar are as fond of ornaments as their non-tribal sisters anywhere else, yet their straitened circumstances do not permit them to do much by way of materialising their fondness. The economic condition of the Baigas is extremely bad and their women hardly possess any ornaments worth the name. The Gonds whose financial position—though not enviable is sounder, possess some ornaments. In any case, the information volunteered by the people relating to ornaments is summarised hereafter.

Male—Ornaments :

The ornaments most frequently worn by the men at Amwar is the *chura,* made of nickle, but rarely of silver also and put on round the wrist. The ornaments worn in the ear are the *bali,* the *bala,* and the *lurki.* The first two consist of small beads strung on a circle of wire of gold or silver, and differ only in size. The *bari,* which is the smaller is put on the upper part of the ear while the *bala,* bigger in size, is supposed to adorn the lobe. The *lurki,* a ringlet of either gold or silver, is worn in a hole through the lower part of the ear. Besides these, the men wear rings or *mundri* in their third and small finger of their hand. Garlands of beads in the neck are also put on.

Women:

For ornaments; the women of Amwar put on a *hawail* or a *sutia* round the neck, *chura* on the wrists, brass bangles also on the wrists, the *dhar* in the ear; the *tarki* and *pola,* also in the ears; *nagmour* and *bohunta* on the arm, above the elbow; *chura* in the anklets; *chhutka* in the fingers of the feet, the *kardhan* round the waist; the *khutia* or *phulli* in the nose. The statement below gives the ornaments of different parts of the body arranged in a tabular scheme.

S. No.	Part of the body	Name of ornament worn in the part	Brief description
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Ear	*dhar*	A large circular silver ornament without a chain.
2	Ear	*pola*	A thick round piece of wood, or stalk of maize put in the ear to keep the hole in the lobe open when no ornament is worn.

45. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 11.

46. Ibid., p. 11.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
3	Ear	*tarki*	Similar to pola in shape but faced with gold.
4	Nose	*Nakkhutia* or *long* or *phulli*	A small flower-like stud of gold.
5	Neck	*Hawail*	A necklace of silver or gold coins.
6	Neck	*Satiya* or *hasli*	A silver ring of the shape of snake.
7	Neck	*Ganthi mala*	A necklace of glass beads black in colour.
8	Neck	*Chhuta*	A necklace of beads of many colours.
9	Neck	*Guria bichuli*	A necklace of glass-square coloured.
10	Wrist	*Chura*	Circular ornaments of silve or nickle.
11	wrist	Bangles	Of nickle or glass.
12	Elbow	*Bahunta*	A circular ornament worn round the arm above the elbow.
13	Elbow	*Nagmori*	Ibid.
14	Waist	*Kardhan*	A circular ornament of silver worn round the waist.
15	Ankles	*Chura*	Heavy broad brasshand with upturned edges worn round ankles.
16	Fingers (hand)	*Mundri*	A ring
17	Fingers (leg)	*Chhukta*	A ring

Of this list, the poor people of Amwar possess but few. The table given below is prepared from the schedule filled in at the time of this enquiry. It shows the number of families which posses ornaments of the type described in column 1; a castewise breakup of these families is also attempted.

Name of ornament	Baiga	Gond	Agaria	Others	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Satiya or *hasli*	3	3	1	1	8
Hawail	3	4	2	..	9
Chura	8	4	3	2	17
Bangles	19	7	4	4	34
Chhuta	22	..	..	..	22
Ganthi Mala	9	..	1	1	11
Bahunta	..	2	..	1	3
Nagmori	..	1	1	..	2
Khutiya or *phulli*	..	1	.	..	1
Lurki	..	1	..	..	1
Tarki	..	1	..	..	1
Mohar (Gond)	..	1	..	..	1
Dhar	..	1	1	1	3

The table brings out the extreme proverty of the people, particularly of the Baigas. In order to properly appreciate the miserable state of the people, the families have been tabulated with reference to the values of the ornaments owned by them.

The table below shows that a little less than half of the Baiga families own ornaments below Rs. 3.00 in value. In fact, the only ornaments which these families have are bangles made of nickel and *chhuta* of heads. As expected, the Gonds appear to be the most prosperous with three of the seven families owning ornaments of value more than Rs. 100. Amoli Gond possesses ornaments worth Rs. 496.00, which is the maximum in the village.

Name of Caste	Families owning ornaments with value between									
	below Re. 1	1—3	4—6	7—10	11—20	21—30	31—40	41—70	71—100	101 +
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Baiga	3	7	4	1	..	..	3	1	..	..
Gond	..	2	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	3
Agaria	..	..	..	2	1	1	..	..	..	..
Others	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	1	..
TOTAL	3	9	5	3	2	1	3	2	2	3

There are certain castewise peculiarities in wearing ornaments. Thus, *chhuta*, the multi-colour garland of glass beads is worn only by the Baigas. Then, the piercing of nose is prohibited in all communities in the village except the Gonds. Consequently, only the Gond women put on the *nakkhutia* or *phulli*. Elwin[47] considers the non-tying of *kanch*, and the avoidance of nose ornaments as traits specifically Baiga in character. I may however venture to observe that non-wearing of the *kanch* is a practice universal in the Marias of south Bastar, and the women of Chhattisgarh, while wearing of nose-oranments is avoided not only by the Baigas in the village but by other communities also except the Gond. There, thus does not appear to be any thing specifically Baiga about these traits. The[48] kachis of Jaitpuri in Jabalpur tahsil were also observed to practise the taboo relating to non-piercing of the nose of their women-folk. The Agaria and Baiga women do not put on glass bangles.

Signs to denote married state :

No particular sign distinguishes married women from a non-married or widowed one. They do not apply vermilion to the parting of the hair; nor a red circular mark on the forehead. The bangles of glass, and the *bichia* put on in the fingers of the legs in non-tribal Hindu women after marriage is also not compulsorily worn by the married women in the village. The only thing which distinguishes the married (also widowed) women from the unmarried is the extent of tattooing; an unmarried girl has only her forehead and arm tottooed but the married ones have their legs, thighs, back and even breasts tatooed.

No community in the village except the Baiga is reported to put on any special type of dress at the time of community dancing. The Baigas put on at the time of dancing a peculiar type of skirt, consisting of strips of cloth, and a special shirt called *jhanga*. With a view at decoration, they put on a crest or *kalgi* made of peacock feathers, this is put on in the turban. The neck is adorned by *chhuta*, while in their ankles they put on anklets with bells called by them *paijna*. This is to help the dancer in keeping proper rhythm while dancing. The *havail* is also put on round the neck, and of course, any other ornament that may be available at the time.

Cleanliness:

Standard of personal cleanliness of the people at Amwar is not very high. Not many persons are reported to be punctual about cleaning their teeth in the morning. The Baigas differ from the other communities in one respect—they do not use water after defecation as the other castes do. Instead they use the leaves of *sarai*. They connect this practice to their mythology, and have a curious belief that if they use water for washing after defecation, they will be eaten by a tiger. Those who wash their teeth in the morning do so by *datun* consisting of twigs of *sarai* or *jamun* or even *harra* trees.

About bathing also, the communities living in Amwar do not seem to be particular. Their hygiene considers a bath once in seven or eight days as good enough. That is their profession. In point of fact, however, the gap between two consecutive baths may be still wider. The unclean habits of the Gond, had often exposed them

47. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 15.

48. Tiwari, G.N. Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 6, Jaitpuri, 1965; p. 13.

to the ridicule of other non-tribal castes in the past. The District Gazetteer of Jabalpur, in somewhat bantering or jeering strain observes that the Gonds only bathe three times in a year, at Hareli, Pola and Diwali, and if they bathe more often than this the people would jeeringly remark they have become *pandubbis* or water-birds.[49] It appears that people in Amwar, including the Gonds, obey their inclinations at the moment in the matter of bathing and generally postpone it as long as possible. The gaps between consecutive baths may be considerably longer in winter than in summer. Soap is not common in the village, there being only a few young men like Agnu Baiga and Lula Gond who occasionally wash themselves with soap. Majority of the persons content themselves with the application of wood-ash for removing the layer of dirt from their bodies. Coal-ash is also in use for the occasional washing which clothes of the poor people in Amwar receive. They could not, even, if they willed, afford to wash their clothes oftener, firstly because they do not have spares to put on, and secondly frequent washing would cut short the span of life of the cloth.

Tattooing :

The women of Amwar seem to share the fondness for tattooing with the tribal women in other parts of the State. Women of all communities in the village including the Mohammadan get themselves tattooed. Among the tribal communities tattooed in the pre-puberty period, and people jeer about it. A girl in the village has her first experience of the tattooing needle sometime when she is seven or eight years old, and in any case before she attains maturity. Only the forehead is tattooed in the pre-puberty period and people in the village reported that this was the only socially obligatory part of tattooing, though in practice hardly any girl restricts tattooing to the socially obligatory extent. When the girl attains maturity and is about to be married, her hands, back and wrists are also tattooed. After marriage, however, the girl is tattooed on the thighs, legs and probably on the chest also, though people in the village denied tattooing on the chest. People of Amwar did not confirm that certain parts of the body, to wit, the legs, thighs, and chest were tattooed only after marriage. There is no such restriction on the extent of tattooing at Amwar, and indeed a mature girl could get herself tattooed to the maximum possible extent subject only to her capacity to endure the painful operation, and of course, the purse of her none-too-rich father.

The various patterns of tattooing prevalent in the village are illustrated by photographs and line-drawings which show the tattooing on Gond and Baiga women. On the face the design shown in diagram was found most commonly tattooed. In fact, it was observed on the forehead of all Baiga women and girls more than about nine years, and of women of the same age of Ahirs and Agarias. The design on the forehead of Gond women was of a different pattern—consisting of dots only. The bodies of grown up Baiga and Gond women are profusely tattooed on the shoulders, arms, back, legs and the thighs. Generally, in the tattooing—patterns on the bodies of Baiga women, horizontal and vertical lines, or curves preponderate; while the tattooing on Gond women is characterised by an abundance of horizontal rows of small semi-circles, crosses dots or lines meeting at acute angles. The variations could not be correlated to any special social or other significance, and probably are indicative of the fancies of the women of the two castes or more probably of the taste of the males of the species in the two communities.

Queries in the village on the importance and significance of tattooing met universally with an answer of this type: "*Godna* is a gift of God to the women. On death, they are stripped of all ornaments and only the tattoo marks accompany her to God's house. This is their imperishable ornament, their constant companion which never separates itself from their bodies. It helps their identification in the next world". According to a celebrated author, tattooing seems to have been originally a magical means of protecting the body against real and spiritual dangers much in the same manner as the wearing of ornaments. The popularity, and among women the social compulsion to undergo tattooing in spite of the excruciating pain associated with it, strongly suggests such a theory.

Possibly, the people of Amwar have now forgotten the past significance of tattooing. May be in the past tattooing might have been performed to give the would be mother enough training in bearing pain with a view to prepare her for maternity. Tattooing as a means of removing or alleviating pain is resorted to in the case of males even to this day. In Amwar, men do not get themselves tattooed generally, except to the extent of getting the figure of a scorpion tattooed on the region of the hand between the wrist and the elbow, or their names. It was however disclosed that they invariably get their legs tattooed whenever they feel rheumatic pains—

हाथ पैर दर्द करते हैं तो गोदते हैं i.e. when the hands or feet ache, tattooing is done". Thus in the case of men, in any case tattooing has a magical significance.

Elwin thinks that in Baigas tattoo marks have a sexual significance. "They are", according to him, "a form of sexual expression and a powerful sexual stimulant[50]". He even goes on to suggest

49. Nelson, A.E. Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Jubbulpore District, 1909, p. 122.

50. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939, p. 18.

that "tattooing has to do with skin-eroticism which is a strong sexual agent in Baiga love making"[51]. With deference to an authority of Elwin's stature, I may venture to suggest that there is not much observable difference in the extent of tattooing in the Baiga, Gond, Ahir or Agaria castes in the village. That being so, there does not seem to be any justification for the statement that this operation which is common to all the communities in the village is a form of "sexual expression" or a "powerful sexual stimulant" or it has something to do with 'skin-eroticism' only in the case of the Baigas. No doubt, people professedly regard tattooing as an aid to the beauty of the women, much in the same way as ornaments. But it is futile to argue any special "sexual significance" of tattooing merely from this attitude. The sexual significance of tattooing, if any, could not be a whit more or less than similar sexual significance in case of ornaments, or the new clothes, or the tight-fitting dresses of fashionable women. And such sexual significance will be true in respect of the Gonds, Agarias and Ahirs too.

Operation of tattooing:

At Amwar, tattooing is done by women of the Badi and Ojha castes. The rates of tattooing on the various parts of the body, as disclosed in this enquiry are as follows:

Forehead	four annas
Hand	Rupees one and eight annas
Legs	Rupees one and eight annas
Back	Two rupees.

The rates for tattooing on thighs and chests were not disclosed. The operation of tattooing is reported to be very painful. In fact there is a saying in the village, which rhymes with the Hindi words for tattooing and sexual intercourse and jestingly remarks of a girl who cries at the time of tattooing, that if she cannot stand the pain of tattooing, one cannot see how she can withstand intercourse. There is a curious superstition which forbids the husband watching the operation of tattooing on his wife. The belief is that if a husband does see, he will become blind.

Food and drinks:

The people of Amwar, whether Baiga, Gond, Agaria or Dhoba, Ahir and even Mohammadan eat three principal meals a day. The Gonds call the three meals, *murgal, marria pef* and *biyar*. The Baiga nomenclature differs from this only in respect of the first meal which is called *juara* by them. The first of these meals is taken in the morning between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., before people leave their houses for work. In the case of all households in the village, including the Mohammadan, this consists of a gruel very thin in consistency prepared by boiling a small quantity of *kodon* or *kutki*, rice or maize in a large quantity of water; and vegetables. This meal can be said to be in the nature of a breakfast. The second meal known as *marria pej* is eaten at about 1 to 2 p.m.; after people return home from the fields. Alternatively, it may also be taken to the field by the housewife. In the case of all households other than the Mohammadan household, this meal also consists of *pej*—as the thin gruel referred to above is known in the village—and vegetables. The last meal eaten at night is a bit more substantial though it also consists of *pej* and vegetables—but the *pej* this time is thicker in consistency and is eaten with *dal* (pulse). Cakes of *kodon* called *marria* cake may also be eaten at this meal. The Mohammadan household differs from households of other castes in the village in that it does not eat *pej* but eats rice instead at night.

Pej is the most important article of the village people's food. It is their mainstay—their principal sustainer. It is prepared by first boiling a certain quantity of water in an earthen pot called *handi*. When the water starts bubbling, a small amount of grain, either the millets, *kodon* or *kutki*, or *maka* or rice (rice is usually taken as a change—few people in the village being able to afford it daily) and then the water-grain mixture is left to boil till the grain becomes soft. It is reported that the quantity of water added in *kodon pej* is ten or even more than ten times the quantity of grain to be put. Cold water is added to the *pej* after it is taken off the fire. *Pej* is the poor man's dish, and one section of the village population, the Baiga, has even sanctified it by according to it a place in their mythology*. There is no doubt, however, that *pej* has been the diet of the poor Gonds and Bygas for at least the past ninety or hundred years. Ward at pages 142 and 162 of the Settlement Report observed about the food of Gonds that "Their food is, as a rule, the flour of the *kodon* (*Paspulam freementaceum*) and the *koodkee*, baked into cakes, or boiled into a paste". The latter is, of course, *pej*. The Seoni District Gezetteer, in 1907

51. Elwin, Verrier, The **Baiga,** 1939; p. 19.

*The mythology is thus recorded in Elwin's Baiga, page 49 "Long ago, Bhagwan called all the tribes of mankind to a feast On one side he put rice and *dal*, vegetable and meat curry for the Hindus; on the other side he put chapati ghi and sugar for the Baiga and Gond. When every one had come, Bhagwan asked them to sit and eat. But at that moment, a rat came out of its hole, and ran across the floor. As Bhagwan had provided no meat for the Gond and Baiga, they all jumped up, and chased the rat so that they could add it to the feast. But they could not catch it, and when they came back they found that the Hindus had come and taken all their *chapati, ghj*, and sugar, and there was nothing left for them at all. Then Bhagwan brought the water in which therice had been boiled and gave it to them This is *pej* he said, "and you will eat it for ever".

wrote that "The Gond's great household standby is *pej* or the water in which rice or *kodon* has been boiled. He takes this at all times as the Scotch do porridge, and it is extraordinary what staying-power it seems to give him[52]".

No salt is added to the *pej* and its taste therefore is very insipid. It is, however, eaten with vegetables. The tribal population of Amwar eat a large variety of vegetables, grown in their back-gardens, and also collected from the forest. The vegetable of the Amwar people is not fried in oil or *ghi*, nor does it contain a multitude of spices, as does the vegetables of non-tribals. It is comparatively simple preparation; the vegetable is boiled with water and salt and chilli are added to it. The people of Amwar consider butter-milk with *pej* a great delicacy and butter-milk is taken in place of or in addition to the vegetable, whenever it is available. Of the numerous *bhajis* or vegetables eaten, those most common in Amwar are *chench bhaji, khotna bhaji, bhenra* (*bhindi or lady's finger*), *kalinj* (gourd), *turai, sem, barbati, tuma* and *rakhia*. All these are grown by the people in their kitchen-gardens. Besides, Amwar people eat young leaves of peepal, the *rosalla* (*Coretea myna*), the tender shoots of gram, the *keolar* (*Bauhimia racemosa*), the *shikora* weed (*Cassia tora*). All these are collected from naturally growing trees and herbs in the forest. *Munga* beans are considered a delicacy, and *munga* tree can be seen in the compound of almost every household in the village. Equally delicious are vegetables prepared from *karil chaina*, the young shoots of the bamboo. The mushroom *pihri* is also eaten.

Roots and tubers:

The people of Amwar supplement their diet to a considerable extent by roots and tubers and fruits collected from the forest. Most important of these roots from the vegetable point of view is *kanihakanda*. As regards fruits, in season, the mango is prized as the most delicious. The raw fruit is eaten by making a *chutnee*. Other fruits that occupy an important part in the life of the people is *mahua*. The dried fruits of *mahua* are powdered and are mixed with *kodo* or *kutki* flour and eaten as *marria* cake; it is eaten by itself also, by baking it on fire. Its seeds, known as *gulli*, yield an oil, while its corolla are fermented to yield the well-known country liquor. *Char, tendu, gooler* are some other wild fruits eaten by Amwar people.

Tikhur and *baichandi* are two important roots dug by the Baiga, and apart from being eaten at home the surplus is taken to the weekly market for sale. Both of these are used by the Hindus elsewhere for being eaten on fast days, and some of their preparations are cherished as very delicious. The *tikhur* (made from the roots of the wild *Curcuma augustofolia*, a plant resembling the broad and long leaved cannas of urban gardens) was termed as particularly acceptable even by Captain Forsyth.

Vegetarianism:

Vegetarianism is almost non-existent in the village, there being only one case of a vegetarian family. The Baigas, Gonds and Agarias were almost omnivorous in the past; but of late, as their contact with non-tribal Hindus became greater, they began to eschew the flesh of animals like cow, regarded as sacred by the Hindus. The killing of a cow, and eating its flesh is tabooed in the village. Tenda, the Baiga Mokadam of the village is reported to be outcasted because he is said to have killed a cow. The penalty that has been adjudged commensurate with the gravity of the offence is that Tenda should undertake a journey to Amarkantak, the sacred source of Narmada. Commenting on the non-vegetarian diet of the aboriginal population of Mandla, the District Gazette observes that "Practically the whole range of flesh food from the tiger to the mouse is acceptable to the aboriginal plate, though he draws the line at two or three species of snake, the ordinary cock and a kind of sparrow known as *ghareli chidia*. The observation of the Gazetteer is not a correct representation of the position now. All sections of the village aboriginal population object to eating the meat of tiger and monkey on religious grounds. Meat of dog, horse and donkey is also forbidden, on grounds which were not disclosed. Again, there is no restriction on the eating of the ordinary cock, as observed by the Gazetteer. Among other birds the flesh of crow and parrot was reported to be not acceptable to the people on grounds of religion. As regards crow, the information furnished at Amwar at this enquiry runs counter to Elwin's observation about the Baigas that their children eat crows as "the flesh has a good effect on the eyes, for the crow is very sharpsighted[53]". Baigas of Amwar appeared to be quite fond of the flesh of the rat, and resemble in that respect the Marias of south-Bastar. The latter are frantic with joy at the sight of a rat and are known to have cut down trees on which they have seen a rat climbing.

Fish are also eaten by all sections of the people in the village. As observed by the District Gazetteer of Mandla, people regard the fish meat as good for eyes[54]. Elwin also observes that the Baigas believe fish to be good for the eyes[55].

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52. Russell, R.V., Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Seoni District, 1907; p. 66.
53. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939;p. 52.
54. Rudman, F.R.R., Central Provines—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. I, 1912; p. 98.
55. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 51.

The vegetarian family referred to earlier is that of Ratu Baiga who is the step-son of Tenda. He puts on the sacred thread in the manner of the *sawarna* Hindus, and abjures all kinds of flesh and alcohol.

Food on festive occasions:

The dull, monotonous routine of the food of people of Amwar is broken occasionally by festivals. At time of festivals, all castes prepare some special dishes. Generally popular dishes on festive occasions are the *sohanri* (sweet *puris*) and *pudi.*

Drinks—alcoholism:

Distilled from the corolla of the *mahua,* liquor occupies an important place in the life of the communities living at Amwar. It is, of course, a welcome stimulant; but more than that, it is an important item in their ritual observances—social or religious. Thus, acceptance of liquor offered from the boy's side by the parents of the girl indicates the formalisation of *sagai* in Baiga, Gond, Agaria, Dhoba and Ahir. The person who is readmitted into the caste-fold after the commission of some socially punishable offence has to stand liquor to the caste; liquor is sprinkled on the seed at the well-known *bidri* rites. Liquor is regarded as a sacred thing. People drink liquor in company for the reason that then they can afford to buy it in a sealed bottle. The liquor in a sealed bottle is said to be better than the open liquor sold in smaller quantities. It is drunk in leaf-cups. which are made of *sarai* leaves. Generally, in company, the first person to be served with liquor is the *mukaddam* or *patel* of the village. Before drinking the liquor, it is customary to offer obeisance to mother earth by dropping a few drops of liquor on the ground. Also before kissing the leaf-cup for drinking liquor, a person wishes *ram ram* to all persons present at the moment. The liquor is served in three or four rounds.

People of Amwar purchase their liquor from the shop at Mawai, which is held on contract by a panika of Mawai. Two varieties of liquor are sold at this shop. The lighter liquor is known as *Rasi* and is sold at Rs. 1.25 per bottle, while the liquor of greater strength, known as *Dubara* is sold at Rs. 1.75 per bottle. The people of Amwar are too poor to be able to purchase liquor off and on. Though people did not admit that they were distilling any liquor in the village, there is reason to believe that there is considerable illicit distillation going on in the village. Looking to the pivotal position liquor enjoys in the society of the village, and to their penurious condition, one should not start looking askance merely at the mention of the word illicit-because the rural society of Amwar does not see anything bad in it.

Non-alcoholism:

The Mohammadan household in the village is an abstainer. The abstention from drink is reported to be on religious grounds. The only other case of non-alcoholism in the village is that of Ratu Baiga, which has already been referred to earlier.

Other drinks:

Tea is taken by made members only of the households of Amoli Gond, Sardu Gond and Sonaooram Gond. No other household in the village is reported to be taking tea regularly in the morning. Tea-taking is an urban attribute, and one can easily understand the households of Sonaooram and Sardu Gonds taking tea. The third household has not been exposed to any influence, and in its case, the explanation for tea-taking is probably to be found in its higher economic status. The household of Sonaooram Gond also belongs to a higher stratum in the village economy. There is thus evidence in the village of the habit of tea-taking going with a higher economic status, apart from the amenability of the household to urban impacts. Another thing which would appear significant is that the women have not yet started taking tea. This may be seen in conjunction with the absence of any urbanisation amongst the women in the matter of dress also.

No drink other than tea is common in the village. Even milk, which is produced in many households in the village is not taken.

Smoking:

Two invariable companions of the people in the village-particularly the Baigas, are the *chongi*—a country biri or cigarette spun from the *sarai* leaves and the *pissori* or pouch for keeping tobacco. The *chongi* can often be seen stuck up in the turban, or ear of a person. Though Agarias, Gonds, Ahirs and the Dhobas also somke *chongi,* it is a speciality of the Baiga, who would start feeling fidgety or unsure if they go without a puff for more than half-an-hour. The tobacco which is used in the *chongi* is grown by the people locally, in the back-gardens attached to their houses,. Two varieties of tobacco are thus grown. The *edmal* tobacco has got a longer leaf while the *ghera* tobacco has a broad leaf. A mixture of both these varieties is smoked in the *chongi.*

The clay-pipe or *chilam* which is very common in the country-side of the non-tribal districts is also smoked in Amwar. Here, however, it is not so common.

Ganja or opium-smoking is not reported in the village.

Language:

The language spoken by the Baigas and other people of Amwar is a form of Hindi, very much akin to its Chhattisgarh dialect. The investigator whose mother tongue was Chhattisgarhi was quite at home while speaking to the people in their language. The close affinity of the language of the Baigas with Chhattisgarhi has been adduced as evidence in support of the fact that they have migrated to their present habitation from the Chhattisgarh plains.

Plate VI



Bhagwan Baiga
enjoing his leaf-pipe

Plate VII



A Baiga Woman (A Sketch)

Plate VIII



A Baiga Couple (A Sketch)

Plate IX



Plate X



A Gond Woman Showing Ornaments of the Neck

Plate XI



Gond Housewife in her kitchen

Plate XII



Family of Baisakhu Ahir



Bakhti Agaria



Mother and child (Gond)

Plate XIII



Bakti Agaria and his wife



Sonauram's children



Baiga Children



Bhursu Baiga—The Village Guniya

Plate XV



Ramhai Dhoba going to the Patwari

Plate XVI

Amoli Gond's house

Plate XVII



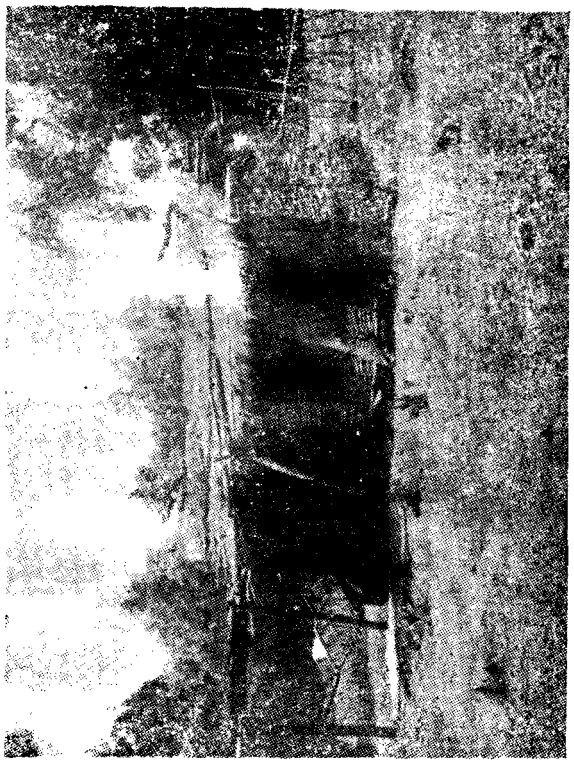
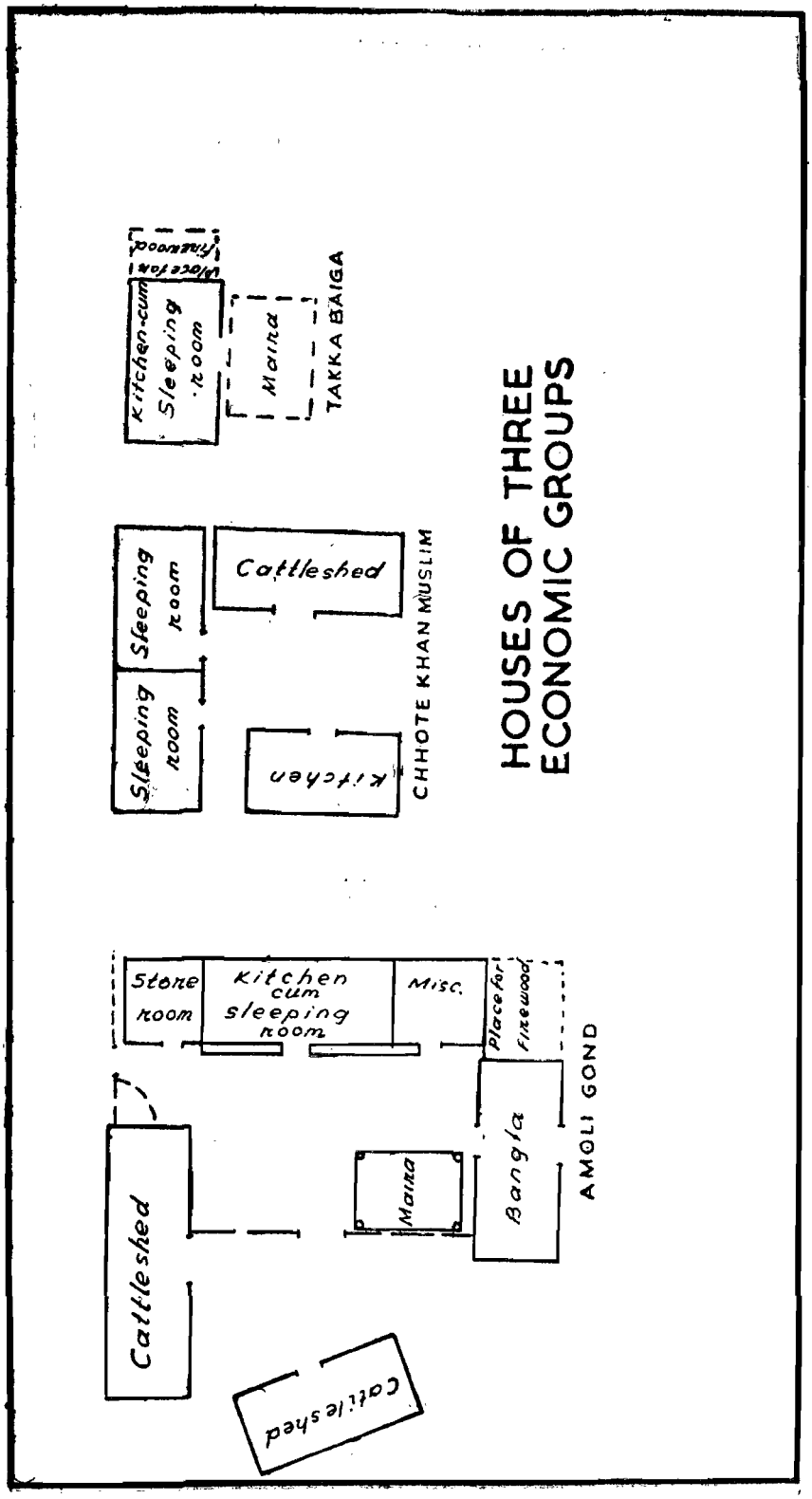




Plate XVIII



Houses of Three Economic Groups

Plate XIX



Baiga Youth with a Khumri

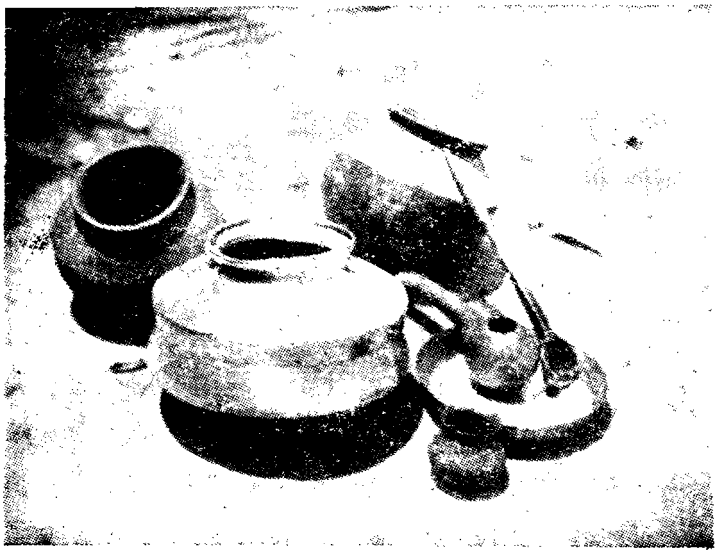


Household utensils of Baiga

Plate XX



Baiga Bamboo Containers



Brass and earthen utensils

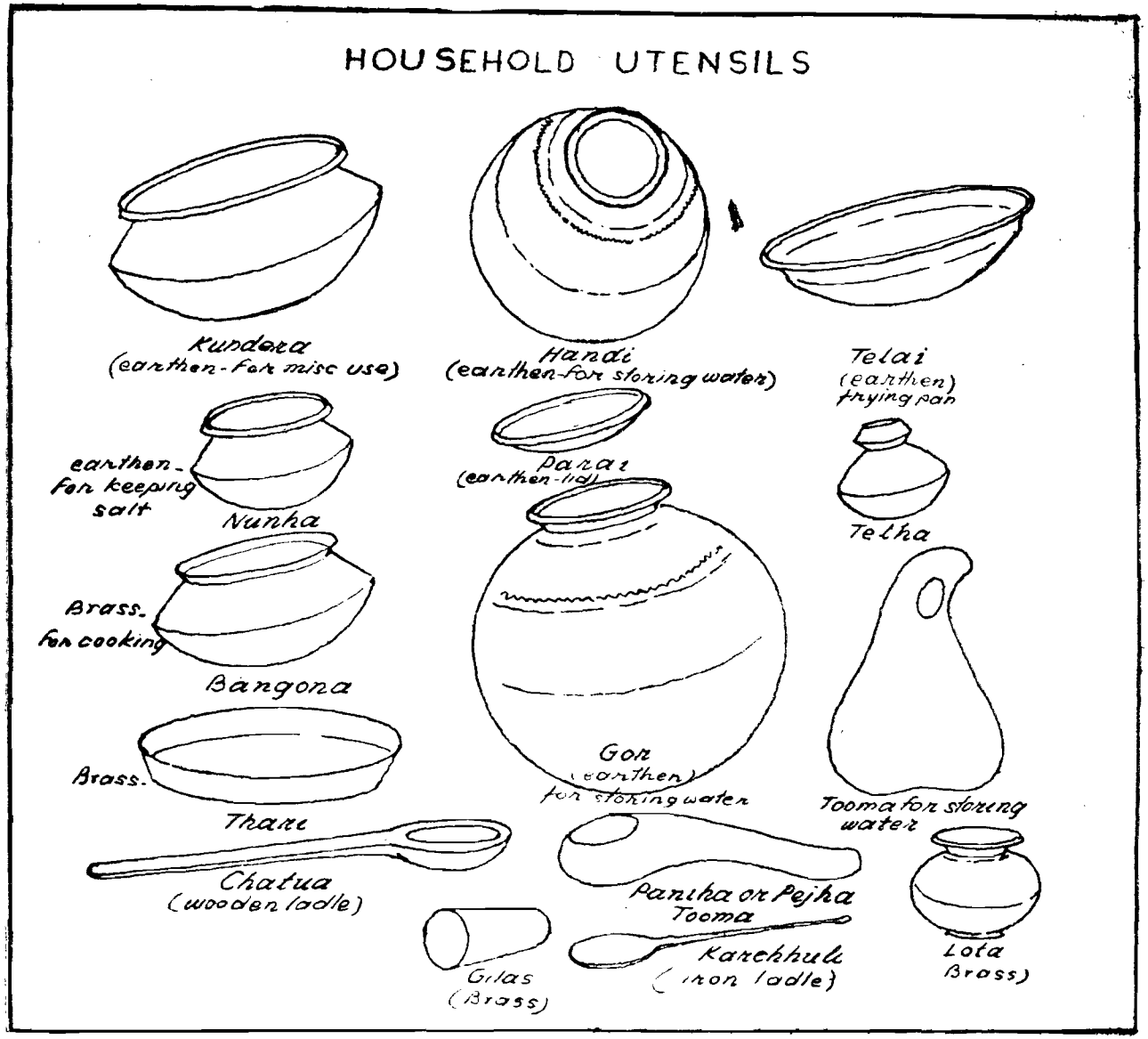
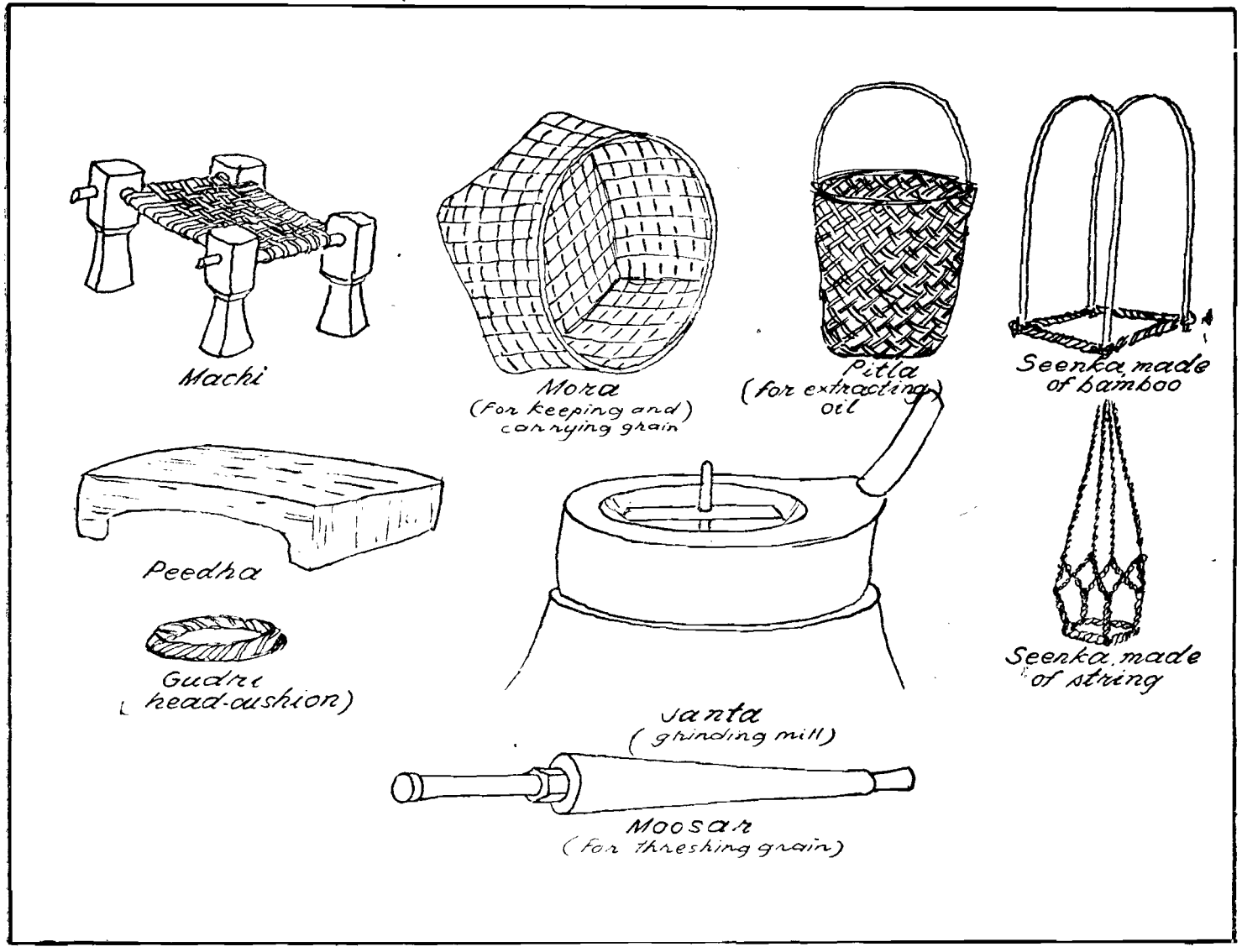

HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS
Kundera
(earthen - for misc use)
Handi
(earthen-for storing water)
Telai
(earthen)
frying pan
earthen -
for keeping
salt
Nunha
Parai
(earthen-lid)
Telha
Brass.
for cooking
Bangona
Gor
(earthen)
for storing water
Tooma for storing
water
Brass.
Thari
Chatua
(wooden ladle)
Paniha or Pejha
Tooma
Karchhuli
(iron ladle)
Lota
Brass)
Glas
(Brass)

Plate XXI



House hold articles

Plate XXIII

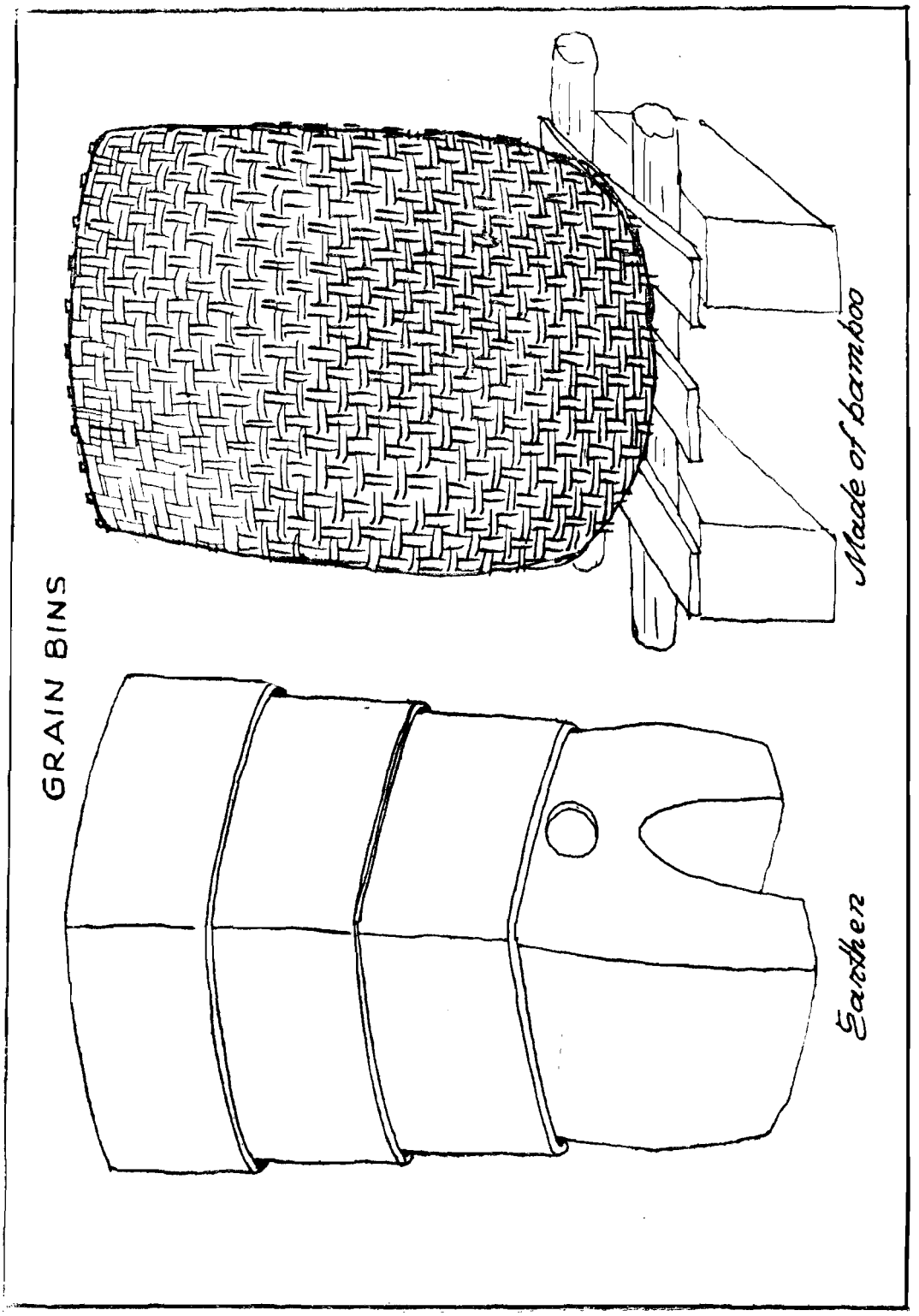


Plate XXIV

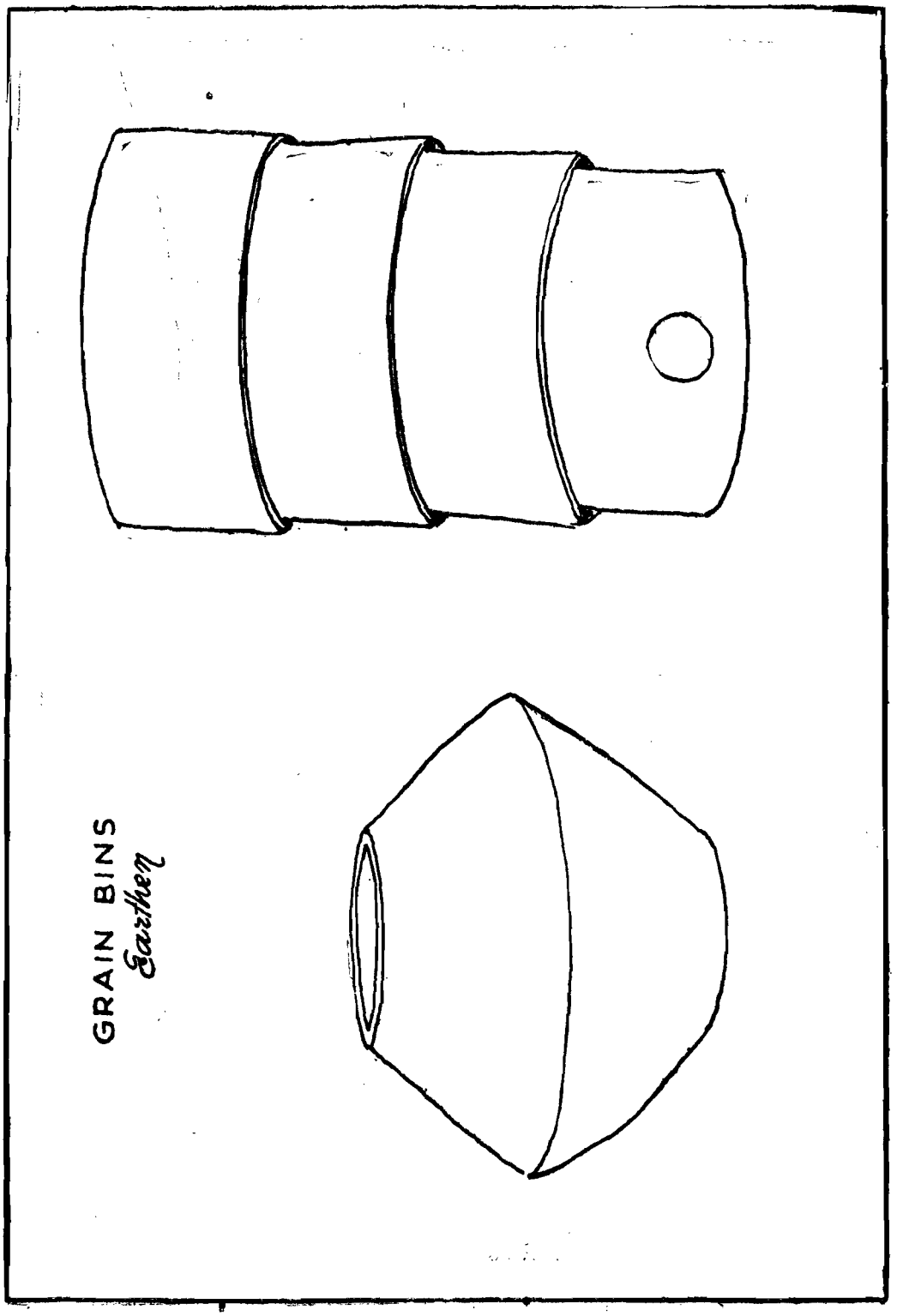
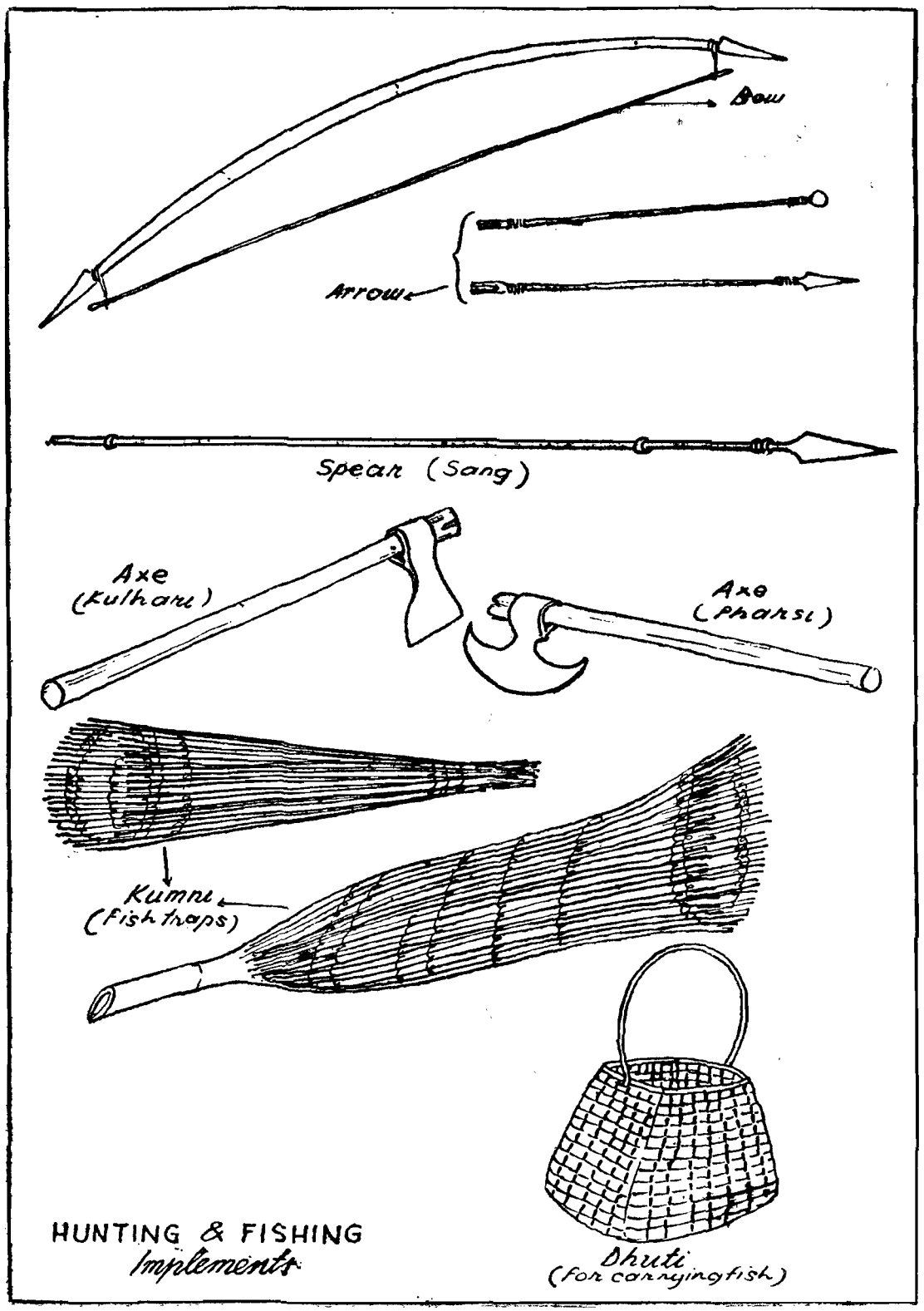
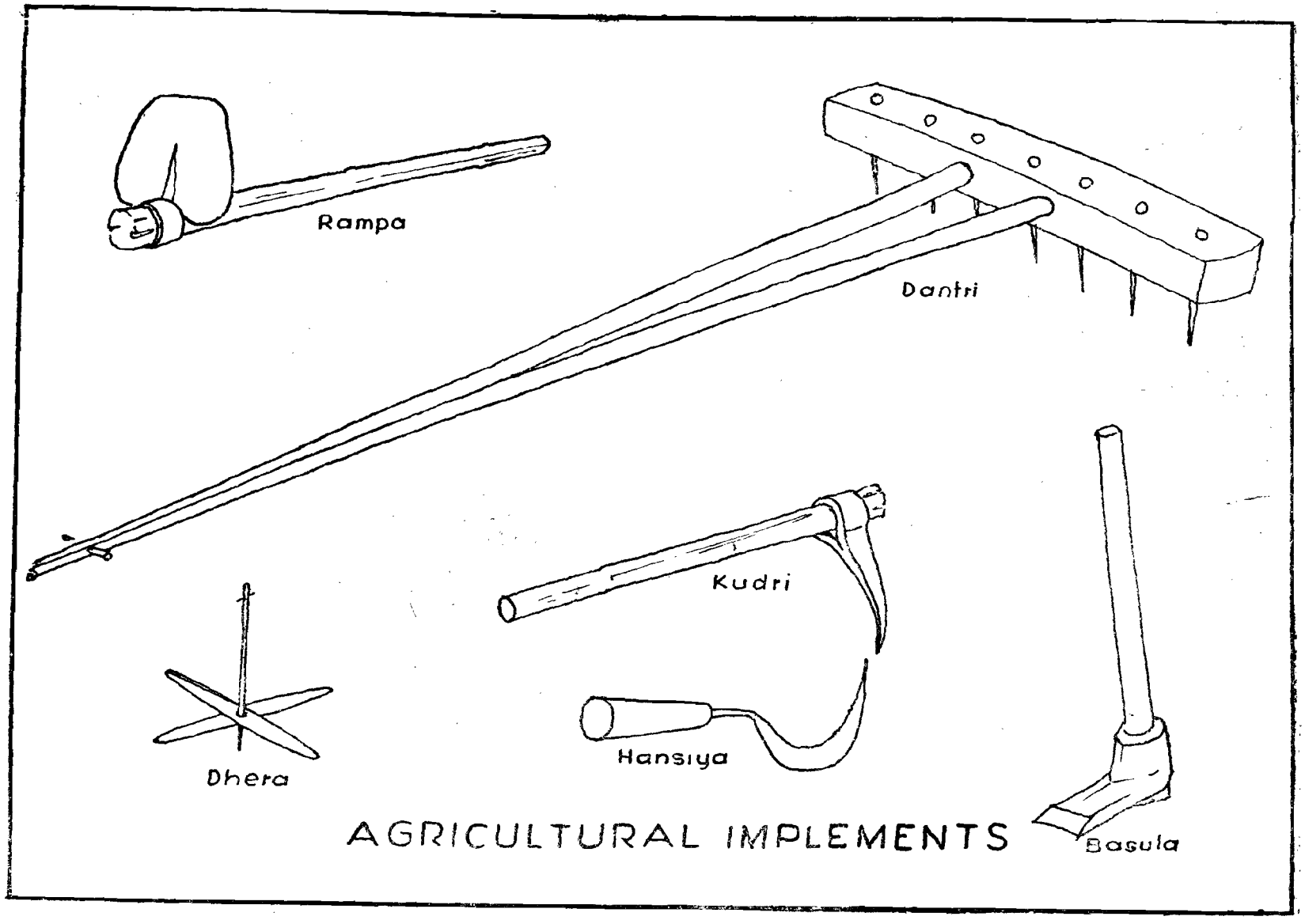


Plate XXV


Bow
Arrow
Spear (Sang)
Axe (Kulhari)
Axe (Pharsi)
Kumni (Fish traps)
Dhuti (for carrying fish)
HUNTING & FISHING
Implements



AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS

Plate XXVI



Dupti Baiga



Family of Amoli Gond

Plate XXVII



A Gond Couple—Nanhu & his wife

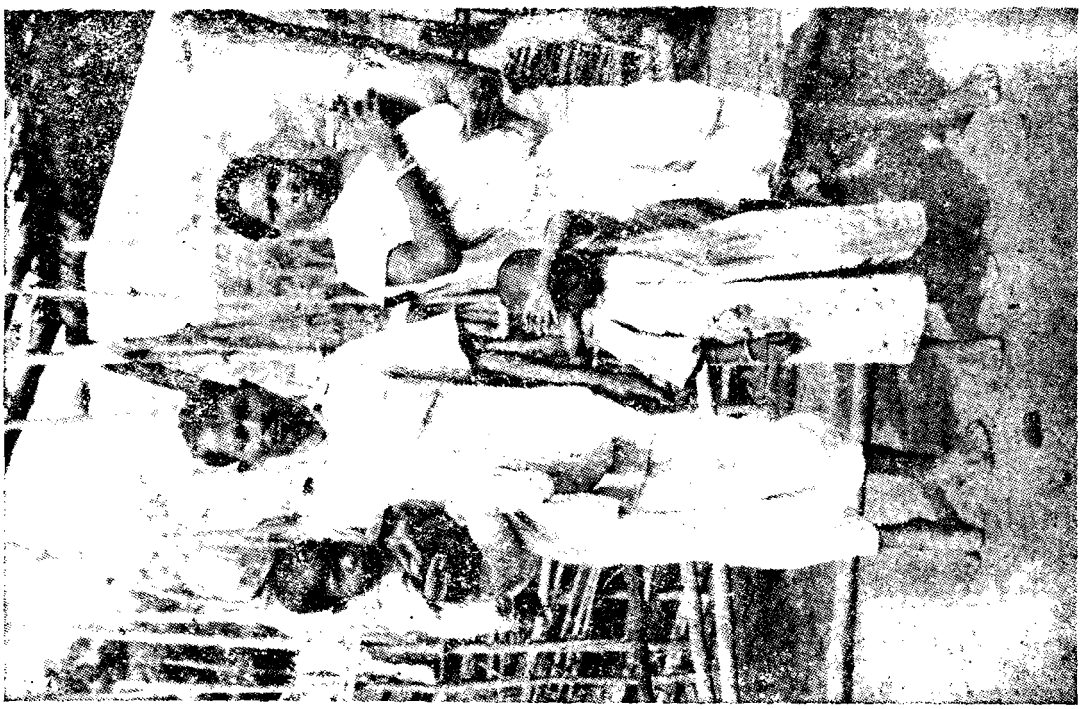


Netu Baiga displaying his hair

Plate XXIX



Dhan Singh Gond with his younger wife



Sardu Gond with his wife & children



Mother and child



Gond brother and sister with their Baiga friend in the middle



Anklets—Baiga ornaments



Agaria old woman displaying ornaments

Plate XXXII

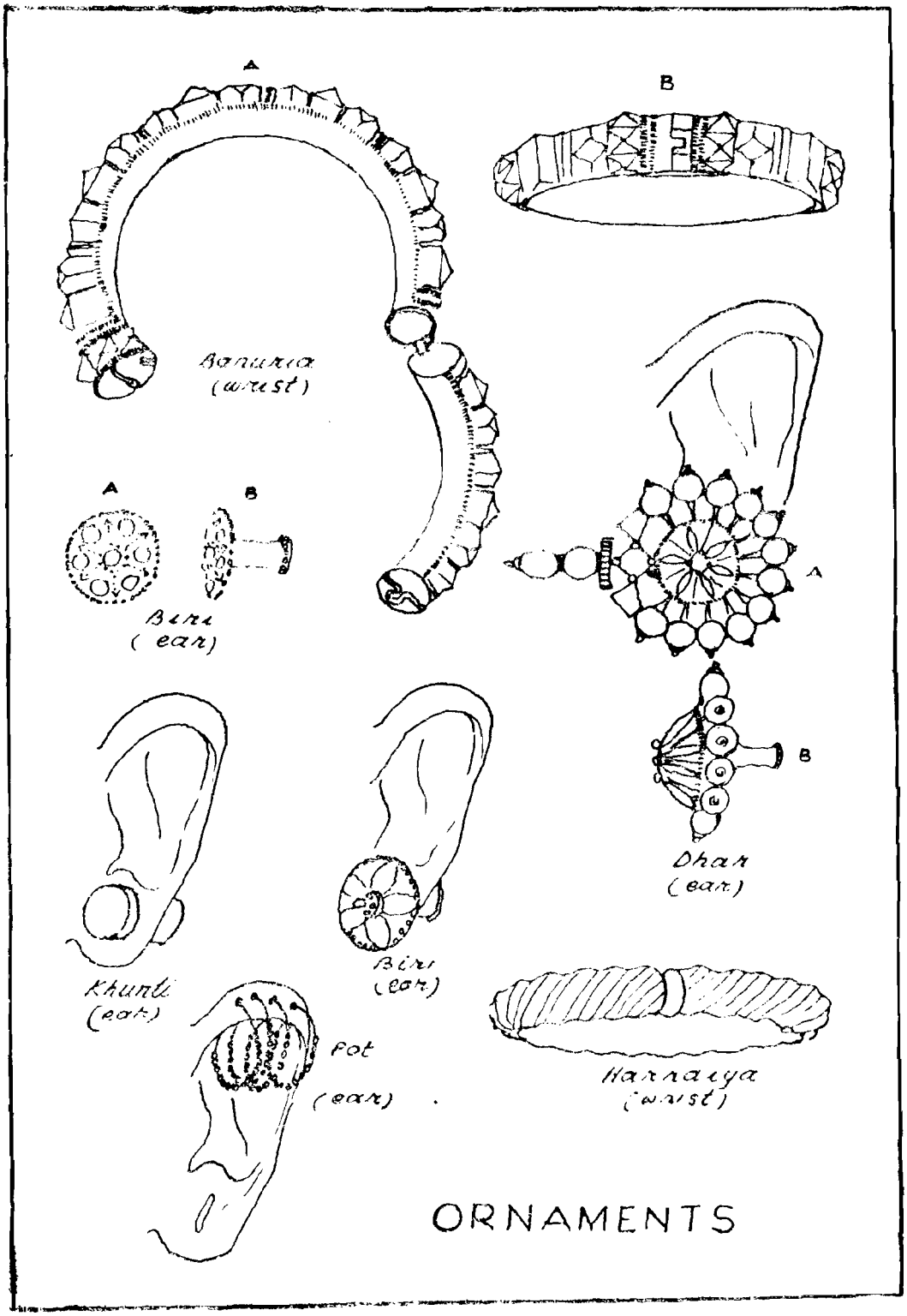
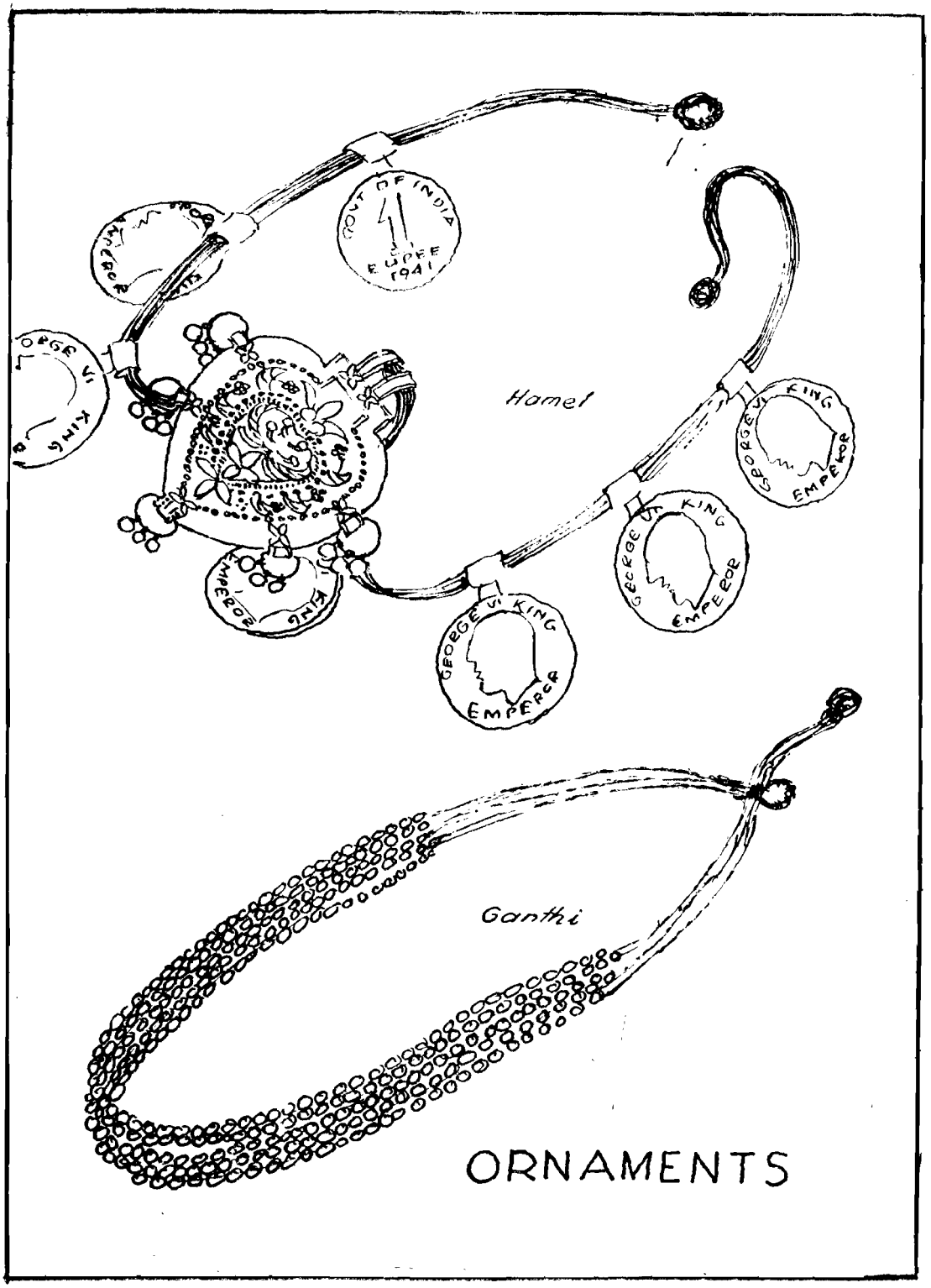

A
B
Banuria
(wrist)
A
B
Biri
(ear)
A
B
Dhar
(ear)
Khuti
(ear)
Biri
(ear)
Pot
(ear)
Harnaiya
(wrist)
ORNAMENTS

Plate XXXIII



ORNAMENTS

Plate XXXIV

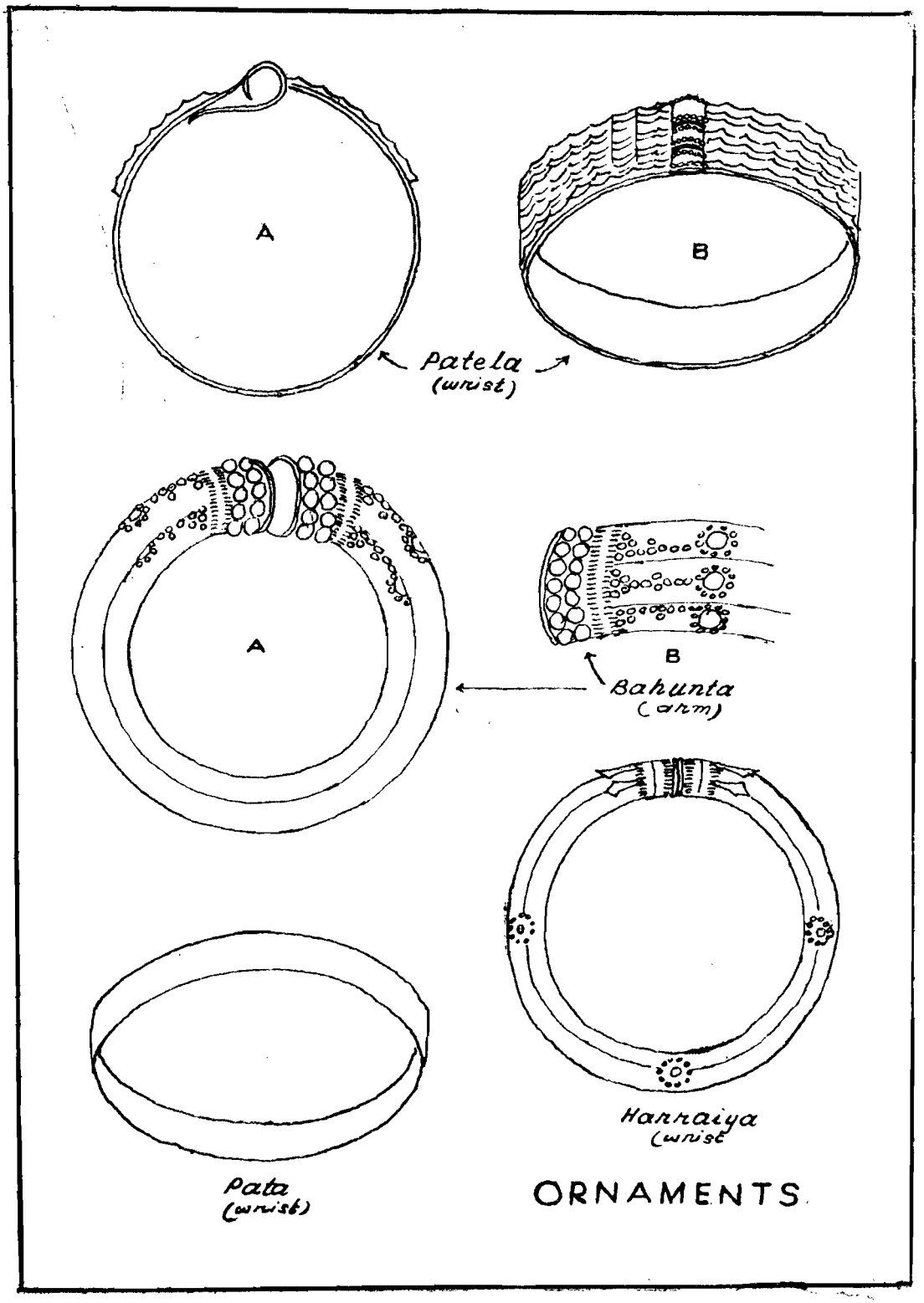
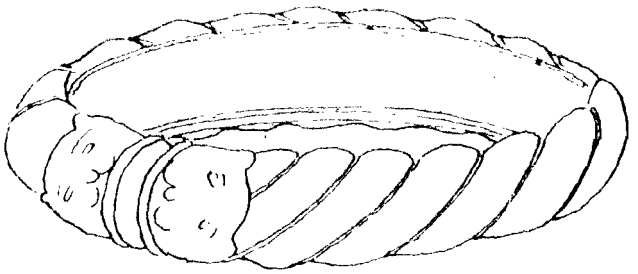
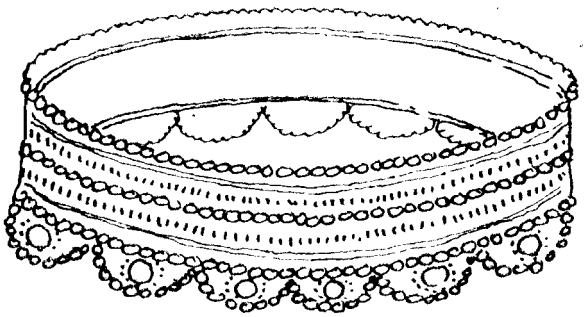

A
B
Patela
(wrist)
A
B
Bahunta
(arm)
Pata
(wrist)
Harraiya
(wrist)
ORNAMENTS

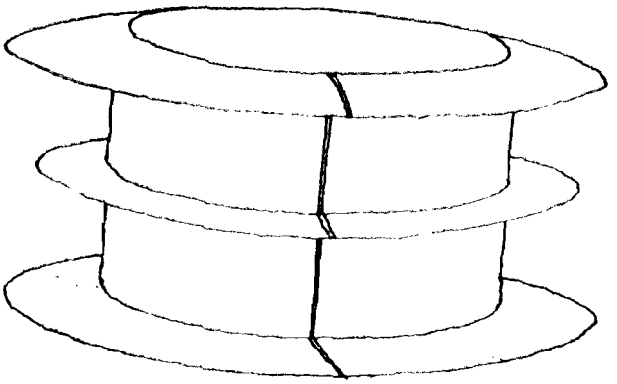
Plate XXXV



Baghmuka Chura
(wrist)



Pairi
(ankle)



Chura
(ankle)

ORNAMENTS

Plate XXXVI

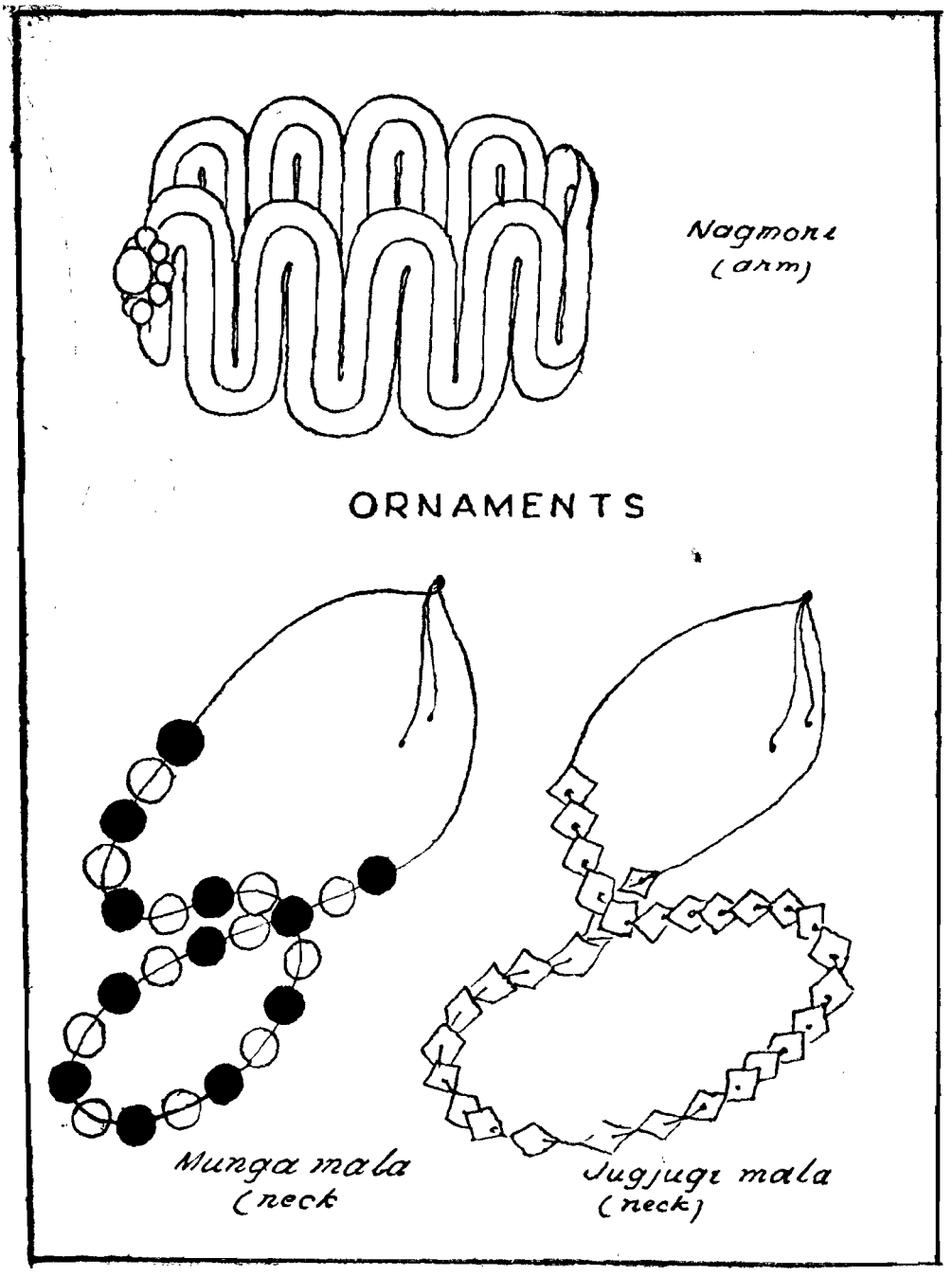
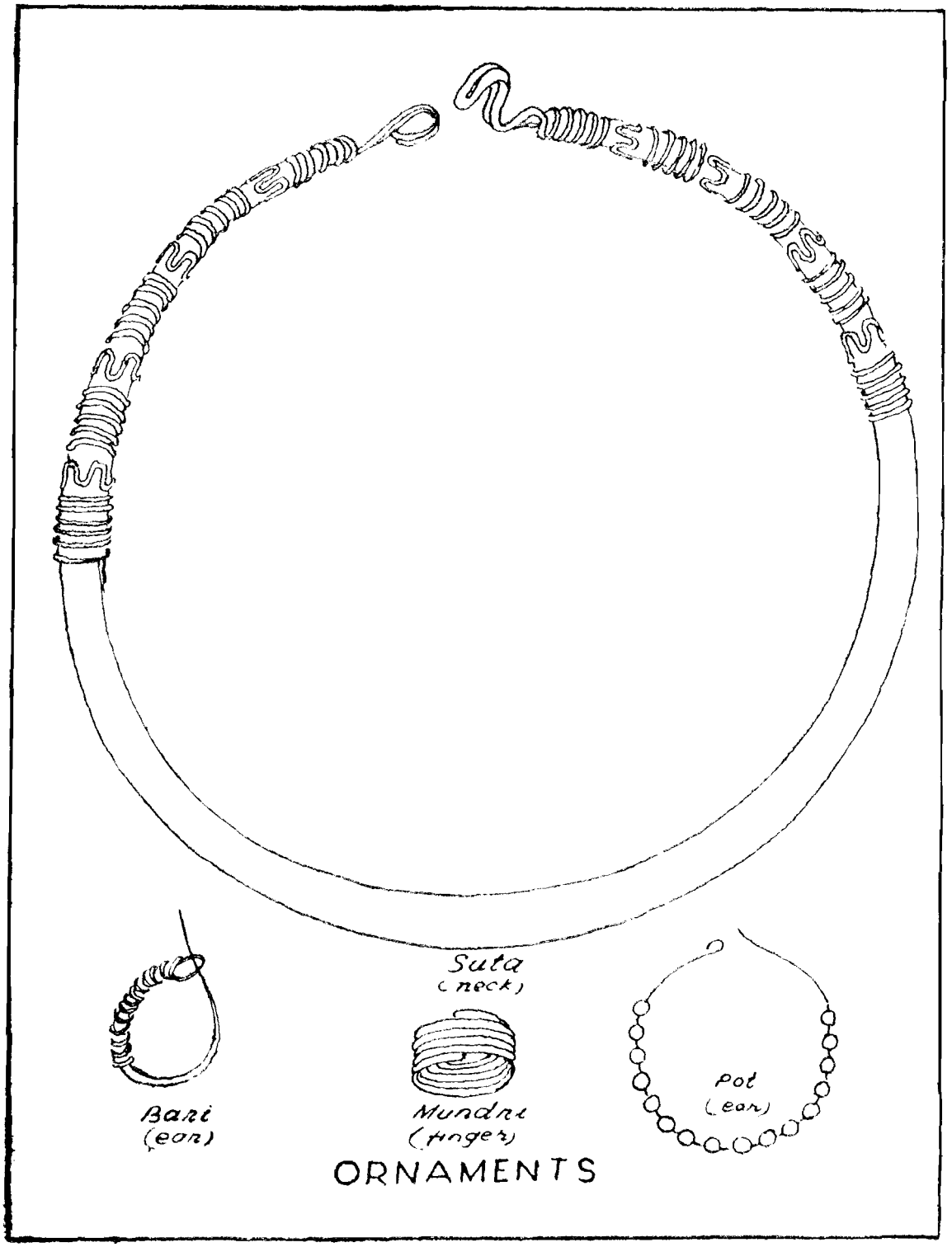


Plate XXXVII





A Gond woman showing tattoo marks on the arm



A Gond woman showing tattoo marks on hand

Plate XXXIX



A Baiga young girl showing tattoo marks on forehead and neck

Plate XL



A Gond woman showing tattoo marks on the arm



A Gond woman showing tattoo mark on the back



A Gond woman showing tattoo mark on the back and arm

Plate XLI

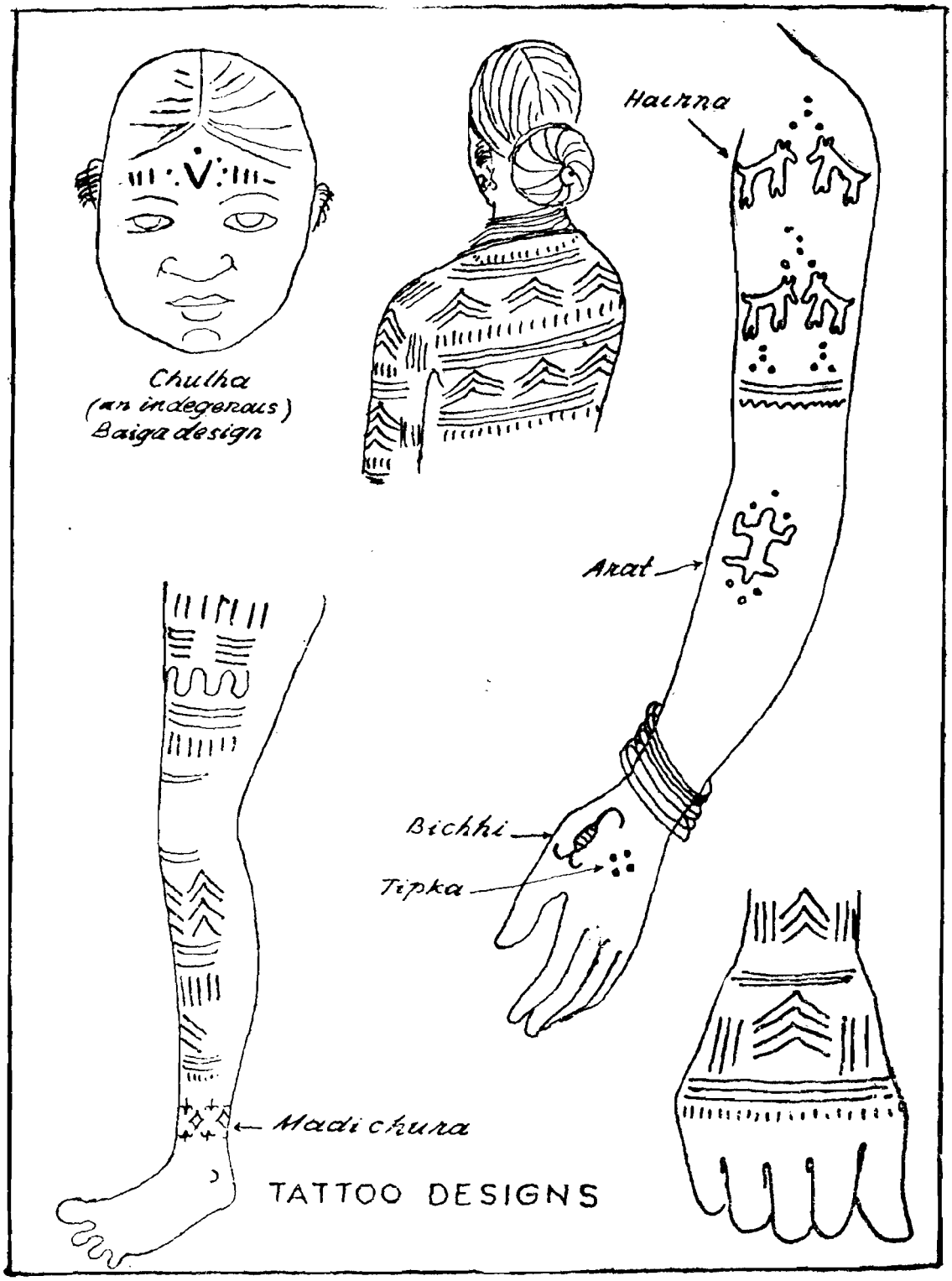
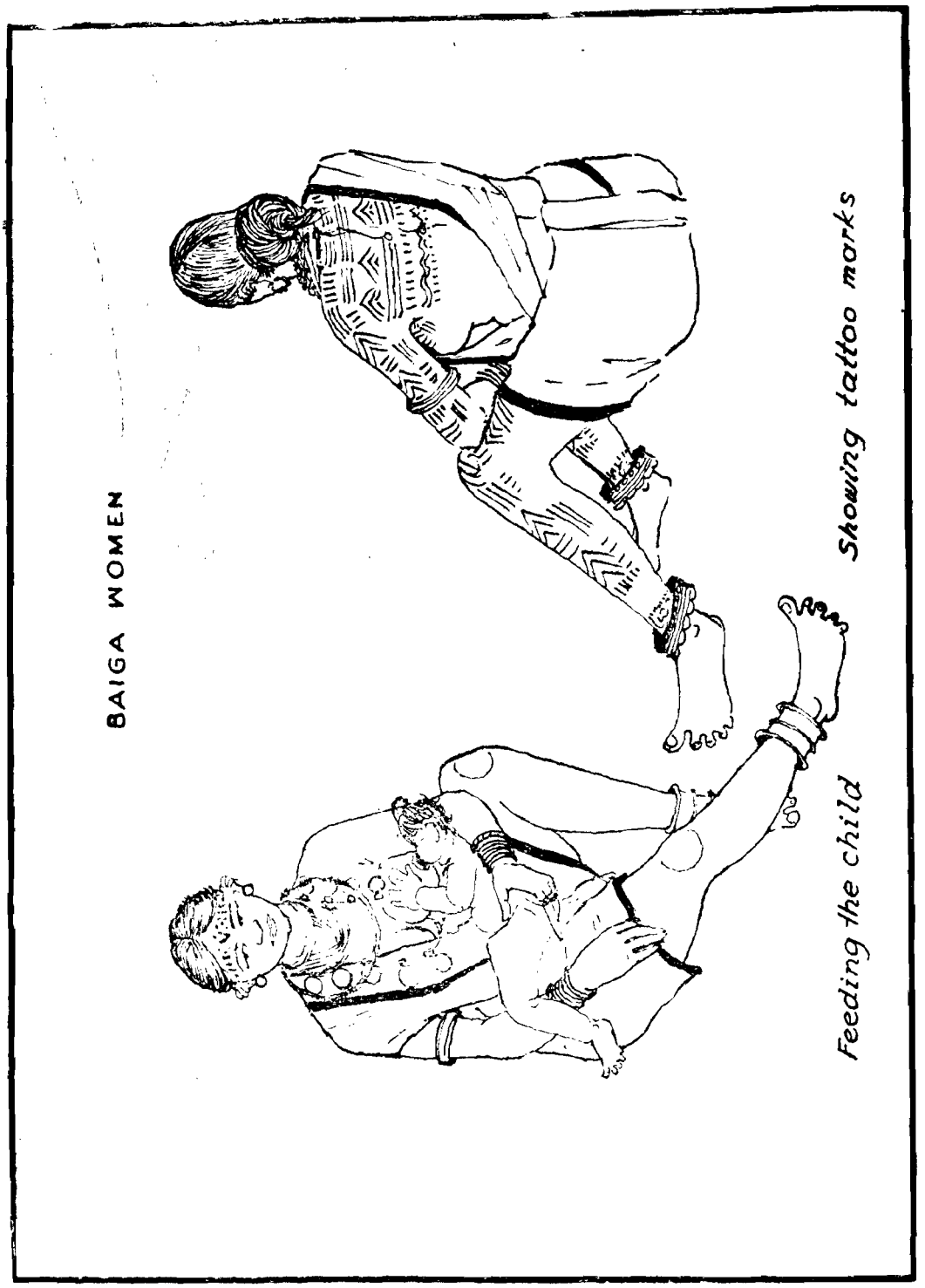

Chulha
(an indegenous)
Baiga design
Haurna
Arat
Bichhi
Tipka
Madichura
TATTOO DESIGNS

Plate XLII



CHAPTER III

RITUALS CONNECTED WITH THE CRISES OF LIFE

As observed by Majumdar in his 'Caste and Communication in an Indian Village', religion and rituals play an important part at every stage of an individual's life. Adumbrating this point further Majumdar observes, "From the cradle to the cremation ground, and for a period even after the body has been cremated, life for the villagers is a round of rituals and ceremonies".[1] This observation was made by Majumdar years ago in connection with Mohana, a suburban village lying in the shadow of metropolitan Lucknow. The pages, about to follow, would, however demonstrate how true it is even in the context of village Amwar today. There is nothing very surprising about this. It only testifies to the much spoken of 'unity in diversity' typefying this country of ours, which has very aptly been described as a melting pot of races, languages, cultures and religious'. In this Chapter, it is proposed to follow an individual right from the moment he is brought forth on to the wordly stage,following the course of his life's journey from the cradle, though the major crises or turning points in it, to the grave, where all mundane journeys ultimately end. The ceremonies or observances connected with the major life cycle rituals will be described separately for each community living in the village, clearly bringing out the castewise peculiarities or points of departure in the details of the ceremonies. Let us begin our account with the "crisis" which comes first in chronological sequence-the birth.

Customs at birth :

People of the village appeared to be conversant with the biological basis of conception, but they did not for that matter underwrite the effect of destiny in that respect. Howsoever one might try, said one old man of the village, 'no children will be born if God willed otherwise'. Sterility in women is not regarded as a virtue, and if magical means to remove the sterile curse prove of no avail, a person is justified in marrying another wife for begetting progeny. Pregnancy is detected by the stoppage of menstruation for two consecutive months. No caste in the village is reported to be celebrating the first detection of pregnancy by observing rites like *god bharna* (filling the lap). The pregnant woman is not subjected to any restrictions in diet, nor is any special type of food prescribed for her. She eats the same food, as other members of the household do.

In fact, one should hardly expect the poor people of Amwar to bestow much care on the expectant mother. The pregnant woman is not relieved of the chores of household till a very advanced stage of pregnancy, almost right upto the labour day.

Taboos on pregnant women :

The whole village observes certain taboos on women who are quick with life. One such taboo is that she should not cross the rope with which a mare is tethered. The accompanying belief was reported to be that such an act might increase the period of gestation to twelve months. There are, however, no horses in the village, and the people may derive whatever comfort they can from the thought that their women are not exposed to this risk. Another universally prevalent belief in the village is reported to be a prohibition on her to work with the needle. Breach of this taboo is associated with the possibility of certain injurious effects on the child in the embryo. It is appropriate to remark at this stage that *similar restrictions on expectant mothers are to be met with in other parts of the district and the State among other sections of the society. Thus in the Kols and Gonds of village Jaitpuri in Jabalpur tahsil and indeed in other castes also in that region, it is taboo for a woman with child to see the eclipse of a moon, or to cut areca nut, while an eclipse is lasting.[2] Another curious belief is that the pregnant woman must not be permitted to sleep on a sack; wilful breach of this taboo results in the child suffering from small pox. Elwin has referred to two of the taboos described above, in particular context of the Baigas. They are however, observed generally and not by Baigas alone.

Delivery takes place in the husband's house. It was not possible to ascertain whether this fact has anything to do with the idea of paternity of the child. The delivery takes place in the house itself, and the people laughed with amusement when told that they might send their women to the hospital for delivery. As it is, no arrangements exist at the Mawai hospital for attending to confinement cases, and, therefore, the suggestion that Amwar women should have the facility of hospitalization is only of theoretical interest. It is little wonder that people laugh-

1. Majumdar D.N., Caste and Communication in an Indian Village, 1958; p. 219.

*Elwin on page 224 of 'The Baiga' observes that the favourite *Kanihakanda* is forbidden to a pregnant woman for fear of causing abortion.

2. Tiwari, G.N., Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 8 Jaitpuri, 1965; p. 23.

ed over the idea. The services of a trained *dai* are also not available at Amwar. In the Gonds and Baigas, the cases of child-birth are attended to by women of the caste; while the Ahirs and Agarias and the Mohammadan household has to call the *suin,* as the woman who conducts the delivery is called in the village, from Mawai. She is a woman of the Sais or Panika caste. All castes in the village take omens to decide whether the delivery will be smooth or difficult. For this purpaose, the *suin* or her assistant dips hand in oil and presses the oil-soaked hand on the wall. If all the fingures leave an equal imprint on the wall, it is taken to be an indication of smooth-sailing. Another method of divination prevalent in the village is to put a little oil between the mother's breasts. The path taken by the oil is then taken as an indication of the labour.

Custom among the Baigas:

The woman in travail is shut in a room of the house. Washing of the floor of the room by cowdung is not necessary. She is accompanied in the room by an old woman of the caste who normally attends to the cases of maternity, and one or two other women to assist her. No male, not even the husband of the pregnant woman is admitted in the room of delivery. He, however, waits outside the house, ready for assistance in case the delivery is not smooth by calling Bhursu Guniya. The latter in difficult cases takes recourse to certain magical practices, which were not disclosed at this enquiry.

It is, however, reported that Baiga women have easy deliveries and employment of the *gunia* at the birth is rare. However, no specific case in which the assistance of a *guniya* was requisitioned was reported to us. After the birth has taken place, the navel-cord or *bondri* is cut by means of a sharp piece of split-bamboo by the mother herself, or if the *samdhin* of the household be present at the occasion, by her. The navel-cord and the placenta discharged by the mother are disposed of by burying into a pit dug in the room itself. The ground where the pit is dug is carefully made level by plastering it with earth and a lamp is kept burning over it for about five days. There is a rustic belief behind this practice; according to Ramhai Dhoba, these precautions are taken because if the navel-cord comes in the hand of a sterile woman, she can transfer the fertility of the mother to herself by eating the navel-cord in the form of a pill. This practice regarding the disposal of the placenta and the navel-cord appears to be followed in many other regions of the country. It was found to be prevalent amongst all the castes of village Jaitpuri in Jabalpur tahsil. It is mentioned by Russell and Hiralal, and by Crooke, by the latter in connection with the Kols of Uttar Pradesh. Russell has also described the belief accompanying this practice in these words.

"It is believed that if a barren woman can get hold of the first hair of another woman's child or its naval-cord, she can transfer the mother's fertility to herself. So they (the Gonds) dispose of these articles very carefully."

After birth, the mother and child are bathed with hot water treated with barks of some tree. The mother is given water boiled with a powder of *sonth* (" सोंठ "), *peepar* (" पीपर "), *ajwain* (अजवाइन) *karat* and ("कराट") to drink after about five to six hours. She is not given anything else on the first day. After that, according to Kangli Baiga, she is given hot (तति) food consisting of rice, *pej* and hot water for five or six days. She starts feeding the child from the first day. If the child refuses to suckle the mother's breast, it is believed that he was a leader of the caste in his previous life, and the refusal is out of pride. Also when the child is born, the *guniya* examines it critically with a view to connect it with some ancestor of the family.

The movements of the mother are restricted to the delivery room for the first five days, or till the navel-cord has dropped off by the natural process of mummification. During these five days, the mother and the new born are considered particularly susceptible to the evil influence of witches and spirits, and precautions are taken to ward off these evil effects. One such precaution consists of tying a *hansia* (sickle), towards the head portion of the mother's bed. Another precaution prevailing in the village is to tie the *shrubs* of *chhoti beri* (smaller species of plum growing wild in shrubs in the wastelands) and *thuha* (a thorny species of cactus) to the door of the room. When the stump of the umbilical cord drops it is disposed of by being thrown on the *ghoora*-dung-heap. The belief underlying this obviously queer practice is that the child may grow as quickly as the *ghoora* grows. If children born to a woman have been dying in the past, the child born to her is symbolically thrown on the *ghoora* and then brought back. It is believed that since the woman has already discarded her child, it would not die. A variant of this same custom is to sell the new-born symbolically to another woman

[3] Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 227.

for one *supaful* of paddy or for a few coins. It is believed that since the child does not belong to the mother, it would not die.

Name giving and 'Tonsure of the Head' ceremonies—period of birth pollution

The birth-pollution in Baigas at Amwar lasts for five days according to one informant. According to another, the Baigas also observe the period of pollution for twelve days as in the case of Gonds. However, the latter information appears to be incorrect. On the sixth day, the *suin* bathes the mother and child, and the *pooja* of *Chhati devi* is performed. This is also the day for giving a name to the child and for performing the *mundan* or head-shaving rite. The latter takes place first, the person undertaking the service is the maternal uncle of the new born. The shaving is only symbolic because only a small portion of the head is shaved. A bottle of liquor is presented to the maternal uncle in lieu of the service performed by him. Thereafter, the head of the household, or some other aged man from those present gives a suitable name to the boy after consulting all those present. This name may be after the day on which or the month in which the child is born. Examples are Aghnu-(born in the month of *Agahan,* Chaitu (month of *Chait*). Baisakhu (month of *Baisakhi*), Jethu (month of *Jeth*); or Itwari (from Itwar or Sunday), Mangal (from Mangal or Tuesday), Sukbaria (from Sukrawar on Friday). Some times a child is given an inauspicious name in order to ward him off from the particular harm or injury connoted by the name i.e. Tenda meaning hunch-back is the name given to the village Patel possibly under the hope that he might not grow to be a hunchback, or *lula* meaning without hands expresses the wish that both the hands of the child might remain intact, or Bhobha, a name meaning mute is given to ward off its owner against loss of speech. Similar examples are Bhaira (deaf), Kangli (Poor), Garbhi, (pride), Bhaglu (one who runs away with another man's wife), Jhitu (thin), Bhukan (hungry). Of special interest is the name Lamu or Lamia given to a child born soon after a first delivery that its mother did not have time for menstruation. Ramhai Dhoba of Amwar is a Lamu, and he always puts on a *kada* of iron in one of his hands to protect him from an attack of lightning, for all in the village subscribe to the belief that a 'Lamu' child is very susceptible to death by lightning. Lamia wife of a Baiga is yet another case of a child of this type. Though the period of pollution lasts for the first five days only, during which period no one from outside the house may eat in the household, the mother continues to be regarded as unclean for a month for some purposes. She is not allowed to cook during this period, though Kangli Baiga was of the view that she could attend to work outside the house.

Russell and Hiralal have also given the period of pollution in the case of Baigas as one month[4] Stephen[5] Fuchs in his book published as recently as the year 1960 states that the 'Bhumia' allow the mother to begin with the cooking only after forty days, and that too only, if she bears a boy. 'If a girl is born', observes Fuchs 'She is regarded as unclean for two months'. Elwin does not appear to have written anything about this in his 'Baiga'. Form the information available at Amwar, the statements contained in the work of Stephen Fuchs were not corroborated.

No couvade is practised in the Baigas of Amwar at the time of child-birth in the family.

Custom among the Gonds:

The delivery is attended to by a woman of the caste itself, who is helped by one or two other women. The omens taken to judge the nature of the labour are the same as in the case of the Baigas. After the delivery, the umbilical cord is cut by means of a sickle to be supplied by the household. The umbilical cord and the placenta are disposed of in a manner which is exactly similar to the practice of the Baigas, and the accompanying belief also is similar. The mother is not given anything to eat on the day the birth takes place. She and the child are given bath in water which has previously been treated by boiling with the barks of some trees said to possess disinfection properties. After bath, the mother feeds the new-born. In this respect, the custom in Amwar Gonds differs from the custom observed by the Gonds in the Jabalpur Country, where the child is not given any feeding on the first day. After the bath, the mother is served with a hot drink consisting of a concoction of powdered *sonth, ajwain, pipar* and *karat* (the same as in case of Baigas). From the next day, till the naval-cord drops off in the natural course of mummification, i.e. for about five days, the mother is given hot food consisting of rice, and *Kodai pej* to eat. The stump of the naval-cord is disposed of by throwing on the dung-heap as in case of the Baigas.

Birth pollution lasts for twelve days when other persons are prohibited from eating at the household. On the thirteenth day, the mother and child are again bathed, clothes of all persons in the house washed, and the name-giving ceremony is performed. People from the village are invited for the *pooja* of *Chhathi devi* which usually takes place in the evening. The *mundan*

4. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 83..
5. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960, p. 250.
6. Tiwari, G.N., Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh Part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 6, Jaitpuri, 1965; p. 22.

or 'head-shaving' rite is performed first by the maternal uncle of the child, and as in the case of Baigas the rite is only performed in a symbolic manner with only a small portion of the head being shaved. The nails of the mother and the child are clipped by the *suin* of the caste who had conducted the delivery. The invited guests are served with liquor, which signifies the removal of the impurity with which the household was suffering on account of the birth.

Name giving :

The name is given on the thirteenth day by the mother's father or the maternal uncle of the child. There is no difference in the types of names given by the Gonds and the Baigas, and for that matter by any other community in the village except the Muslims.

Customs among the Agarias:

The *suin* of Agarias comes from village Mawai and she is a woman of the Sais or the Panika caste. The umbilical cord is cut by a sickle to be given by the household. The manner of disposal of the umbilical cord and the placenta, and the customs relating to bathing and feeding of the mother and child are analogous to those obtaining in the case of Baigas and Gonds. The Agarias observe the ceremonial impurity only for five days, and on the sixth day, the *pooja* of *Chhathi* is performed.

On this day, the *suin* from Mawai again comes and bathes the mother and child in warm water, pares off their nails. The clothes of the household are washed in order to shake off the poullution that pervades the whole house from the day of birth. In the name giving and *mundan* ceremony, which takes place on the same day, people from the village are invited and treated to liquor. Relatives of the household are fed, and the peculiarity of the feast is that male members, have to cook for male relatives while the female relatives are served by the ladies of the household.

Ahirs :

A peculiar custom among the Ahirs is that the father is not allowed to see the new-born till the sixth day, when the worship of *Chhati devi* is performed. The birth pollution, however, continues to last for twelve days as in the case of Gonds, and no one may eat from the household during this period. During the same period the mother is not allowed to stir out of the house. On the twelfth day, the household clothes are washed, the mother and child bathed in warm water, and the mother's feet are decorated with ornamental designs in coloured lines. The people of the village and near relatives from other villages are invited for a drink.

As in the Gonds, the head-shaving ceremony is performed by the maternal uncle of the child on this day, and the elderly members of the household decide upon the name in consultation with the guests present. From the thirteenth day the mother is completely pure and is allowed to attend all household work including cooking and fetching water.

Dhoba:

The Dhoba household in the village does not have any female members. Even then, from the information furnished by Ramhhai Dhoba, it appears that in their community the mother and the entire household is regarded as ceremonially impure as long as the stump of the naval-cord does not drop off. As in Baigas, however, the mother's impurity continues even beyond this period. In fact, she is not allowed to appear in public for one complete month. The *pooja* of *Chhathi* and other rites and ceremonies antecedent to a child-birth take place as in the case of the Baigas or the Gonds.

Mohammadan:

Deliveries in the Mohammadan household of the village are attended by the *suin* of the Sahis caste who comes from village Mawai. The navel-cord and placenta are disposed of in a manner similar to that followed by the other Hindu communities. After the child-birth, the child and its mother are given bath with hot water, treated with barks possessing disinfecting properties.

The mother is served with a thick decoction known as *harira* prepared by boiling *jaggery* and powdered *sonth* in water. This decoction contains many nourishing and delicious ingredients like cashewnuts, *chironji*, *badam* and *ghi*, and is generally given to woman after delivery in all Hindu and non-Hondu castes of many districts of the State. *Chhati* takes place after five days. On this day, *laddu* or sweet balls of jaggery, *ghi*, *sonth*, and other nourishing and delicious ingredients are prepared and presented to female guests of the caste who come from villages Pakhwar and Mawai. The male relatives are not reported to be invited for this function.

Mundan or 'head-shaving' ceremony takes place after five weeks. The head is shaved by the maternal uncle or grand-father of the child as in the case of other communities. Both male and female relatives from the villages mentioned earlier are invited, and a goat is killed in their honour. Name-giving ceremony is performed on this day.

Khatna:

The rite going by the name of *Khatna* or circumcision is peculiar only to the Mohammadan household in the villages. It takes place at the age of five years, in the village only in case of boys. The Nai or Barbar, also a Mohammadan by caste is called from the town of Mandla.

Relatives from Pakhwar and Mawai are invited at the ceremony. The ritual consists in circumcising the loose skin which covers the *glens* of the male organ. After the ceremony, the guests are treated to a feast, the special feature of which is meat of goat, killed in honour of the persons present.

General observations—intercast relations

From the foregoing description, it will be apparent that the customs obtaining in the different communities before, at the time of, and subsequent to the birth of a child are remarkably similar. The only important item of custom where differences prevail is the period of ceremonial impurity. What is to be particularly noticed is the adoption even by the Mohammadan household of such customs as *Chhathi*, manner of disposal of the navel-card and placenta the head-shaving ceremony and the namegiving ceremony. The names given by all communities in the village except the Mohammadan are similar, and have identical peculiarities.

Another significant respect in which communities in the village differ is the attendance at the time of the delivery and thereafter. The Baigas and Gonds do not call *suin*. In fact, in their case, no person not belonging to the community is admitted inside the labour room at the crucial moment. In their case again, no payment has to be made to the woman from the caste who attends to the labour. In the case of all other castes in the village inclusive of the Mohammadan, payment has to be made to the *suin* from Mawai. The payments made to her in the past used to be Rs. 2/- and Rs. 3/-, respectively in the case of male and female births; but now-a-days, a flat sum of Rs. 5/- has to be paid to her. It is significant to note that services of menial castes like the Nai, and the washerman are not available to the people of Amwar. It is doubtful whether they would have availed of them, had they been available. Another significant observation is the absence of the Brahamin priest, a necessary concomitant of the acculturisation of the tribal communities into the caste-structure of the Hindu society.

Child-birth, like any other ritual is an occasion for inter-castes contact in the village. On the *Chhati* day, and on the *mundan* and namegiving day, persons of all castes in the village are invited and served with liquor. The childbirth also gives rise to inter village contact. The *suin* has to come from village Mawai. The name of the child has to be reported to the Kotwar for the village who lives at Mawai. Again relatives of the household living in the other villages are also invited on the sixth and the twelfth day ceremonies.

In the case of the *khatna* ceremony, the Mohammadan household has to make a payment to the Nai from Mandla which is either Rs. 3, Rs. 5, or Rs. 7, depending on the paying capacity of the household at the moment. The journey expenses of the Nai are of course paid by the household.

Coming of age in the village:

The tribal and non-tribal communities in Amwar do not belong to the twice-born or द्विज class, and, therefore, are not entitled to put on a sacred thread. Only Ratu Baiga in the village has put on what looks like the sacred thread. The coming of age of boys and girls in the village is not reported to be attended by any ritual observances. Girls are supposed to become mature or of the age of understanding when they start menstruating. In Baigas, as already stated at this age they start taking the *khandela*, and are eligible for marriage. The girls apparently pick up their knowledge of menstruation and sex from observations in their family and neighbourhood. According to Russell and Hiralal, in the Gonds of certain parts of Mandla, the first attainment of puberty by a girl is considered to be an important occasion, and is accompanied by certain practices which are attended to induce fertility in the girls[7]. The Gonds of Amwar apparently do not observe these practices.

Menstrual taboos:

The taboos on women in menstruation are more or less on the same pattern as in the case of the non-tribal castes in the rural areas of the district.

They do not have any separate menstruation huts as we find in the case of Murias and Madias of certain parts of Bastar and the Durg districts. The usual taboos are that the woman is forbidden to fetch water, or touch the earthen or metal pots containing water. She must not cook, not even enter the kitchen. She must not enter the cowshed and the store-room. She is not permitted to wash the floor of the house with cowdung. She must not go to the place of gods or *deothana* nor must she touch the grain-bins. Sexual intercourse is, of course, prohibited during the period. In short, she is regarded as untouchable, and normally remains confined to a corner of the house. She can only eat in a brass utensil, and as long as her period lasts, she must eat from the

7. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and of the Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III 1916, p. 183.

same utensil. Others can not touch or wash this utensil, nor can they eat in it. During this period, even Gond, Ahir and Agaria women do not take the *kanch* in wearing their *lugda*. She is also forbidden to work in the field, or enter the threshing floor. Agaria women during this period cannot go near the pit from where ore is brought; she cannot touch the heavy hammer or the anvil nor can she bring water for work in the smithy. She can attend to other works in the smithy.

A form of couvade is practised by all Hindu castes in the village, in that the husband of the menstruating woman also suffers from certain disabilities. If during this period, some one asks the husband to give him grain, the latter would say "My wife is in *chhua*. I cannot touch the grain bin". Apart from the restriction on touching the grain-bin, the husband also suffers from the following disabilities. (1) He cannot start a new work; (2) He canot worship the gods; (3) He cannot plough the field nor can he touch the implements of agriculture; (4) He cannot have sexual intercourse with any other woman.

The Dhoba woman can go to the field but otherwise she also suffers from the other taboos. The Mohammadan women in the village do not observe any of these taboos. The woman normally takes bath on the fifth day, and is then rid of her impurity. If, however, for any reason the menstrual flow does not cease on the fifth day, she continues to be treated as an untouchable as long as it does not stop. In such a case, according to Ramhai, the Dhobas have a peculiar rule. If the woman does not take her bath on the fifth day, her husband has to give *bhat* (penal feast of rice) three times to caste people from nine villages.

Russell and Hiralal observe that the Kaonra Ahirs do not consider a woman impure during the period of menstruation.[8] The Amwar Ahirs who belong to the Kaonra caste, however, do observe all the taboos. There is thus reason to believe that the Ahirs of Amwar have changed in their living habits owing to culture—contact with the Baigas, the Gonds and the other Hindu castes in the village. According to Mahajan Ahir, the women in Narwar Ahirs still do not follow the menstrual taboos.

Thus, as regards the menstrual taboos, the only significant observation in Amwar is the practice of couvade obtaining in all the Hindu castes in the village. The adoption by the Kaonra Ahirs of the menstrual toboos, and the non-adoption of these by the Mohammadan houschold are two other observations which must be noticed.

Marriage :

The Hindu scriptures regard marriage as a *sanskar* necessary for a normal person on his entry into the second stage (*Ashram*) of life, the *Grihastha Ashram*. Though quite unaware of the scriptural background of the institution of marriage, the rural communities of Amwar look upon the married state not only as an ideal for every man or woman of age, but as a social obligation. There is no place in their society for confirmed bachelor's or spinsters. Everyone must marry. This social obligation to marry is embodied in the belief that those man or woman who die without having tasted the bliss of married state become *raksha*—a burning spirit or *churelin*. No young man or woman can long remain widowed or separated by divorce from his or her spouse. He or she must woo or be wooed, and get married.

Types of marriage :

The five different types of marriages prevailing in the Hindu communities of Amwar are as follows :—

(1) The regular *Bihao* or marriage arranged by the parents—the *sat-bhawar* marriage;

(2) The *churi-paharana* or *haldi-pani* type of marriage;

(3) *Paithu* or marriage by intrusion;

(4) *Lamsena* or marriage by service;

(5) *Udaria* or marriage by elopement.

Strictly speaking, *churi-pahrana* or *haldi pani*, like *bhawar* is a method of solemnising marriage of categories (3) and (5). Of these, the first type or the regular marriage or *Bihao* (a local corruption of Sanskrit *Vivaha* meaning marriage) is a 'must' in every individual's life, and it is symbolised by the sacrament of *bhawar* or rounds of the marriage post. In Hindus at the higher social stratum, from whom the aboriginees seem to have adopted this system, the sacrament of *bhawar* consists in taking a prescribed number of rounds of the 'Sacrificial fire'. *Lamsena* or marriage by service is only a variant of the *bhawar* type of marriage resorted to in the case of poor boys.

Both these types of marriages are necessarily between partners who are never-married or in any case, one of whom, the bride, is a never-married. The *Paithu* or the *Udaria* type of marriages usually take place between partners who have already been married once, but may also, though rarely, involve partners who are not married. In

8. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, 1916; p. 34.

the first case, the formal ceremony will be solemnised by the *haldi-pani* or *churi-pahrana* rites, while in the later case, the *bhawar* rites will have to be followed. We are thus in a position to describe marriage types in the village by the following:—

Types of Marriages

Bhawar				Haldi pani or Churi-paharana		
(1)				(2)		
Bihao or regular marriage	Lamsena or marriage by service.	Paithu	Udaria	Paithu	Udaria	Levirate

As already observed, however, the frequency of the *Paithu* and *Udaria* types of marriages by *bhawar* rites is reported to be rare.

A survey of 41 marriages was made in the village. Its results are tabulated in the statement below.

Frequency of marriage in the village

Frequency of certain types of marriages in the village at the time of enquiry, by castes:—

Caste	Bhawar			Haldi pani		Levirate
	Bihao	Lamsena	Paithu	Paithu	Udharia	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Baiga	11	2	..	..	7	1
Gond	4	..	1	..	4	1
Agaria	2	..	..	..	2	..
Others	3	..	..	..	2	..

Consanguinity in marriage: Selection in marriage

Like all other Hindus, the tribal communities of Amwar have both endogamous and exogamour rules limiting the choice of a mate. The endogamous rule restricts the scope of selection to one's endogamous group, or *Jat* as it is called in the terminology of the village, as also of the society. Thus, the Baigas of Amwar who belong to the Bhumia (or Bharotia) sub-caste, can choose a mate only from the Bhumia (Bharotia) Baigas; the Gonds restrict their choice to only the Nagbunsee sub-section of the tribe; the Ahirs of the village to the Kaonra Ahirs. The Agarias and Dhobas in the village have their choice from the entire caste.

According to the exogamous rule, among the Hindus, the restrictions on the selection of mate are based on the exclusion of marriage between *gotra* or *Sapinda* relationships, as also on totemic, and territorial considerations. The tribals of Amwar, particularly the Gonds and Baigas, follow complex rules of exogamy based on totemic, and territorial considerations as in some sections of the Hindus. But they have another, rather peculiar rule of exogamy based on the number of gods worshipped. These have already been described in the previous chapter. It appears that the totemic sub-divisions of the Gonds (there are reasons to believe that the Baigas have borrowed the *gotras* from the Gonds) were later on, as a result of culture contact with other Hindus, exalted to the status of *gotra* group. Be that what it may, it must be confessed that the rules of exogamy prevailing in the Gonds and Baigas of Amwar are too complex to have been dealt with fully and adequately in a report of this type, with its limited scope and resources. It is an interesting subject for study and may with profit be taken up by future investigators. For the present, we shall only study the field of selection of mates in Amwar village from a rather narrower angle, namely, the selection of mates from certain categories of blood relations.

Consanguinity in marriage—The 'Dudh-Lautawa' match

The communities living at Amwar do not subscribe to the rule of excluding *sapinda*[1] relationships from the field of selection of a mate. On the other hand, they prefer to choose mates from certain categories of relations, from the mother's and father's sides, subject only to the exclusion of *gotra* relations i.e., those descending from a comon ancestor in the male line.

In the tribal castes of Amwar, when the boy attains an age considered suitable for marriage, his parents start looking about for a suitable girl. This culture trait of Amwar society can be contrasted with the conditions in certain higher Hindu castes, where the burden of searching for a suitable mate devolves on the head of the parents of girls. In the Baigas, Gonds, Agarias, Ahirs and Dhobas of Amwar, marriage of girls is not at all a problem. Girls are very much in demand, and the difficulty is, in fact, experienced by the parents of the boy in finding a partner for the boy. Necessity being the mother of invention, the tribal societies of Amwar have evolved a system of marriage of relations, consonant with the avoidance of *gotra* relations with a view to overcome this difficulty. At the same time marriage in *natedari* or known relations ensures automatically that the rule of exogamy is not broken. Thus, the society has institutionalised practices like *dudh-lautawa* (returning of milk), and *lamsena*, and making breaches thereof constitute offences punishable by the caste authority. Under the custom of *dudh lautawa* a father has a preferential claim over his sister's daughter for his son, based on the argument that the family of the boy's father has already given a girl to the family of his father's sister and the latter must return the compliment.

Russell and Hiralal[9] have referred to this custom, and also Ward.[10] The penalty of Rs. 5.00 also referred to by Russell and Hiralal, inflicted on the sister's husband for breach of the rule, still obtains at Amwar. (It is surprising that the money-value of the penality has not kept pace with the phenomenal rise in the cost of living since Russell and Hiralal's time). As a natural corollary to the *dudh-lautawa* match, and in accordance with the rule of reciprocity in relations, the match in which the sister's son marriages his maternal uncle's daughter also came in vogue, an in Amwar, particularly in the Baigas, it is the most frequent. The popularity of this match in the village can be inferred from the observed fact that the sons-in-law normally address thier fathers-in-law as *mama*, the Hindi equivalent of maternal uncle. The *lamsena* type of marriage has no direct bearing with marriage among kinds, and it has been institutionalised mainly on grounds of poverty of the boy's family. We shall deal with it later. Save the two types of consanguinous marriages, Amwar does not have instances of any other type. The *junior levirate* of which there are examples in Amwar does not come within the scope of consanguinity. Given below is a statement, classifying the marriages in the village according to consanguinity.

Total number of marriages investigated

Name of Caste	No. of marriages where there was no relationship	No. of cases in which the wife was related to husband as		
		Mother's brother's daughter	Father's sister's daughter	Elder Brothers wife
1	2	3	4	5
Baiga	6	13	2	1
Gond	5	3	..	1
Agaria	1	3	..	..
Others	4	1	..	..
Total	16	20	2	2

The Khoja Mohammadan family also prefers marriages between relatives. They permit both cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages. The *dudh-lautawa* match is not binding in their society. They also have the custom of *junior levirate*. The Hindu do not follow the parallel cousin marriages.

The regular bihao in Baigas

Marriage proper is usually preceded by *sagai*, also—but less commonly in Amwar-known as *barokhi*. The *sagai* itself denotes the sound stage in the preliminaries to the marriage. The

1. 'Sapinda' exogamy prohibits marriage between persons related to each other within certain generations on the father and the mother's side.
9. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III, 1916; p. 71.
10. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by H.C.E. Wards 1870; p. 136.

first stage consists in an exploratory visit by the boy's parents to the girl's village. The parents of the boy, informed Tenda Baiga, are accompanied by their son also and take two bottles of liquor with them. The parents of the boy see the girl, and the parents of the latter see the boy. Thereafter, the boy's parents offer the liquor brought by them to the girl's father. The latter denotes his consent to the proposed marriage by accepting the liquor. According to Tenda, the girl's father does not ascertain the wishes of the girl in this matter but only consults his wife and relatives.* In any case, if the girl's fathter accepts the liquor, the boy's father asks him as to when they should come for *sagai*, and the date of this subsequent ceremony being agreed upon, the boy's party returns to their village.

On the day agreed upon for the purpose, the boy's parents repeat their visit to the girl's village, this time with a party of about fifteen to sixteen relatives of either sex, and a cargo of two *pipas* of liquor, five *kuros* of *kodai*, one *kuro* of pulse and one seer of tobacco. The entire village is treated to a feast by the boy's parents in honour of the *sagai* ceremony. When the guests are drinking, the bride-to-be is brought before her prospective father-in-law, who makes to her a ceremonial present of one rupee. This is followed by the boy and girl touching the feet of both the parents, and other elderly men and women present, and more presents in cash may be made to the girl with words of endearment like *Ja Beti, Lai Kha lebe* (go daughter, take this and eat lai). After formalisation of the *sagai*, the boy's parents and party come back to their village, after handing over the material to the boy's father.

After about a week or so, the parents of the boy again go to the girl's village, taking with them four bottles of liquor, and they again play host to the caste people in that village. The purpose of this third visit is to settle the *lena-dena* or the amount which the boy's father must give to the father of the girl.

The bride-price which is called *sukh-rupia* meaning happiness-money) in the village, and the few clothes which the boy's father has to give to the parents of the girls are as a matter of fact fixed by local custom. According to the Baiga informant Tenda, the *sukh-rupia* in their subcaste is Rs. 9.00, and the clothes to be given are one *mai-sari* for the bride's mother, one *aji-bunde* for the bride's grand mother—whether the latter be alive or not—and two *lugdas* for the bride herself. The grain payments have already been settled between the two *samdhis* at the first visit of the groom's parents and paid at the time of *sagai*, and grain payment is not a subject of discussion this time. The importance of the third visit, really speaking, lies in the finalisation of the details of the marriage proper by the two *samdhis*.

Should the girl's father be poor, he expresses his inability to incur the expenses of the marriage, and requests his counterpart on the boy's side to take away the girl. In such a case, the groom's father pays the *sukh-rupia* then and there, reserving the clothes to be presented at the marriage in his village. He invites the girl's parents, and caste people of his village for the marriage. In practice, however, in such a case, only the parents of the girl and young men and women who can dance go to the boy's village.

The marriage is then solemnised at the boy's house, and the rituals, like *chilharmati, tel, mangrohan, kuarabhawa*, etc., which would normally have taken place at the girl's house, are performed at the boy's village separately for the boy and the girl. Persons from the boy's village act as *suasa* and *suasin* for the girl also. The question of giving *janwasa* to the boy's party does not arise. The ceremonies of *madwa gadana* and *bhawar* take place on the same day and at night there is dancing by the girls of the bride's village. The *tikawan* also takes place at the boy's house. After the marriage is thus over the parents of the girl kiss the boy and the girl by touching their cheeks with hand, and after meeting the groom's parents and relatives shoulder to shoulder come back to their village.

The above description relates to the marriage of the unusual type. In the usual type of marriage, the ceremonies and rituals that take place are described hereafter. Unlike marriages in the higher Hindu castes, which are officiated at by Brahmin priests, the main actors in the wedding of Baigas and other communities at Amwar are the *dosi* and the *dosin*. The *dosis* on both the sides are the masters of the ceremonies—performing almost the same role as the priests performing in the marriage of a higher caste Hindu.

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*According to Elwin, in Dindori tahsil, 'The father goes to the girl and ask her if she should drink the liquor. The girl's decision is final. In Kawardha, Elwin says, the girl and the boy have a talk together first, though not in private and if they like one another, they tell their parents "drink your liquor" (page 272). The Amwar Baigas who have relationships in the Kawardha tahsil, may have followed this latter practice, though they declare otherwise to strangers.

Writing about marriage in Baigas, Russell and Hiralal observe "Three ceremonies precede the marriage. The first, whic may take place any time after the birth of both children consists merely in the arrangement of their betrothal. The second is only a ratification of the first, feast being provided by the boy's parents on both the occasions. While on the approach of the children to marriageable age, the final betrothal or *barokhi* is held. The boy's father gives a large feast at the house of the girl and the date of wedding is fixed "(The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces, Vol. II, Page 82). The description of these preliminary ceremonies preceding the marriage proper as given during this enquiry at Amwar agrees, in general, with Russell and Hiralal's version. The version given by Elwin at page 270 of his "The Baiga" differs materially from both,

In Amwar, usually Bhursu Baiga, who is also the village *gunia*, acts as a *doshi* for the Baigas. He acted in that capacity at the marriage of Nandlal, son of Dukal Baiga. It was, however, disclosed, though it was not substantiated by citation of a specific case, that a Gond can also act as *dosi* at a Baiga wedding and vice-versa, and that persons of no other caste may act as *dosi* in their marriages. The connotation of the word *dosi* is not certain; but we were informed that apart from officiating at the marriage, the *dosi* also protected the bride and the groom from the evil eye'. This gives us a probable clue into the meaning of the word. *Dosi* is perhaps derived from *dosi* or blame or guilt and the word may therefore signify the taking over (by the *dosi*) of all guilt or blame of the bride or the groom, so that they may be protected from 'evil eyes'. Besides the *dosi*, and the *dosin* (female counterpart of the *dosi*), two other personalities play an important ritual role in the marriages of the Hindu communities of Amwar. These are the *suasa* and the *suasi*, recruited usually from the ranks of younger relatives of the boy and the girl, and they accompany and wait upon the bride or the bridegroom besides performing ceremonial roles expected of them during the ceremony.

Lagun bicharna :

The marriage proper starts on the day, previously appointed, with the boy's father inviting the *dosi* to conduct the ceremony of *lagan bicharna*. The *dosi*, after performing *pooja* at the shrine of Thakurdeo, puts two grains of rice in a pot of water. If the two grains do not meet end to end, the process is repeated. If they do not meet end to end in five trails, inauspiciousness of the marriage is foreshadowed and it should be given up. However, in practice, people go on repeating the process till two ends of the grains meet, thus satisfying themselves that the marriage is auspicious. A similar ceremoney also takes place at the bride's house. After the ceremony of *lagun-bicharna* the *dosi* at the two ends collect the two grains, and send them on to their opposite numbers on the other end. These grains are tied by the concerned *dosi* in the end of the bride-grooms *dhoti* or the bride's *lugda*.

Tel:

After the ceremony of *lagun-bicharna* is over, and the *dosis* have despatched the ceremonial grains of rice, the rite of *tel-charhana* takes place. The ceremony consists in applying, by means of mango-leaves, oil to the nails, the knees and the head of the bride or the bride-groom, by their female relatives, usually sisters.

Chilharmati:

The next important ceremony after *tel*, taking place the same day is known as *chilharmati*. The corresponding ceremony prevailing in the rural areas of Jabalpur tahsil, and other parts of the Narmada Valley is *mangar matti* a corruption of Sanskrit word *"Mangal Mrattika"* meaning "the auspicious earth". Etymology of the word *chilharmati;* which is used to denote the ceremony just to be described by all castes in the village could not be found from the villagers. A probable derivation is suggested from the *chila rotis* which are offered to the earth before digging. The ceremony of *chilharmati* consists in bringing earth sanctified by the performance of *pooja* to the house for certain ritual purposes. The *dosi, suasa* and the *suasin*, accompanied by a party of men and women, and the bride or the bridegroom as the case may be, go to the *bari* or some field. The *dosi* takes a bottle of liquor and a crow-bar with him; the *suasa* carries the bride or the bride-groom on his back; while the *suasin* carries along a *karsa* (corruption of the more sophisticated Sanskrit word *Kalas*: an earthen pitcher covered by a burning *diya*) filled with grain with an earthen oil lamp burning on top of it, a *lota* of water, four *chila-rotis* and an incense or *rar* (shellac of sarai tree) and fire on a cowdung cake. The *dosi* chooses the spot from where the earth is to be dug, and in the case of Baigas and the Dhobas, this is always the 'नि भीरा' or the ant hill. The *suasin* sprinkles a few drops of water, and turmeric powder on the ant-hills by way of worship of *dharti mata*. The *doshi* burns the incense first brought from home, and pours a few drops of liquor there as an offering to *dharti mata* and Thakurdeo. Crumps, one from each *chila roti*, are also offered and thereafter in the case of the Baigas, the bride or the bridegroom digs the earth from the ant hill by the crowbar. The liquor—whatever remains of it after the offering—is finished by the *dosi* and then the party returns home, *chanting dadaria* songs on the way, the women bringing the *chilharmati* in their *lugdas*.

Madwa and mangrohan :

In the *madwa* or marriage booth and *mangrohan* ceremony, the *dosi*, accompanied by the *suasa* and young boys go to the village forest for bringing the wood for erecting the booth and the *mangrohan*. They are not accompanied by the bride or the bridegroom. The *dosi* carries with him a bottle of *daru*, incense of *sarai rar*, four *chila rotis*, *bhat* and *dal*, axe and fire on a cowdung cake. The *suasa* helps him in carrying these articles. In Baigas the *madwa* is prepared out of the wood of any of these trees—the *sarai, saj*, bamboo, *omar*, mango or the plaintain, but the *mangrohan* is made of *char* wood only.

The *dosi* sprinkles liquor on the ground near the *char* tree, and offers worship to Thakurdeo and *dharti mata* by presenting the eatables brought by them, and by burning incense. He also chants the following words *"bane bane bhanwar. . . . . .ginjrana, bane bane madwa gadai,*

kuchhu bhut—pret jhan away maheraj", and at the same time cuts the *char* trees for the *mangrohan*. The party is then served with a ceremonial meal by the *dosi* and then it goes back to the house, singing *dadaria*. In the court-yard, the *dosi* digs the pit for the *mangrohan*, and in it he sprinkles a few drops of liquor, two copper coins, *dar* and *bhat* and fixes the *magrohan* (which has already been shaped and patterned by the *dosi*) in it. The hole is quickly filled with earth and stamped and then the *suasin* covers the wedding pole or *magrohan* with the *chilhar-mati*, thus obliterating all traces of digging. This is followed by the *suasa* and *suasin* tying thread three times around the *mangrohan*. The wedding booth was in the meanwhile erected by the boys with the wood and the twigs, brought by them from the forest. Thereafter, the *suasin* makes certain decoratives designs on the external surface of two *karsas* with fresh cowdung and by fixing paddy grains on the cowdung, fills the *karsas* with paddy and covers them with earthen *diyas* with lighted wickers in them.

These *karsas* were then installed in front of *mangrohan*. The next important ceremony is the *Kuari-Kuara bhawar*, but till preparations are afoot for it, the ritual of *tel-charhana* is performed two times and the boy is anointed with turmeric powder moistened with water. In the *kuari-kuara bhawar*, he bride or the bridegroom has to go three rounds of the *mangrohan* post. This *kuari kuara bhawar* is apparently a custom not followed by the non-tribal section of the Hindus and appears a ritual peculiar to the tribal society in the Mandla region. The *kuara kuari bhawar* is followed by a feast of the caste fellows from the village and invited guests from other village. Persons belonging to other castes in the village are given a feast in the evening, which is followed by a generous treat of liquor. The entire night is spent by the people of the household and relatives in drinking, singing and dancing.

After the anointing with turmeric powder the previous evening before the *kuara bhawar*, the bridegroom is dressed in old clothes, and he puts on *sutiya* (a silver tore) and *havail* in his neck, with a view to confuse the evil spirits because the ornaments are those of girls. With a view to ward off the evil spirits the bridegroom is given a *sarota* or nut-cutter to carry in his hand. It must be remarked that this custom of putting on lady's ornaments in the neck and of carrying a *sarota* obtaining in the forest tribe living in a remote corner of the Mandla district, is widely prevalent in all sections of the Hindus in the northern districts like Jabalpur, Hoshangabad, Narsimhapur and Sagar districts.

Barat or the marriage procession :

The marriage procession or the *barat* leaves the bridegroom's village on the day following the *kuara bhawar* and the *mangrohan*. Before that, however, the bridegroom is given a bath and the turmeric and oil grease is rubbed off his body and he is dressed in a new dress. These services are of course performed by the *suasa* of the bridegroom. The *barat* consists of the parents of the bridegroom, their male and female relatives from other villages, and caste fellows from the village. People of the village, though not belonging to the caste, also accompany the procession. Drummers belonging to the caste accompany the procession. There being no carts in the village, the party has to negotiate the distance from the groom's to the bride's village on foot. The bridegroom however, who is regarded virtually as a king during the marriage cannot walk, and as a compromise between this supposed kingship of the groom and his actual inability to afford a conveyance, he is physically lifted by the *suasa* and carried on shoulders as far as the village boundary, and thereafter he also walks the distance along with the rest of the party.

Mock-fighting :

On arrival at the bride's village, the marriage party does not go straight away to the *janwasa* or the place meant for the stay of the *barat*. On the other hand, it stops at some distance from the village preferably under the shadow of some big tree. Soon is to follow a unique custom—which requires the bridegroom's and the bride's parties to engage in a mock-fighting. Before the actual fight, the bridegroom's party dances the *bilma* dance which, according to Elwin, is "a wildly riotous performance". The bride's party also approaches from the direction of the village, dancing the *bilma* dance. Later on when the two parties approach too near to each other, the dance develops into a virtual mock-fight with toy swords, axes and sticks which both sides carry with them.. Stephen Fuchs[12] describes the mock-fight as follows: "the dance is wild and disorderly, and gradually develops into a veritable war dance." The men swing swords, axes and sticks, and sing and shout till they are hoarse .....The women in a separate group dance with ever increasing excitement and tempo,

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11. Ward observes that in Baigas "the marriage procession or 'barat', comes from the house of the bride instead of the bridegroom as among the Gond (page 157 of Ward's report)". If this is correct, then obviously the position has undergone a complete change since Ward's time.

12. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 279.

swinging their arms, bending low and then suddenly jerking up into an erect position".

The Mock elephant :

While the bride's and the groom's party are engaged in the mock-fighting, the bride's brother rides on a a mock-elephant prepared by lashing together three cots, one horizontal and two in a slanting position covering them with a blanket and affixing a cloth in front. The mock-elephant, having no real legs, is carried by four carriers, and charges on to the groom's party, and for a while havoc is supposedly wrought in his party. The elephant must ultimately be bought off by the groom's father by paying the present of some cash to the bride's brother. While the mock-fighting is in progress, the bridegroom is taken by his *suasa* to the bride's house, where he has to touch the *mangrohan,* and repair to his party. The custom of mock-fighting is apparently a survival of the ancient *raksas* form of marriage or 'marriage by capture'. The villagers explained it by saying that formerly they were ruled by *kshatriya* rajahs who were always bringing brides by winning them in battles, we, however, do it only in the form of a 'नेग' (rite), pretend to fight with our toy *barchhis* swords and lathis. The mock-fighting, according to villagers, is essentially a feature of the 'चढ बरात' (attacking *barat,* i.e., the *barat* which leaves from the bridegroom's house. The *barat* which leaves from the bride's house, as in Gonds, is not a 'चढ़ बरात' and in it the ceremony is observed in a spirited manner. Also, the custom which requires the bridegroom to slip away to the bride's house looks like a relic of the old days when the prince must have made for the house of his girl. The touching of the *mangrohan* thus symbolises the capture of the bride.

After the mock-fight is over, resulting in a symbolic defeat of the bride's party, the arms are deposited on a sheet of cloth spread on the ground for the purpose, and the two parties receive one another, the men of one side embracing the men of the other, and similarly the women. The men and women are now treated to a feast of liquor, whereafter the bridegroom's party is conducted to the *janwasa*—their resting place.

Bhawar :

Before *bhawar* which takes place the following day, the bride and bridegroom separately go out a-begging from three houses. After this begging ceremony the *baratis* proceed to the bride's house in a procession. A similar procession starts from the bride's house and the two groups meet somewhere near the bride's house. Two sheets of cloth are drawn up, one by the *baratis* and the other by the bride's party, which act like two dividing curtains. The bridegroom steps beneath both these curtains and throws the rice which he had collected during the begging tour at the bride. The operation is repeated three times, and the third time, the bridegroom physically gets hold of the girl and physically carries her on to his side. The *dosi* of the groom then ties the end of the loin cloth of the boy to the end of the *lugda* of the bride into a knot and then the bride and the bridegroom together go to the bride's house where women of the house and other relatives wash their feet. This is called *god dhulao* or 'washing the feet'. Thereafter, after a number of other small rituals, they get ready for the *bara-bhawar,* the most important ritual of the marriage which marks, in the non-tribal Hindus, its consummation.

Just before the *bara bhawar,* the *suasa* pours grain all round the wedding post, and then the couple go around the wedding post three times. If the wedding takes place at the house of the bridegroom, as in the case described at the outset, the bride and bridegroom take seven rounds of the wedding post. The *bhawar* is followed by a feast, in which liquor is served first, and then edibles of which the chief attraction is a roasted goat. Thereafter the couple are seated before the *mangrohan;* and the ceremony of *bandawan* which resembles the *tikawan* of other castes follows. The ceremony resembles the *paon pakhari* ceremony obtaining in numerous Hindu castes and consists in touching with moistened turmeric powder first the wedding post, and then the forehead of the bride and the bridegroom, and making small cash presents to them. Only the parents of the bride, and her relatives and people from her village take part in the *bandana* ceremony here.

Bida :

This takes place the day following *bara-bhawar* and marks the end of the festivities at the bride's house. *Bida* is a common word and is used in the same sense of bidding farewell in other Hindu castes too. After the *bida* ceremony the bridegroom's party return to their village, bringing the bride along with them. A siginficant feature, in the case, however, is that the parents and a few relatives of either sex of the bride also accompany the *barat* to the bridegroom's village. At the groom's house, the couple are again required to go three (some said it was seven) times around the wedding post, which again followed by the ceremony of *bandana.* This time, however, only the parents of the bride-

groom and his relatives and people or the groom's village take part in the *bandana*. After this, the bride's people return to their village leaving the bride at her husband's house.

Gond marriage :

The most important point in which a usual Gond marriage differs from a usual Baiga marriage is that in the former the bridal procession starts from the bride's village and the marriage is solemnised at the house of the bridegroom, while it is the other way round in the latter. In the paragraphs that follow, the marriage of Lula, son of Amoli Gond of the village is described.

Preliminaries to marriage—The Sagai :

Amoli Gond and his wife first went on a more or less exploratory trip to the bride's village, saw the girl and after approving of her, asked her parents as to when should they come for the *sagai*. The date of this last mentioned ceremony having been settled they came back to their village. On the appointed day, Amoli invited his caste fellows from the village to accompany him to the bride's village for the *sagai*. Amoli, his wife, and party consisting of members of either sex went to the village, taking with them ten *kuros* of *kudai*, five *kuros* of *chana dal*, one *pipa* of *daru*, one *lugra*, *bangles*, *ganthimala*. At the bride's village, Amoli played host to the caste fellows from the bride's village, and the *sagai* ceremony was performed. The *lugda*, *ganthimala*, and a rupee in cash were presented by Amoli to the would-be-bride, and then the latter and Amoli's son touched the feet of both the parents and elderly relatives on either side. Thereafter, liquor was served to the guests. While the drinking was in progress, Amoli squared up the delicate matter of details of *lena-dena* (the words literally mean 'give and take', but in practice, it is only a 'one way' commerce from the bridegroom's side to the bride's). Amoli's *samadhi* demanded the usual items of clothes i.e. the *mai-sari* for bride's mother, *aji-bondri* for the grand mother, a *sukhrupia* of nine-rupees. These are well settled by long usage. The real hitch, and which requires settlement, is over the grain payments. Amoli's *samadhi* demanded three *khandis* of *kudai*, and 15 *kuros* of *dal*, to which Amoli readily agreed.

Lagun bicharna :

As in the case of a Baiga marriage, in Gonds too, the chief actors in the drama of marriage are the *dosis* on either side, and the attendants, *suasa* of the bridegroom and the *suasin* on the bride's side. As people in the village put it, they treat the bridegroom and the bride as king and queen for two and a half days. It appears from this that the word *suasa* is nothing but a natural corruption of the sanskrit word *Sabhasad* meaning a 'courtier'. In fact, amongst the Brahmins and other Hindus castes of the districts of Jabalpur, Hoshangabad and Narshimhapur, the attendent of bridegroom (invariably his sister's husband) is known as *sabhasad* which nearly approaches the sanskrit word for a courtier. The derivation of the word *dosi* is not clear, and the villagers were unable to remove my ignorance on this point. In the marriage of Amoli one Dhanu Gond, brother-in-law of Amoli, Lula's father acted as the *dosi*. It was, however, disclosed that in Gond marriages, if a *dosi* from the caste was not available they would recruit a *dosi* from the Baigas but from no other caste. Lula's *suasa* was Sardu, his brother-in-law, while Lula's sister and Sardu's wife acted as *suasin*.

The marriage started with the ceremony of *lagun-bicharna* as in the case of Baigas. As often happens, in this case also, Dhanu had to make a number of trials till two rice grains met end to end, indicating the auspiciousness of the marriage. The news of this, along with the dates of the ceremonies of the marriage proper were sent to the bride's village, along with a *lugda* for the bride, $\frac{1}{4}$ seer of *hardi* (turmeric) and a bottle of liquor.

It may be remarked at this stage that the tribal communities of Amwar have taken the ritual of *lagun* from the non-tribal Hindu communities in the region. The latter, however, do not observe it in the manner the tribals do. *Lagun* infact, is a diminutive of *lagun-patrika* which is a letter of invitation with details regarding times of the important ceremonies of marriage, sent by the parents of the girl to the boy's side. The tribal communities, whose *dosis* are generally innocent of reading and writing, have adopted the custom to their requirements. Since the *dosis* do not have an almanac and even if they had one they would not be able to make head and tail of it—to find out the auspicious dates for the various ceremonies connected with the marriage, they take recourse to the simple process of gambling i.e. judging the auspiciousness of each ceremony by the event of the rice grains meeting end to end. Another point of departure from the ordinary Hindu usage is the sending of the *lagun* from the bridegroom's to the bride's side. This of course is necessitated from the prevelence in their community (or at least in a section of it to which the Awmar Gonds belong) of the custom according to which *barat* comes from the bride's village to the bridegroom's village.

Marriage:

Marriage took place after a week of the sending of the *lagun*. The first ceremony in the series is *tel charhana* and *chiksa*. The *chiksa* consisted in anointing the whole body of the bridegroom

with turmeric paste and flour; the anointing was done by the *suasin* and four other women. The ceremony of *tel charhana* consisted in dipping two mango leaves in *tel* or oil, and with this oil touching the toes, the ankles, knees and forehead (in this order) of the bridegroom. It was also repeated five times, once each by five women, the leader being the *suasin*. On the night of this day, the relatives, and guests from the village and outside were given a feast.

Chilarmati:

This took place in the morning the following day. The *dosi, suasa, suasin,* and a number of women went to the *bari* of Amoli for bringing *chilarmati*. The *suasin* carried with her a *lota* full of water, an earthern lamp (दीप) turmeric (powder) and four *chila* or *chila roti* of rice floor, while the *dosi,* the master of ceremonies, carried a crowbar, and a bottle of liquor, *rar* of *sarai* tree for incense, and fire on a cowdung cake.

The bridegroom was also in the party. The Gonds do not bring the *chilarmati* as the Baiga. The Agarias and the Dhobas do from an anthill. On the spot selected for the purpose by the *dosi,* the *suasin* sprinkled water with a view to purify it, and then offered worship by besmearing it with turmeric powder and placing the earthern lamp (with a wicker burning in it) there. The *dosi* burnt incense, and poured a few drops of water from his bottle as an offering to *dharti mata,* as also a crump of the *chila*. The *sausa* then dug the *chilarmati* with the crowbar, which was collected by the women in their *lugda*. The *dosi* qauffed off a portion of the liquor on the spot, and the party returned home, where the *chilaroti* were distributed to the children and the remaining liquor in the bottle was finished by the *dosi.*

Mangrohan and the madwa or marriage booth :

The same day, after an interval of about an hour, the *dosi* and *suasa,* accompanied by boys went to the forest outside the village, taking with them *bhat* (baked rice) in a *duari* (a bamboo container for keeping rice), *dar,* four *chila roties* and a battle of a *char* tree, the wood of which as in Baigas is used for making the *mangrohan,* the *dosi* burnt incense under the tree, and sprinkled liquor drops on the ground as offering to the gods. While offering liquor, the *dosi,* uttered the words *Le re Banspati* (i.e., take, O, Banspati). Thereafter, while the *suasa* cut a branch of the *char* tree for the *mangrohan,* the boys clipped of branches of *sarai* tree for the marriage booth. The party feasted on the *bhat* and *dar* which was taken by them and returned to the house of Amoli.

There is no carpenter in Amwar, or in the villages adjoining it, and the *madwa* and *mangrohan* had to be prepared by the *sausa*. The installation of the *madwa* and *mangrohan* was performed in the evening. The pit for the purpose was dug by the *sausa* in the courtyard of the house, who also put two copper coins in it by way of price of the land, and a knot of turmeric. After the *mangrohan* was fixed in position, and the loose earth was filled, the *suasin* prepared a paste of the *chilarmati* and with it plastered the ground on all sides of the *mangrohan*. Thereafter, the *suasa* and the *suasin* dipped thread in turmeric paste, and this yellow thread they tied three times round the *mangrohan,* and thereafter all round the *mandap*. The exact significance of this rite could not be ascertained as even the informants were ignorant of it. Fuchs, on page 272 of his book, "The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla" refers to a pretence on the part of the *dosi* to tear the thread, and a slight tussle between him and others who try to prevent him. Thereafter, the *suasin* prepared two *karsa,* ornamented with cowdug figures duly patterned with rice, both full of rice, and burning earthern *lamps* on top. Both these *karsas* were fixed in front of the wedding pole, on raised mud supports called *schri,* especially prepared for the purpose.

The bridegroom was then anointed with *chiksa* which had turmeric powder mixed in it, and *tel charhana* ceremony was performed twice on him. After this, Lula was clad in old clothes which could get soiled, and in order to save him from evil spirits, areca-nut-cutter was given to him. As in Baigas, he had also put on the *sutiya* and the *hasli* in his neck. After the *mandap* was *erected* and the *mangrohan* was installed, the whole caste in the village and relatives from outside were given a feast. This was in the afternoon. Afterwards, in the evening a feast was given to the whole village. The Baigas and Agarias ate the food prepared in Amoli's house, but the Ahir, Dhoba and Mohammadan households had to be given *sidha* (uncooked food articles) as they could not eat food cooked in a Gond kitchen. After the feast followed the most attractive part of the day—a *pipa* of liquor, which made all present literally dance with joy.

At night the *barat* was to come and preparations for its reception began. When news came that the *barat* had reached the boundary of the village, the bridegroom's party consisting of members belonging to both the sexes (because, as in case of Baigas the Gond *barat* also has a mixed composition of men and women) started to meet

the *barat*. The *suasin* was carrying a *lota* full of water, and the *karsa* on her head with a burning earthern lamp on top of it, while a few young men took a few cots and wooden planks with them. As the bridegroom's party approached within sight of the *barat*, toy weapons i.e. *lathis* and wooden swords were distributed to the party, and they started dancing in a wild manner. Subsequently this dance developed into a free fight—mock though—between the two parties. After some time, the mock-fighting stopped. Since, this was not a case of what is known as *Charh-barat* the mock-fighting was only in the form of a brief ritual and was taken as a huge joke. The Gond custom at this point differs from the Baiga custom as there is no mock-elephant running wild and trampling the other party. A cloth was spread on the ground and all persons deposited their arms on it. The fathers of the bride and the bridegroom then produced their bottles of liquor, and each poured a few drops of water on the toy swords, and the *lathis* (significance of this again not known). Then, the two *samdhis* offered betle not to each other and met in a shoulder-to shoulder embrace three times. Taking cue from them, other persons from both the sides met in a similar fashion, men embracing men, and women meeting their women counterparts on the other side.

After this, the *baratis* were conducted to the *janwasa*. It may be mentioned at this point that the bridegroom's party had sent three persons from the village for carrying the bride on shoulders. These persons, though belonging to the caste, are known as *bhistis* (*bhistis* means a water-carrier). The *janwasa* had two apartments, one was meant for the stay of the bride, her *suasin* and other lady companions, while the other members were to stay in the other apartment, and in the verandah. On reaching the *barat*, the *baratis* told Amoli Gond to bring the *med khudoni* liquor—(i.e., liquor for trampling upon the village boundary), and a *canister* of liquor was served to them. Elders from the bridegrooms' side also participated in the drinking. The drinking over, Amoli handed over one *aji bondri* (a *sari* for grand mother of the bride), one *mai-sari* (*sari* for the mother) to the parents of the bride, and then departed after inviting the *barat* for the *pangat*. After some time, the *baratis*, both men and women, marched in procession to Amoli's house, the bride with them, being carried on shoulders by the *bhistis*. At the door of the house, the *barat* was received by the *suasin* who was standing there with a *karsa* full of water, and wooden plank. All persons of the *barat* before they entered the courtyard, stood on the plank and had their feet washed by the *suasin*. The bride was, however, directly taken to the inner room, where the bridegroom and she were seated on a *gona* and turmeric and oil were applied to their persons, to the groom by women of the bride's side, and to the bride by the women of the groom's side. This was repeated seven times in each case. After this, the bride and bridegroom were physically lifted by the *bhistis* and taken outside the house for a rite known as *chul mundari pahirana* (putting on *chulmundari*). Each one of them was seated on a *gona* and then they were covered by a piece of cloth. Then Amoli gave to each of them a *mundri* (finger ring), and each put on this ring in the finger of the other. After the rite of exchanging *chul mundri*, the *dosi* was directed to get ready for a ceremony known as *kuara-kuari bhawar*. For this he put a cloth over the shoulders of the bride and the bridegroom, and its ends were tied to the *lugda* of the bride and the *dhoti* of the bridegroom, thus uniting them. Then, with the bride leading, the couple moved round the wedding pole thrice, with the help of their *suasa* and *suasin*. These three rounds constitute the *kuara-kuari bhanwar* (the *bhanwar* of the bachelor and the maid). The significance of the name could not be known.

After the *kuara-kuari bhanwar*, the dosi untied them. The ceremony of *tel utarna* was then performed on the bride and bridegroom separately two times. This is similar to the ceremony of *tel charhana* but the order of applying oil is reversed. They were then taken inside for a ceremonial bath. The bath was given to them by their *suasa* and *suasin*, the couple having been made to sit on wooden planks for the purpose. After the bath, they were given *dar khichari* to eat. It was now time for the *bara bhanwar*, preparations for which were afoot while the couple were being given the ceremonial bath and feed. For this purpose, the *dosi* made a *chouk* with flour (a *chouk* is an ornate line design made on the ground with flour; the designs conform to certain set patterns which are considered auspicious) in front of the wedding pole in the *mandap* and the couple were taken seven times round the wedding pole by the *suasin* of the groom. After the *bada bhanwar* the couple were seated on *pirhas* or wooden planks on the *chouk* in front of the wedding pole for the ceremony of *god-dhulai* (washing the feet). Two *thalis* of bronze were placed at the feet of the bride and the groom, and the ceremony of *god-dhulai* was initiated by the *dosi*. He was followed by the *baratis* or people from the bride's side, who also gave small presents or *daaj* (corruption of the well known *dahej*) to the couple. After the *baratis*, relatives from the groom's side performed the ceremony, and the last to do so were the parents of the bridegroom. After the

ceremony of *god-dhulai* was over, the couple were taken inside and the *baratis* were treated a sumptuous round of liquor.

The next item was the feast of *mandi*, the biggest feast on the side of the bridegroom.* The bride and bridegroom were taken for this feast by their respective *suasins*. They first made obeisance to the elders on both the sides by touching their feet and then sat for the feast with their respective peoples. After the feast the *baratis* left taking away the bride with them. They were followed by the bridegroom and a few persons of his party. The bridegroom carried a bottle of liquor and fire on a cowdung cake, and shouted to the *baratis* to wait and leave the bride. The *baratis* waited accepted the bottle of liquor from the bridegroom, and smoked their *chongis* or leaf-pipes. The *baratis* then handed over the bride to the groom, who brought her home on his back. The *baratis* of course returned to their village after the feast of *mandi* leaving the bride at the groom's place.

Next morning, the couple was taken to the river with the *suasa* and *suasin* of the groom, and while the couple walked four persons made shade over them by means of a blanket suspended by four sticks. The *suasin* was carrying a *kalsa* with her. At the river, the bride was made to sit in a *para* (a bamboo pan), and the groom had to drag her into the water seven times. Other feats of amusement followed. Thus, a bead necklace was thrown in the water and the couple were asked to search it. The person who succeeded in finding it for four times or more out of seven trials was declared to have won. Thereafter the couple chased one another in the water and while doing so exchanged blows. After the bath, the bride is required to fill the *kalsa* with water and carry it home on her head. The *suasa* holds a deer made of grass in front of the bride so as to offer a target to the groom through the triangle made by the bending hand of the bride and the *kalsa* on her hand and the bridegroom is then challenged to shoot the deer through this triangle. If he succeeds in piercing the toy deer with arrow in seven trials, he is supposed to have won the bride, otherwise he had to pay a penalty in the shape of two bottles of liquor to the *suasa*. Loola, of course, had lost the game, and one may call it mere coincidence, (a phenomenon not very uncommon in the tribal Gonds, Baigas and others) but his wife ran away from him within six months of the marriage.

Gauna:

The recemony of *gauna* is not usually practised by the Gonds of Amwar, as the marriages are solemnised when the bride has attained the age of understanding. It was, however, stated that if the girl was married at a very young age, her parents frequently take her away with them; the marriage then is consumated only after the *gauna* ceremony, which takes place after one or two years. In the case of Lula, the marriage was consumated after the ceremony of the marriage proper as the girl was left over at her husband's house by her parents.

Ahirs:

As mentioned by Russel and Hiralal, the Kaonra Ahir families of Amwar too do not marry a girl till she attains puberty. Their marriage customs resemble more or less the customs prevalent in the dominant community—the Baigas. The ceremony of marriage proper is preceded by the ceremony of *sagai* when details like the amount of grain to be paid, the *sukhrupia* and clothes are settled. According to our Ahir informant Mahajan, the father of the boy has to spend money on the following items: —

(1) $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 *khandis* of *kodai;*

(2) $\frac{1}{2}$ *khandi of dal;*

(3) $\frac{1}{2}$ *khandi of day;*

(4) Clothes (a) one *aji-bondri;* (b) One *mai-sari;* (c) Two *lugda* for the bride known as *Sukhodhna.*

The marriage proper consists of the ceremonies *lagun, Chilharmati, tel, madwa, mayna barat, kuara kuari bhanwar, bara bhanwar,* etc. The marriage is conducted by the *dosi* who is a classificatory uncle or *mama* of the bride or the groom and the *suasa* and *suasin* of the bridegroom and the bride. The ceremony of *chilharmati* is performed in the same manner as in the Baigas and Gonds, but like the Baigas, Dhobas and Agarias, they do not bring the sacred earth from an ant-hill. The *madwa* and *mangrohan* are prepared again in a similar manner as the Baigas. After the *madwa*, the *dosi* colours a thread with turmeric paste and this thread is tied three times round the marriage shed. The *tel charhana* ceremony is performed by the *suasin* and two other women. The bride or the bridegroom is seated on *pirhas*, on a *chouk* made in front of the marriage pole, and then he or she is rubbed with turmeric paste. The *tel-charhana* is an operation involving the touching of certain limbs of the bride or bridegroom with mango leaves dipped in oil.

*The Brahmins' and other castes in the Hoshangabad district are also known to give a feast soon after the 'bhanwar', known the feast of 'bhanwar'.

A peculiar feature of the Ahirs is the *mayan pooja* which takes place the day following *madwa* and *tel charhana*. The Gonds, Baigas and Agarias of the village do not perform the *mayan pooja*. The Gonds of Amwar in this respect differ from the Gonds of Jaitpuri in the Jabalpur tahsil who do perform the *mayan pooja*. In fact, this cultural trait is common to almost all the Hindu castes in the Jabalpur country and the Gonds must have adopted it from them. The worship of *mayan* is restricted to persons of the same *gotra* as the household performing marriage. The *pooja* consists in offering *rotis* or *puris* baked in *ghi* to the household gods residing in and outside the house. The members of the caste are then fed in a feast known as *mayan bhat*.

The *barat* proceeds from the bride-groom's house on the day of *mayan pooja* and consists of the parents of the bride-groom and their male and female relatives. Persons from other castes in the village also accompany the *barat*. The *barat* does not directly proceed to the village but first waits outside till they are received by members of the bride's party. No mock-fighting as in the case of Baigas is reported to take place but there is dancing.

When the *barat* reaches the *janwasa* the *suasin*, with five other women, goes to the *janwasa* to perform what is known as the *bhaji khawan* ceremony. They carry in a *parra*, *rotis* of five types prepared from wheat and rice flour, and also for fun, some chillies, etc. At the *janwasa* they crack jokes etc., with members of the bridegroom's party. After feeding the bridegroom with the *rotis*, they come back and the *suasa* physically carries the groom on his back to the bride's house. The bride and the bridegroom are then seated on planks kept over a pit, and are given a bath by their *suasins*. After this the *dosi* ties their clothes with a new piece of cloth and takes them three times round the wedding post. This is the *bhawar*. The *bhawar* is followed by the ceremony of *god dhulai* or washing the feet, corresponding to the *bandana* or *tikawan* of the Baigas. The *god-dhulai* consists in ceremonially washing the feet of the couple with water or milk, and making small cash presents to them. The 'big feast' known as *barabhat* then takes place, followed by a round of liquor. Those who can afford, kill a goat also for the feast. The next morning the *barat* is given *bida* or send-of. As in the Baigas, the *barat* is accompanied by the parents of the bride, the *suasa* and few other relatives. These are called the *nengahars* by the Ahir. When the *nengahars* reach the groom's village, the *suasa* of the groom meets them waving a wooden sword. On reaching them, however, he puts the sword down and offers *suparf* to the *suasa* from the other side and the *samdhi*. This peculiar custom appears to be a relic of the old 'marriage by capture'. The bride's father and parents were of a hostile camp, and on seeing them, the first reaction of the *baratis* would naturally be that they were being chased. The waving of the wooden sword by the *suasa* is a hangover of the preparedness of the *barat* to meet the foe.

At the groom's house also, *bhawar* takes place. The couple have to go seven times round the wedding pole in the bride-groom's *madwa*. The relatives of the bride return after the *bhawar*. Thereafter, probably with a view to remove the shyness that is natural between the couple, a few rites of merry-making and jokes take place. One such is the *chakhaloli*. In this the couple are taken to the river-side and the bride is asked to search a *lota*, hidden by the husband in water. This is done for three times. Then the bride hides the *lota* and the groom is required to search it. After this the couple take their bath and in the river itself untie the *kankan* tied in the hand of each.

The marriage is consummated shortly after the ceremony is concluded. No ceremony like *gauna* is reported to take place.

Agarias:

Marriage in Agaria is more or less on the lines of marriages in the Baiga. The practice of taking out a mock-elephant is, however, not prevalent among them.

Dhobas :

The marriage rituals of the Dhobas resemble those of the Ahirs. Like the latter, they also perform the *mayan pooja*. The *god-dhulai* ritual is called *paon-pakhrai* by them. No other peculiarities were reported.

Muslim:

The Khoja family of Amwar restricts marriages within the Khoja Muslims. The usual age of marriage is about 13 years for the girl and about 15-16 years for the boy. Chhote Khan's son Abbas was married two years ago when he was sixteen years old. Below is given a description in brief of his marriage.

The ceremony preceding the marriage proper was *mangani*. For this Chhote Khan, his wife and his maternal uncle from village Sondha went to the girl's village, Bachhargaon, which was 32 miles from Amwar. The parents on both sides approved of the match and settled the details regarding bride-price etc. A bride-price of Rs.

14 in cash is customary in the Khoja Muslim community of the region and this was readily accepted by Chhote Khan. Besides, for meeting the expenses of marriage, Chhote Khan's *samdhi* demanded two *khandis* of rice, and other things for the marriage Chhote Khan agreed to this also. The demand for clothes, consisted of the usual *mai-sari, aji-bondri* and *dhotis* and these were also readily agreed to by Chhote Khan. After these settlements were over, Chhote Khan celebrated the *magni* by distributing *batashas* (sugar candies) to the guests.

Marriage followed six months after the *magni*. It was attended by Chhote Khan's relatives from villages Mawai, Pankhwar, Boda, Sondhi, Ragat etc. There was no *dosi* but there was a *suasa*, brother in law of Abbas Khan and *suasin*—his sisters. The wood etc., for the *madwa* were brought by the Baiga and Gond boys of the village. They prepared the *madwa* from twigs of the *oomar* tree. After the *madwa*, the *tel-charhana* rite was performed four times by Abbas Khan's sisters, and sister-in-law. Next day, just before the *barat*, Abbas Khan was again subjected to the rite of *tel charhana* three times and then given a bath by his sisters, who were the *suasins*.

Barat:

Barat consisted of, besides the parents of Abbas Khan, his male and female relatives from the villages mentioned earlier and people of other castes in the village. From the later category, Kangli's brother Datri Baiga, Sukhlal Agaria, Mohan Agaria, Mahajan and his wife accompanied the *barat*. Baiga musicians (drummers) from village Badai (four miles from Amwar) were engaged on payment of Rs. 18 to accompany the *barat*.

As in other castes, the *barat* was received by persons of the bride's party outside the village; the *susain* of the bride with a *kalsa* with a lighted earthen lamp on top of it led the members of receiving party. No ceremony resembling the 'mock-fighting' of the Gonds and Baigas was reported to have taken place. The two *samdhis* met shoulder to shoulder thrice, and other male members of both the sides followed suit. The female members of the two sides met one another. Thereafter, Chhote Khan handed over the rations brought by him i.e. ten *kuros* of rice, one goat, 4 seers of *ghi*, 4 seers of *rai* oil, 5 seers of sugar, 4 *kuros* of wheat flour (two *khandis* of rice were sent by Chhote Khan to his *samdhi* eight days prior to the marriage, the things brought by him with *barat* were meant for the *barat*). The clothes, one *mai-sari*, one *aji-bondri* and two *dhotis* for the bride were also handed over to the bride's father. The *baratis* were then invited for a feast. The members of the *barat* from other castes were given the provisions separately, which were cooked by Mahajan Ahir and his wife. The feast to the caste members included goat's meat, rice, *dal*, vegetables, sugar and *ghi* and is known as *sakarana*.

Nikah:

This is the most important ceremony of the marriage. It follows the *sakarana* feast. The groom and the bride are seated on the ground and they were covered with *lugda*. *Nikah* was then read by a Mohammadan from village Madiaras, who was called by the bride's father. Chhote Khan had to pay five rupees to him for reading the *nikah*. The same person also fixed the *maihar*, i.e. a sum of money payable by the husband to the wife if he divorces her without any justification. The *milad* followed the *nikah*. The person from Madiaras who had read the *nikah*, also read the *milad* around to the whole assembly. At the end of the *milad batashas* were again distributed to the persons present.

Next day *khana* or feast was given to the persons from *barat* and other invited guests. The same day in the evening the *bida* took place. It was preceded by the ceremony of *daij*—corresponding to the *bandana* or *tikawan* or *paon-pakharai* of the other castes. There was, however, no ceremonial washing of the feet of the bridal pair. The couple was simply seated in the *mandwa* and a bronze plate was put before them. Relatives of the bride and other persons in the village and outside gave presents —cash or kind to the newly weds according to their economic status. The presents, however, were not and could not be very significant in money value. According to Chhote Khan, the total *daij* received by him in Abbas Khan's marriage consisted of Rs. 14 in cash, one brass *gundi*, 3 glasses of brass, 2 *lotas*, three *thalis* i.e. mostly utensils. Besides, Chhote Khan had presented a pair of *per-pattis* (silver), a *chandrahar* (silver ornament worn round the neck) and a pair of earings (silver) for his daughter in-law. These were of course presented after the reception of the *barat* along with the *sukhrupia* (brideprice).

After the *daij* but just before the *bida* or farewell, the *baratis* were given the last feast which included meat of a goat killed in honour of the guests. With the *bida*, ended the marriage at the end of Chhote Khan's *samdhi*. Two persons from the latter's family, however, accompanied the *barat* to Chhote Khan's house. Here again, the ceremony of *daij* took place, the bridal pair was seated in the *madwa* and received small presents from the relatives and people of the village who could not go in the *barat*.

The marriage is reported to be consummated as a part of the wedding ceremony itself because the bride does not go back to her parent's house and there is nothing corresponding to the '*gauna*' of some Hindu castes.

Marriage in the village:

Marriage is an important social event in the life of the communities living in the village. As already stated, marriage is a compulsory sacrament, but apart from this social obligation, marriage gives the village people welcome relief from the anxieties and worries of their routine life. From the start to finish, people give themselves with complete abandon to merry-making and fun; the women are forever busy in singing songs—*dadarias, birha* etc. while persons of both the sexes dance. There is also feasting followed by drinking. In fact, most of the expenditure incurred in the wedding is on liquor. Tenda Baiga—who is also patel of the village stated that about five *kawads* (*kawad*—quantity which could be carried in one *kawad*) of liquor are consumed in one marriage. This works out to about Rs. 300 easily even if, assuming that the liquor is distilled in the village itself (though Tenda denied local distillation). In the marriage of Amoli Gond about enght *pipas* of liquor were consumed, which cost approximately Rs. 300. Other important items of expenditure are the grains—*kodai, dal,* rice and things like *ghi* or oil, *gur*, vegetables etc.

Ornaments of course are not many, and in case of the tribes are not usually demanded along with the *sukhrupia*. When asked as to how they could afford to incur such heavy expenditure with their meagre incomes, people replied that they usually disposed of their belongings like bulk of their cattle to celebrate marriages. Whereas this may be true to some extent, still the fact that people in the village are not indebted to any appreciable extent would lead one to doubt the veracity of their statement. It appears to be more probable that people exercise great thrift and put by money for marriages in their homes. Elwin's observation that the necessity of paying bride-price is an incentive to family thrift, and a stimulant to youthful labour, though made in connection with the Baigas, sums up the position as regards other communities also. Again going to Elwin, marriage supplies the chief want in the life of the villagers and people therefore save for marriage.

Inter-caste relations:

Absence of Brahmin priests in the rites connected with marriages is a feature common to all the Hindu castes in the village. Again the nai, dhimar, basor and barhi, associated with marriages of many Hindu castes are not assigned any roles in the marriage. Drum-beating is of course professionally done by the dhulias—but Baigas also are called as would appear from the fact that Chhote Khan had called Baiga from village Mawai. There is thus no ritual participation by members of one caste in the marriages of other castes. But that should not lead one to conclude that marriages in Amwar do not pass the caste barrier and people belonging to other castes do not concern themselves with marriages. The descriptions given earlier are sufficient to show that people of other castes are invited for eating and *sidha* is given to such persons who do not eat from the kitchen. Persons from outside the caste participate in the *barat*, as also in the ceremonies like *bandna* or *god-dhulai, dahej,* or *paon-pakhrai*. A very encouraging feature is the participation by the Baiga, Gond and Ahir residents in the marriage of the Muslim family and by the latter in the marriage of the others.

Similarity of Customs:

The customs observed by the various communities are similar in the main, differing only in details. The similarity arises from their having arisen from common contacts with the Hindus in the locality. Though the Muslim family professes another religion, still it also has become integrated in the social fabric of the community as a whole.

The ceremony of *madwa, tel-charhana, barat* etc., are definitely traceable to the influence of the dominant communities. It is to be noted that chief rites of a Muslim marriage viz. *nikah* and *milad* are fitted in the external frame of a marriage in the village.

The customs of Ahirs and Dhobas resemble more closely the customs of the non-tribal Hindus and indicate their greater association with the culture of the latter. The Baigas, Gond and Agaria show a marked affinity in the customs followed by them.

Sukh Rupia:

Sukh-Rupia is the local name for the money known as bride-price in English. *Sukh* in Hindi means happiness and the term *sukh-rupia* therefore means the price of happiness which the company of the girl would give to her parents. Similarly, the *mai-sari,* the *lugda* or *sari* (known collectively as *sukh-kapda*) ceremonially presented to the mother of the bride is the symbolic price of the milk of the mother. The meaning of the term *aji-bondri* and its significance was not amplified.

As observed by Martin in his Report[13] marriage by capture used to be a widely prevalent form of marriage in the tribal communities in the none-too-distant past. This type of marriage, however, claims antiquity of the Post-Vedic era. Hindu law givers of the past had discussed eight modes of marriages, namely, the 'Brahma, Prajapatya, Arsha, Daiva, Gandharva, Pisacha, Raksas, and Asur'. Of these, the first four types were socially desirable, while the last four were

[13]. Census of India 1911, Voll. X, Parr I—Report; p. 142.

considered to be undesirable. The *Asur* type of union consisted in abduction of the princess by force, and this is the 'marriage by capture' referred to by Martin in his Report, and relics whereof are discernible in many tribal and non-tribal communities today. As has been adverted to earlier, people in the village explained the mock-fighting that precedes the reception of the *barat* by saying that in the days of yore, the kings in their country used to attack the kingdom of rulers having marriageable princesses and used to capture them by force. Thus, the folklore of the village people lends support to our view that the mock-fighting that we find in their marriages is a relic of the old 'marriage by capture' of which we have examples even in Hindu mythology. About the *Asura* type of union, Kapadia observes that 'it was the sort of contract where money was paid as the bride-price'[14]. Payment of *sukhrupia* or a bride-price is a phenomenon common to all the communities—including the Muslim in the village. The fact that the name for the marriage party leaving from the bridegroom's place is 'चढ बरात' or "attacking barat" is further suggestive of the ancient traditions of marriages by capture.

Another trait common to all the communities and requiring to be noticed is the fact that the wedding pole or *mangrohan* is made of *char* wood: *char* is a tree which is laden with fruit, and selection of *char* wood for the *mangrohan* is therefore indicative of fertility inducement. The practice of fixing the *mangrohan* with the earth sanctified by the performance of worship is also suggestive of a practice connected with fertility, and the practice of bringing earth from ant-hills prevalent in the Baigas, Agarias and Dhobas is again a practice connected with fertility.

By far the most noteworthy feature common to the Hindu communities living in the village is the custom which requires *bhanwar* to be performed twice or even thrice; one of these is the *kuara-kuari bhanwar*, while the other is called the *bara bhanwar*. Plurality of the *bhanwar* is prevalent[15] in the Gonds of the Jabalpur country also but they had not named the *kuara-kuari bhanwar* as such. The Kols of the Jabalpur country also, before the actual *bhanwar* perform fake marriage of the bridegroom with an *oomar*[16] twig. There is no apparent explanation for these practices which distinguish the marriages of the tribal communities from the marriages of other communities amongst the Hindus.

The mixed composition of the *barat* is again a differential, but the practice is found in some other Hindu communities—like the Maharashtrians etc.

Other types of marriage : The Lamsena :

The invention of the *lamsena* marriage or 'marriage by service' is apparently a product of the necessity of poverty of the boy's family. It is prevalent in all the Hindu communities living in the village though only two cases were reported from the village. The practice can claim sufficient antiquity, as Ward also has referred to it on page 138 of his Report. It is reported that the marriage takes place outside the *dudh-lautawa* circle of relations. When the boy's father is very poor and cannot pay the bride-price etc., he approaches the girl's father to keep his son as a *lamsena* in his house, in lieu of the wedding expenses. The term for which the boy should serve his prospective father-in-law is settled by agreement between the two fathers, but should they fail to come to any agreement, help of the caste-panchayat is invoked. The term, according to information received from villagers, varies from two to five years. Fuchs says that the term lasts in Bhumias from five to seven years, and in Gonds from three to five years[17]. In Ward's time the term of apprenticeship varied from seven or eight months to three years, and therefore the increase in the period of service now may be taken to represent the rise in the level of prices. In practice, however, the term is governed much by the age of the marriage partners.

When the fathers of the boy and girl have reached an agreement regarding the period of service, the former stands a drinking party to the latter and caste members in the latter's village and leaves his son with him. The *lamsena* stays with his father-in-law, though in a separate hut, and eats with him. He is not supposed to make intimate advances to the girl while his apprenticeship lasts. If, however, he chooses to disregard the rules of the society, and runs away with his girl during mid-term, the boy's father has to give compensation to the girl's father. The Panchayat also keeps in check wilful breaches of the *lamsena* contract by the girl's father. The marriage is performed at the bride's house, at her father's expense by *bhanwar* rites; his relatives are of course invited to participate in the marriage. After the marriage also, the *lamsena* is offered inducements to stay on in the village.

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[14]. Kapadia, K.M., Marriage and Family in India, p. 136.

[15]. Tiwari, G.N., Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Pradesh, Part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 6, Jaitpuri 1965; p. 27.

[16]. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[17]. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 293.

Haldi-Pani type of marriage:

Out of the 41 (investigated) marriages, referred to earlier it is observed that 15 marriages i.e. 37% of the marriages are of the *haldi-pani* type. This extreme popularity of widows is a universal rule. A widower, if he is not successful in setting up a new home within a few months of losing his spouse, is made a butt of redicule by the villagers. Thus Dukal Baiga, a man of about 55 years, with grand-children, is the laughing stock of all and sundry because of his inability to attract another wife. This being so, and marriage by *bhanwar* rites being ruled out more than once at least in the case of woman, marriage by *haldi-pani* rites is the only alternative open to intending partners. Lastly this form of marriage is quite cheap. Shorn of all the rituals, and expensive feasting of the regular marriage, *haldi-pani* marriage consists simply in anointing the persons to be married with turmeric paste, and in bangles or *churi* being offered by the husband to the wife. Feasting of caste *panchas* of course takes place, but its scale is not very lavish and it does not entail much expenditure. However, if the woman to be married is already the wife of another man, then her new husband has to pay the compensation to her old husband.

Elwin describes the *Churi-pahrana* type of marriage to the marriage in a registry office, while the marriage with full *bhannwar*-rites is compared by him to the wedding solemnised in the church. The wives of a *haldi-pani* marriage enjoy the same social status as the wives of a regular marriage, and their sons inherit equally with sons born of wives of a regular marriage. In fact, there is no ceremonial or social distinction in women married according to the regular or the *haldi-pani* type, and that can also be advanced as a reason for the extreme popularity of this type of marriage.

A woman who has already been married once cannot again be married by the *bhanwar* rites. At the same time, an unmarried man or woman has to be married at least once by the full marriage rites. In cases, therefore, where unmarried young men seduce married women, the difficulty is got over by symbolically marrying the man first by the *bhawar* rite with an axe[18] and then his remarrying the other woman with *haldi-pani* rites. If the man has been married but the woman is unmarried, a marriage by full rites can take place between them.

Udharia or marriage by abduction:

If love develops between a man or a woman, whether married or unmarried, and if the two consummate their love by running away and marrying, the marriage is known as *Udharia*. Such cases are quite frequent in the tribal communities of Amwar. Usual causes that lead to this type of union are pre-marital sex relations between a girl and a boy, torture inflicted by the husband on a wife, or the latter succumbing to the advances made by a lover in contravention of the marital tie .The marriage is performed by the full *bhawar* rites or by *haldi-pani* rites depending upon the previous histories of the persons concerned.

Paithu:

This is yet another way in which conjugal relations are formed in Amwar and in the society to which they belong. Literally *paithu* means entering; and derivation is suggested from the fact that the woman enters the house of the person with whom she had sexual relations. She starts living there, undaunted by the initial maltreatment meted out to her. Subsequently, her status is put on a legal footing by the performance of her marriage with the person in whose house she has intruded. It should, however, be borne in mind that a woman takes recourse to this extreme step only if she conceives by such man, or under some other equally compelling cirmumstance. The people of Amwar reported only one case of *paithu*. This was of the daughter (13 years old) of Bhukaoo Baiga who left her father's house and started living with a Baiga boy of Patpara. The reason which compelled her was simple love.

Widow remarriages:

Inspection of schedules shows that the number of widows, widowers, or separated persons in the village is very small. These are persons who have not been able to find suitable partners for cohabitation and who have not yet become resigned to their state of enforced celibacy. Infact, remarriage of widows is the rule in the rural communities of Amwar, except when the widow is not acceptable owing to her crossing the child bearing age. In case of widowers, old age is no dis-qualification. *Levirate* is practised in the village, but elder brother of the late husband of the widow is forbidden from marrying her. There are two cases of the junior *levirate* in the village. In fact, there is a social compulsion on the widow to remarry the younger brother of her late husband, even if the former is already having a wife living. If she disobeys this rule, and marries any other man, the latter has to pay compensation to the younger brother of her deceased husband. The custom of junior *levirate* appears to have originated from the necessity of preserving the solidarity of the family. Economic reasons are also reasonable, because the family of the late husband had spent money on his marriage with her, and

[18]. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 284.

they are therefore justified in claiming back their money even as the husband himself would do if he were alive.

The marriage of a widow takes place by the *churi-pahrana* rites.

Divorce

Divorce is freely permitted in the society of Amwar. Theoretically speaking only a husband can divorce his wife on grounds of barrenness, infidelity, quarulous nature or the habit of running away from the household. In practice, however, cases of husbands invoking the caste panchayat for seeking separation from their wives are unheard of.

There was not one in Anwar. On the other hand, there are numerous cases of husbands being deserted by their wives. They do not have to go before the caste panchayat for the purpose. It is necessary and sufficient that they take matters into their own hands and slyly run away with their lovers. The matter is, of course, taken up before the caste council by the husband of the runaway woman, not because he is much interested in getting back his wife—though he would be only too happy to take her back—but because he has to square up the issue of compensation from his wife's lover. The lover has of course to make the necessary payments and also to feed the caste, and formalise his relations with the woman by marrying her according to the *haldi-pani* rites. The amount of compensation varies from case to case. It was, however, reported that of late heavier penalties are being inflicted in such cases because the society wants to minimise them. However, cupid's arrows seem to have greater sway over the hearts of persons than the deterrants imposed by the society, and cases are not wanting when persons pay considerable sums like five to six hundred for the sake of their sweet heart. Amwar also has its Don Juans, who would care naught for financial deterrants in winning their spouses. The case histories recorded later in this report will bear this point out. If a woman, however, goes on changing husbands, the compensation paid to her former husbands follows a sliding scale i.e. it goes on decreasing with every new husband. After about six such changes, husband's do not demand any compensation because, as Bhursu Baiga (*Gunia*) put it, that by her sixth change She becomes *paira* i.e. dehusked paddy f dder and no question of compensation would therefore arise.

Polyandry and polygamy

Polyandry or social system which permits a women to have several husbands at a time is not practised. Polygamy is of course in vogue. There was, however, only one case of a polygamous union in the village, that of Dhansingh Gond, he has two wives. People approve of polygamy as a social system; but practical considerations limit cases of polygamy to a minimum.

Death in Baigas

A dead body is either cremated or buried. Just before death, the dying man, if lying on a cot, is lifted off the bed and put on the ground. A little *pej* and a silver coin are then put in his mouth, and he is made to swallow it. After death, the corpse is bathed in the house. If a man, it is his wife who bathes the corpse. In case of woman, other women of the household undertake the duty. Afterwards, it is wrapped as far as possible in a new cloth, and turmeric powder and oil are applied to it.

Corpse is taken to the funeral ground either on the cot, or on a bamboo *kathari*. The *kathari* is lifted on shoulders by four persons and taken to the funeral ground. Our Baiga informant Tenda did not confirm the fact, mentioned by Elwin, that the hurdle is carried away, "going by a zigzag route, and avoiding the main paths as much as possible" with a view to "prevent the soul from finding its way back to the house". Tenda pointedly denied this, and state that the mourners carry the corpse straight to the funeral ground. As already observed, the dead body is either cremated or buried. Tenda also reported that in cases of sudden death burying is generally the rule, but if death has occurred after a protraced illness, the practice is usually to cremate. Thus if a person dies without much suffering (*sukh se marna hogya to jalate hai*) i.e. having attained a good age, he is cremated. In cases, however, of premature deaths, or deaths of persons who are not of sufficient age, who die after brief period of illness, burial is the rule. In case of cremating the son of the deceased leads the procession with an earthen pot containing fire with which the pyre will be lit. This is in accordance with the non-tribal Hindu practice from whom probably the tribals have borrowed it. On reaching the funeral ground, the *kathari* is taken three times round the funeral Pyre or the grave, as the case may be. The corpse is then placed in the grave, or on the funeral Pyre. It deserves to be noted that they put a copper coin in the pit of the grave or into the pyre, symbolically, signifying the purchasing of the land. The grave is dug, or the pyre prepared in the north-south direction, and the corpse is laid in the grave with his feet pointing to the north. In the village dialect *mar muhoo* is the term used for south, because the head of the deceased is kept in the south direction. (This may be contrasted with the non-tribal Hindu practice, according to which the feet are kept pointing to south, under the belief that the region of the god of death is to the south). The face of the dead is upwards—whether it be a man or woman, and this appears to be contradictory to the version in Elwin's 'The Baiga' (page 296), that the corpse

is laid "face downwards, if a man, and face upwards if a woman". The deceased's son then lights the funeral pyre. If the son be not alive, the rite of lighting the funeral pyre is performed by the father of the deceased. The fire for the purpose is prepared by the *samdhi* of the deceased from the fire brought from home by the son in the earthen pot. In case of burial, the son and if he is not available, the father of the deceased, is the first to throw earth over the dead body. After that all the mourners throw a little earth into the grave, or put small bits of wood into the funeral pyre. In all cases, whether of burial or cremation, the *samdhi* of the deceased keeps grain in a bamboo 'चुट की' and scatteres it round the grave or the pyre.

A potful of *pej* is kept near the grave of the deceased. Other belongings dear to the deceased like his *tungla* (axe) *tuma* (gourd), *soopa*, and sickle or (*hasia*) are also kept. The people were not in a position to enlighten us on the reasons or beliefs behind this beyond a statement that they had been so doing from the time of their forefathers.

After the corpse is buried, or cremated some one of the mourners breaks the cot or *kath ri* on which the deceased was carried with a single blow of his axe. In case of burials, a copper coin and turmeric knot are put in the grave-pit and then a pole is affixed on top of it. Later on some *jari-buti* are tied to the upper end of the pole. Above the grave, an enclosure is prepared and stones are placed in the enclosure. This is known as *morghatti.*

The mourners walk back to the house of the deceased in a single line. At this time, a rite known as *goli ringana* (moving the stone) is performed. The man at the head of the file picks up a stone and passes it on to the man behind him, this man to the one next to him, till the stone reaches the last man. While thus passing on the stone, no one looks behind. The last man spits on the stone and throws it away. The significance of this peculiar custom was again not explained. Stephen Fuchs (page 333) observes that this rite "clearly expresses the wish of the survivors to break off all relations with the deceased! At the deceased's house, another *samdhi* of the house mounts on top of the roof, and from there pours water, with which the mourners wash their left hand. They then rub turmeric powder and oil on their faces and the *samdhi* shaves their hair.

Ceremonial pollution lasts for nine days. Restrictions to take out grain from grain-bin and to cook are imposed on the deceased's family for three days. On the third day, called *tijawan* the restrictions regarding the family's going to the grain-bin are removed, but they may still not cook. The tenth day is called the *nahawan*. All the mourners go to a stream and bathe. In cases of cremation, the son of the deceased collects the ashes from the pyre and tying it in a bundle round his neck, takes bath in a stream. On this day, the women also go to the river to bathe. There they try to catch the 'जीव' which is either a fish or a crab (केकड़ा). It was stated that *jiv* will be re-born to the woman who succeeds in catching it. After catching the *jiv* i.e. the fish or the crab, it is kept on a piece of stone; and *haldi* and *pan* are poured over it, and the women lay prostrate before it in obeisance. The last woman throws back the *jiv* in the river. This may be contrasted with the following observations contained in "The Baiga" of Verrier Elwin.

> "In other villages, on the Daswa day the women catch a fish or frog and put it in a hollow mud-ball. Then they weep and prostrate themselves before it, and mark it with milk and turmeric as though they were doing the *tikawan* at a wedding. For it is the man's last marriage rite. Then they throw the ball into the river, it breaks and the soul escapes".

The above observations bring out how customs take different forms, and how the beliefs underlying them undergo transformation.

On the tenth day, the *samdhi* of the deceased's house roasts fish or goat and feeds the members of the household, and implores them to get over the miserable feelings on account of the loss. The caste people are also fed on this day.

Deaths in Gonds:

On the death of a person, the *samdhi* and other close relatives of the deceased are informed. The funeral does not take place in night. As in Baiga, cremation is resorted to when the person has died in *sukh* or happiness i.e. after attaining a good age. In other cases, burial is the rule. The dead body is taken to the funeral ground in a bier or hurdle, known as *kathari* and while marching it is ensured that the *kathari* is taken out of the house "head" first. In case of cremation, the funeral pyre is ignited by the son and *samdhi* of the deceased, the son from the side of the head ond the *samdhi* from the side of the foot. If the deceased had no son, the pyre is ignited by his father, brother or wife. The head of the deceased is kept pointing to south which is known as *maramukh* or *marmahu* on that account. In case of burial, a coin is put in the grave by way of price of land and the dead body is put in it, head southwards. The grave is then filled, the lead being given by the chief mourner—a son, father, brother or wife of the deceased. Other mourners also then join in filling the grave. Near the grave, a small amount of grain and a broken earthen pot are kept. Thereafter the *samdhi* gives *mukhari* (a

twig of *sarai* for cleansing teeth) to all persons and after doing *mukhari* the mourners take bath in the river and return to their house in a single file. While coming back, *goti ringana* takes place as in the Baigas. The ceremonial impurity lasts for three days. For the first two days, no food is cooked by the bereaved family in its house; and it is fed by the *samdhi*. On the third day, *tij nahan* takes place. The whole house is cleaned and all members go to the river to take bath. The women on this day catch a fish or a crab and bring it home and worship it as in case of Baigas. The fish or crab is afterwards thrown away in the river. On the third day, food is cooked in the house and the caste people from the village and adjoining villages are given a feast. It was, however, stated that it was not obligatory that the feast should be given on the third day; it could be given any time before a year after the death. Persons of other castes also accompany the funeral procession but they do not take any active part in the ritual activities there. They are also not invited to the caste feast on the third day.

Destiny of the soul:

The Gond of Amwar do not raise any memorial stones or posts to the dead in case of normal deaths. In case, however, of persons dying unnatural death, i.e. through lightning, drowning or any other accidental cause, they erect a *koor* on the boundary of the village any time in three years. The *koor* is simply a heap of stones, and its object is to prevent the soul of the deceased from coming back to the village; for it is believed that in case of accidental deaths the soul of the deceased is not mingled with Burhadeo. There was, however, no *koor* at Amwar.

The 'Kunda'—mingled with Burhadeo:

The rite of *kunda milana* is performed by the Gonds any time within three years of the death. For this the family has to go to the village where its *pujeri* lives. The *pujeris* of Mangal, Sardu, Amoli and Sonau Gonds of Amwar live in villages Koilighat (Balaghat district), Saniamar Bondar, Parsatola and Mal kachhri (Bilaspur district). It is believed that after the rite of *kunda milana*, the soul of the deceased is mingled in Burhadeo, and it on that account ceases to be troublesome to the family members. The *pujeri* ties a stalk of grass in the name of the deceased in a little bundle which also contains a piece and a knot of turmeric. This is the *kunda* and is supposed to represent the soul of the deceased. The *pujeri* then hides this *kunda* in the forest. After this the afflutus of Burhadeo descends on the head of a member of the family who, thus possessed is able to search the *kunda* and offers it to the Burhadeo. In case of such persons who have died unnatural death, the Burhadeo does not accept the *kunda* and the possessed man throws it apart. In case of such deceased, whose *kunda* is not accepted by Budhadeo, a chicken is fed and led free by the *panda* after the performance of some rites. The chicken which is then supposed to represent the soul of the deceased ancestor is eaten by some animal and there does not remain any reasonable possibility of its coming back and pestering the members of the family. Again, as if to doubly ensure the non-return of the soul of the deceased, the *koor* referred to earlier is made outside the village boundary.

In the Gonds of Amwar, who say they belong to the Nagbansi division, there is a belief that the souls go to the *Naglok* (also known as *patal*) after they are mingled with the Burhadeo by the *pujeri*.

Death in Agaria:

The Agaria follow practices similar to Gonds in case of death in the family. The ritual pollution lasts for three days, on which a feast is given to the members of the caste. They do not, however, follow the practice of mixing the soul in Burhadeo, as the Gonds do.

Death in Ahirs:

The body of the deceased is taken to funeral ground on the cot—if death has occured on a cot—or in a bier. As in other communities, burial and cremation both are in vogue. The latter method of disposal is followed in case of old persons dying at an advanced age. The rites of cremating or burying are similar to Gond rites. The ceremonial pollution lasts for three days. On the third day, all persons of the house and members of the caste go to the river for a bath. On return, a person from the bereaved family gives to the *sonwani* of the caste a *thali* containing turmeric powder, oil and water. The *snonwani* then sprinkles the oil and turmeric in the whole house, and it is only then that the gods of the house are held to be purified. The same day, women of the house bring a fish or a crab from the river, worship it and throw it back in the river. The funeral feast is given on the fourth day.

The Amwar Ahirs also believe in mingling the soul in Burhadeo. This is done anytime within three years of the death. The *pujeri* of the family of Baisakhu Ahirs lives in Parasmahu.

Dhoba:

The death rites in Dhobas are similar to the Gonds rites. In their case, however, there is nothing like mingling the soul with Burhadeo.

Mohammadan family:

The corpse is buried in the grave, with its head in the north direction. It is laid on a cloth and is covered also by means of a cloth. The body is placed on its back in the grave. No food or other article is placed by the side of the grave as in case of other castes. After burial, the

faqir reads what is known as *janaje ki namaj* the house is freed of ritual impurity. On the him. On return, the mourners purify themselves by touching their bodies with flowers—which are soaked in oil in a *thali*.

Nahawai takes place on the third day, when the house is freed of ritual impurity. On the same day, a feast is given to caste members from nearby villages.

The last rite is the *chalisa* which is performed on the fortieth day after death.

Participation of other castes:

It was disclosed that people belonging to other castes accompany the funeral procession. They, however, merely watch the various rites, and do not actively participate in them. They are not invited to the funeral feast on the tenth day.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMY

The economic life of Amwar centres round its agricultural lands, forests and its cattle wealth With few wants, and fewer avenues open for their satisfaction, the economy of the village is more or less a subsistence economy, the motif of production being the direct satisfaction of the needs of the community, and not for the market. As is natural to expect of such an economy, the wants of the people are mostly of the category classed as 'compulsory'—food, modicum of clothing, and shelter there being hardly any need which could be called luxury.

Economic resources :

Agriculture is the mainstay of the village economy. The total land in the village measures 2.997.56 acres. This is the total area of village for revenue and administrative purposes, and it includes forests, pasture lands, rivers and *nullahs*, hills etc. The area of land under each of these categories is initially fixed at settlement. This inclusion in the village of an extensive area other than the settled (inhabited) and occupied area tended in the past to make it—what has been called by sociologists and anthropologists— a *microcosm* or little universe in itself by enabling it to evolve a more or less closed economy; producing a mojor portion of its needs in the village itself. Amwar, to this day, remains to some extent a *microcosm* in the economic sense. It is only recently that its economic frontiers have begun to widen. Reverting to the main point, it is to be noted that of the total area of about 3.000 acres, only 252.55 or about one-twelth of the total area is recorded as occupied —viz. held under tenures by persons. It may be interesting as well as instructive to know how the land in the various primary classes has changed since last settlement (1927—30).

Changes in areas of land of different types

Serial No.	Type of land	Area in acres at settlment	Area in acres at present
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Big tree forest .	4·88	4·88
2	*Pahad* and *Chattan* (Mountain and Rocks). . .	2361·18	23161·18
3	Small tree forest and grass . . .	299·67	324·07
4	Water . . .	44·38	44·38
5	Roads and *abadi* .	10·50	10·50
6	Total unoccupied land	2720·61	2745·01
7	Total occupied land	276·95	252·55
	Total area .	2997·56	2997·56

It would appear from this table that a change occurred only under two heads—the area under small tree forests and grass and the small tree forests and grass has increased by occupied area. The area under first category, i.e., 24.40 acres; while the occupied area has gone down by an equal amount. The unoccupied area has thus registered an increase of 24.40 acres at the cost of the occupied area which has decreased by an equal amount. At first sight, this diminution in the occupied area attracts attention because it indicates, *prima facie*, a decadent, rather than a growing, agricultural economy. To what extent is this preliminary observation justified will be seen only when we have proceeded more with our discussion.

Soil types :

The land classification at Amwar (as regards the occupied land) differs from the somewhat complex system adopted for the regularly settled assessment groups of the Mandla and Dindori tahsils. Under this latter system the soils are classified into ten types—*Kachhar, Kabar* I. *Kabar* II. *Mund* I. *Mund* II. *Khisa Sehra, Kaitha Sehra, Mutharra, Barra* and *Bari*. The soil classification at Amwar follows the simplified system described at pages 11 and 12 of the Report on the Revision of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mandla District (1927—30). Under this simplified system the soil types distinguished were *Gohari* I, *Gohari* II, *Dhanahi* I. *Dhanahi* II, *bari* and *mutfarkari*. *Ujarha* denotes the area open to damages from wild animals, and in view of the importance of this fact in the village, this character of the land is indicated by adding the suffix *ujarha* to the soil name. *Gohari* is land producing wheat, *dhanahi* is rice land while *mutfarkat* means minor-cropped land. *Bari* is garden land *Gohari* I is further distinguished as land capable of growing wheat regularly or being regularly double-cropped, and it is the equivalent of *Mund* I or *Kabar* in the first classification. Similarly *dhanahi* I means the better rice land, re-

ceiving the village drainage, or possessing some other advantage of position. The table below presents a distribution of occupied land into the various types indicated above:

A break up of village area according to soil types

Serial No.	Soil Type	Area in acres	
1	Gohari 1, Ujarha .	8·56	
2	Gohari 2, Ujarha .	64·81	
3	Dhanahi I. . .	8·38	
4	Dhanahi 2, Ujarha .	152·45	
5	Bari . . .	22·35	
	Total occupied area .	256·55	Includes 4 acres of land recorded under water.
6	Mutfarkat Ujarha .	2712·46	
7	Impossible to cultivate	28·55	
	Total area. .	2997·56	

This table brings out the important fact that really good wheat or rice land is scarce in the village. Bulk of the occupied land is inferior rice land, and that too is pestered by wild animals. However, this could possibly be improved in times to come. A very large area 2712.46 acres is recorded as *mufarkat ujarha*; and it is this area to which people of Amwar look for meeting their future and present land hunger. Its classification as *mutfarkat ujarha* is of course a rough and ready one, and some of it should be capable of being turned to some better account. The Baigas of Amwar—who can extract crops from the difficult, hillslopes in their *bewars* should certainly be able to break some of the less difficult lands of the large landmass of 2712.46 acres classed as *mutfarkat ujarha*. Excluding from this areas recorded as mountains and rocks, big tree forest, water etc., we are left with an area of 291 acres. All this area is recorded as grass or small tree forest. All of it is, however, not fit for cultivation. At the nistar enquiry that was held in the village after the Abolition of Proprietary Rights Act, 1950, an area of 54.81 acres only was declared as *kabilkasht* or fit for cultivation. It is this area, infact, which is available for allotment to *bonafide* cultivators under official rules. The lands in the village being generally of poor productivity assessed mostly at the rate of 12 nP per acre, the available culturable land in the village can reasonably meet the demands of six cultivating families only. There are in the village, at the time of this enquiry eight landless families of Baigas alone and five other families besides many others who own small areas of land. This leads us to conclude that the existing cultivable land in the village which is available for occupation by villagers is far too inadequate for the landless families of the village, and unless the various land reforms measures enacted by the Government (to be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter) lead to an easing of the situation, which does not seem to be very likely in the near future, the scope of extension of cultivation in the village by lawful means, is extremely limited.

Cropping pattern :

Given below is a statement of crops grown in the village during the intercensal decade 1951—60. It is prepared from the records maintained at the tahsil headquarters by the Kanungo, on the basis of information furnished by the village Patwari from the village papers. The statement shows that barring an exceptional year or two, the trend is for the net cropped area to increase. The net cropped area was minimum viz. 74 acres in 1952-53. while in the closing

Year	Occupied area	Area held by Patel	Area held by Raiyats	Net occupied area	Double cropped area	Principal crops: Paddy	Kodo Kutki	Wheat	Irrigated area	Total Kharif area	Total Rabi area	No. of plough cattle	Revenue demand	Collection	Remark
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
1951-52 . . .	256	..	256	83	15	19	42	..	..	78	21	33	82	82	..
1952-53 . . .	254	..	254	74	5	21	30	..	..	71	15	40	82	82	..
1953-54 . . .	254	..	254	86	19	29	36	..	..	85	19	48	82	82	..
1954-55 . . .	254	..	254	101	18	28	46	..	..	99	20	56	82	82	
1955 56 . . .	254	..	254	120	18	27	65	2	..	114	24	39	92	92	
1956-57 . . .	253	..	253	124	43	28	66	3	..	116	52	70	92	92	
1957-58 . . .	253	..	253	188	..	69	86	..	..	186	2	74	92	15·50	
1958-59 . . .	253	..	253	187	32	37	123	..	..	188	39	52	168	168	
1959-60 . . .	253	..	253	180	39	30	130	..	..	180	39	52	92	92	
1960 61 . . .	253	..	253	152	20	33	71	6	..	135	36	62	92	92	

year of the decade, it stood at 152 acres—thus since 1952, the area has more than doubled itself. During the period 1951-60, the village population increased by (156—96) 60 persons i.e., by about 62.5 per cent. Apparently, the net cultivated area has outpaced the population growth within the last ten years, and this indicates that the people are somewhat better-off now than ten years ago as regards cultivation, though, whether that is adequate for their sustenance is a question which can only be answered after more facts are elucidated about the economy.

A look at the crop statement further shows that approximately hundred acres (40 per cent of the occupied area) remained uncultivated in the year 1960-61. The uncultivated area was 20 per cent in 1959-60 and more than 50 per cent in the earlier years. A considerable area out of this represents the lands given resting fallows in accordance with agricultural usage. But a considerable portion—40.65 acres in 1960-61—is old fallows and apparently is not being cultivated by the holders. Amwar principally grows *kharif* crops, the area under which has been more or less steadily increasing during the last decade. The *rabi* crops in comparison occupy an insignificant area—which, leaving exceptional years 1956-57 and 1957-58, varied from 1/4th to 1/5th of the *kharif* area for the year. In the closing year of the decade it was 1/4th of the *kharif* area.

In the case of paddy, marked trend to increase is discernible. Being the staple food of the people, *kodon kutki* account for bulk of the cropped area during all the years. The cropping pattern during the year 1961-62 for all the crops grown in the village is given in the following statement:—

The pattern does not indicate any significant departure from past years. The areas under *Jagni* (*Kharif*) and *Rai* (*Rabi*) need to be particularly noted as these are crops which put cash in the hands of the villagers.

Forests:

The importance of forest in a tribal economy can never be overemphasized. In fact, it is wellnigh impossible to think of the tribals removed from their forest setting. It is probably for this reason that the relationship between the tribal people and forest has been described as symbolic. The tribal communities living at Amwar enable us to appreciate the truth of this platitude. The influence of forest is visible in every aspect of life there. To begin with, about half the families of Baigas practise what is known as *bewar*, a type of shifting cultivation, which is possible only in the forest-clad hill slopes of the village. The houses of all communities in the village are built almost wholly of materials—bamboo, wood, thatch, etc., obtained directly from the forest. The forest provides grazing grounds for the village herd. It supplies the coal to the Agaria family as also the iron-ore. The bamboo *sine qua non* for the numerous artifacts prepared by the Baiga for their domestic use—comes from the forest. On top of it all, the forest provides a large variety of natural forest produce i.e. roots and tubers like *bechandi, tikhur*, fruits of *mahua, tendu, achar, aonla, oomar, chhind, bhilma*, etc., which, besides satisfying the immediate domestic need of the people, enable them to obtain other commodities like salt, kerosene, cloth etc. by barter. The Baigas are traditional hunters, and for this again, they have to turn to the forest. The *chongi* which is the popular smoke of the villagers, their leaf-plates and cups, their indigenous

Crop	Kharif Crops		Crop	Rabi Crops	
	Occupied land	Encroached		Area occupied	Encroached
Paddy	39·86	11·66	*Pissi*	4·67	1·40
Kodon and *Kutki*	61·38	22·83	*Birra*	0·98	0·47
Maka	14·87	2·96	Gram	3·00	1·57
Jagni	9·90	1·38	*Rai*	13·59	3·06
San	0·35	..	*Masoor*	0·50	..
Urda	0·93	..	*Bajra*	0·00	0·20
Kanda	0·05	..	*Alsi*	0·20	..
			Tobacco	0·03	0·06
			Dhan	..	0·02
Total *Kharif*	127·34	38·73	Total *Rabi*	22·97	6·78
Double cropped	Occupied area		19·61		
	Encroached		5·05		
Net cropped area	Occupied area		130·70		
	Encroached		40·45		

liquor etc., all come from the forest. It is thus seen that forest plays a vital role not only in the economy of the village but permeates all facets of their life and the description of the relationship between the people and their forest surroundings as symbolic is therefore no exageration.

It has already been stated that Amwar is situated in a forest setting. Of the 2,997 acres of village area, 2,690.13 acres, or above 90 per cent, is covered by forests, big and small and hills. To the north and east of the village is the Madfa Reserve Forest. A description of the flora and fauna found in these forests has already been given.

Livestock:

It is not unreasonable to expect livestock to play a significant role in a predominantly agricultural and forest economy. The livestock wealth of Amwar, as ascertained from village papers in the maintenance and custody of the village Patwari is 523 in absolute numbers. Its distribution is presented below:

Bulls	72
Breeding Bull	1
Cows	114
Bull-calves	49
Cow-calves	52
Cows for plough	14
Cattle	302
Be-buffalo	8
She-buffalo	32
uffalo-calves—He	124
Buffalo-calves—She	8
Total buffalo	60
Horse	1
Goats	25
Pigs	5
Cocks	31
Hens	25
Chickens	74
Total	523

The village seems to be reasonably rich in livestock wealth. If we exclude fowls, the average number of cattle and other animals possesseed per person is 2.5. The average of cows per household comes to three while every household on an average possesses a buffalo. This somewhat bigger number of cows and buffaloes is reflected in the adoption by 8 households of the *ghi*-making industry as a subsidiary economic activity. It was, however, reported that the average yield of milk per cow in the village was about 1/2 a seer per day, and that for a buffalo was 1½ seers a day. These are admittedly very poor yields and are partly due to the fact that villagers milk the cows and buffaloes only once in a day. There being no dearth of grass in the village, it should be possible for the people to improve the yield of milk per cow and buffalo.

The employment of about 14 cows for ploughing may be noted. It obviously indicates that there are not enough number of bullocks for the purpose. But what is socially more significant, is that it shows that a section at least of the village population does not regard the cow with the reverence with which the non-tribal Hindus do.

Other resources:

Among other resources, mention may be made of the perennial streams Manai, and the Jalle-Jhori. The former is a bigger stream with high banks and its utility for irrigation purposes is extremely limited. In the case, however, of Jalle-Jhori, it is noticed that for the most part it flows between low—at places almost on level with the fields—banks, and to boot, has some of the best lands in the village on either side. Its potentiality for irrigation is therefore great; and also practical because it would probably not be a costly affair—at least as regards the fields on its right hand which are generally on a lower level.

Factors influencing economic life in the village :

(a) *Land Reforms*: Amwar was a malguzari village, created under the Waste Land Purchase Rules sometimes after 1868. Prior to the year 1951, the *proprietary rights* in the village vested in the malguzar or the landlord of the village, and others in the village held lands—agricultural or otherwise—from him under different types of tenures. As regards agricultural lands, there were two types of tenures—the absolute occupancy and the occupancy. These tenures, and the rights accruing to the tenants under them were defined and regulated by the C.P. Tenancy Act of 1920. The absolute occupancy tenant had somewhat greater rights in the land than the occupancy tenant; but even he could not generally transfer interest in land without reference to the landlord, who enjoyed a right of pre-emption. The rights enjoyed by the occupancy tenants were extremely limited. Sections 11 and 12 of the C.P. Tenancy Act which dealt with the rights of an occupancy tenants run as below: "Sec 11.—The interest of an occupancy tenant shall on

his death pass by inheritance in accordance with his personal law:

Provided that:—

(i) no person shall take any interest during the life time of any ancestor of such person in the male line of descent from the tenant;

(ii) no collateral shall be entitled to inherit unless he is a male in a male line of ascent or descent and within seven degrees of kindred from the tenant. Sec. 12. (1).—An occupancy tenant may transfer his holding only to the extent and in the manner herein indicated, namely—

(i) he may sublet any right in his holding for one agricultural year, provided that no contract for such lease shall be made more than two months before the year to which it relates, or shall contain a convenant to renew;

(ii) he may transfer, otherwise than by a simple mortgage as defined in the Transfer of Property Act 1882, any right in his holding to any cotenant, or person, who if he survived the tenant without nearer heirs would inherit his right."

It thus appears that an occupancy tenant had very limited rights of transfer in his holding. This obviously was a great disadvantage. As it transpires all landholders in Amwar were occupancy tenants, and thus suffered from the legal disabilities referred to above. Moreover the provision of Law which permitted the eviction of an occupancy tenant, even though the eviction was channelled through a revenue officer and could only be for arrears of land revenue, made the position of the tenantry very unsafe. Added to this was the unfortunate circumstances that almost invariably the tenantry was unlettered and ignorant, while the person they had to deal with was in most cases an artful and unscrupulous landlord, or his equally unscrupulous agent. The first landlord of the village was the firm of Raja Gokuldass of Jabalpur. According to the information collected at this enquiry, people were by and large not unhappy during the proprietership of this landlord. Their woes really started, when sometime after 1931 but before 1940, the village came in the hands of a minor from Raipur. The effective day-to-day administration of the malguzari was carried on by a *Munim* or *Mukhtiar* resident at Mawai (which was also included in the Malguzari). This *munim* is reported to have been harassing the tenants of Amwar through extraction of *begar* or forced labour in the malguzari lands at village Mawai—and for various other purposes like repairs to the malguzari house etc. He is said to have initiated an allegedly false civil case against Ramhai Dhoba which ended in a fiasco. The Kotwar of Amwar (residing at Mawai) also was reportedly so much harassed by this agent that he was, at one time, almost thinking in terms of relinquishing his kotwarship. Apart from extracting illegal *begar* from people, the agent used to take a *tika* whenever a new person wanted to settle in the village, or construct a house there. The *tika* often meant the gift of a cow or even a buffalo to the landlord, or a cash present to the extent of Rs. 40 to Rs. 50. Dispossession of tenants is said to have been the order of the day, and though the people almost groaned under oppression, what with the fear of the agent and their ignorance, they did not bring their grievances to the notice of the appropriate revenue authorities. In other words, even though the extant revenue and tenancy enactments contained provisions to safeguard the interests of the tenants, such provisions served the purpose only of adorning the paper on which they were printed; in practice, the malguzar or his agent always could, and in the case of Amwar reportedly did, flout the legal provisions. It was therefore natural for the people of Amwar to give vent to their resentment with the repressive institution of village landlordism, and with two exceptions they unequivocally expressed their disapprobation with it. It was a very welcome sigh of relief they heaved, when in 1951, with the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Abolition of Proprietary Rights Act, 1950, this age-old, more often-than-not-tyrannical, institution of village landlordism was done away with. This was a big and revolutionary piece of legislation in the history of land reforms in the State and the country.

The two dissentors who opined that they were better in malguzari days did so chiefly on account of their grievances in the matter of land allotment and nistar.

It is true that in the Malguzari days getting land was a comparatively simpler affair; one had only to arrange for the *tika* to the Malguzar. The somewhat complex and certainly lengthy procedure, involving applications to the revenue authorities at Mandla possibly involving a couple of visits to that far-off place (as regards the people of Amwar) does probably result in a measure of hardship. There may also be some difficulty of procedure in obtaining nistar. But, both these persons seem to have lost sight of the cardinal fact that in Malguzari days they were required to do forced labour for the landlord, and what is more important, did not hold their land in ownerlike possession. Apparently they dissented to emphasize their protest with the procedural delays involved in two of the most vital matters of life in the village-land and nistar.

With the passing of the Abolition of Proprietary Rights Act, 1950, the State stepped into the shoes of the landlord, and the tenants now hold their land directly from the State. The rights in land however continue to be what they were before the enforcement of the Act, but the very fact of removal of the malguzar from the village scene was a relief to the people.

The logical corollary to the abolition of proprietary rights in villages was the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code of 1954, which by abolishing the old tenures constituted another radical step in the direction of land reforms. Two new land tenures were created. Thus all persons who, prior to the coming into force of the code, were *malik makbooja* or absolute occupancy tenants, became under the code *Bhumiswamis* of the land held by them; while those who held land in occupancy rights became *Bhumidharis*. The tenants of Amwar thus now became *Bhumidharis*. The Code modified the rights of transfer of the peasantry in land to their advantage. The erstwhile occupancy tenants who now became *bhumidharis* could transfer, otherwise than by way of mortgage any interest in land. The rights over trees standing in the holding were also reformed. The *bhumidhari*—who formerly enjoyed the same rights in fruit trees in his holding as he had in the holding which in concrete terms enabled him to appropriate timber of *babul* (*Acacia arabica*), and propagate lac on *palas* trees (*Butea forndosa*) in the holding—now became master of all trees in the holding except timber trees. In respect of timber trees, the *bhumidhari* could enjoy the usufruct and could propagate lac in them. With all these reforms, radical though they were and far-reaching in their implications to the large masses of rural humanity of the State, the code was far from being the last word in land reforms. It did not bring the State in direct contact with the large numbers of tenants-at-will or for that matter the ordinary or occupancy tenants. There were of course provisions whereby, under certain conditions, subtenancies could be created—i.e., tenants at will could acquire the status of ordinary or occupancy tenants. The Report on the second Five Year Plan (G.O.I. Planning Commission, 1956) had taken it as an agreed objective that "early steps should be taken to enable tenants of non-resumable areas to become owners of their holdings". The M.P. Land Revenue Code of 1959, which was at once intended to consolidate and amend the law relating to land revenue in the various integrating units of the new State of Madhya Pradesh, was therefore another big and effective step in the direction of eliminating the absentee landlord and by prohibiting subleasing of agricultural lands it placed on the statute book measures of deep significance to the landholding classes. The measures of land reforms introduced for the first time, and which are relevant in the context of village Amwar are summarised below.

Simplification of tenures:

The Code abolished the two land-tenures—*bhumiswami* and *bhumidhari*, and created only one class of tenure-holders—the *bhumiswami's*. This provision affected Amwar very intimately because all the tenure-holders in the village were *bhumidharis* and they now became *bhumiswamis*. By a mere stroke of pen, the people for the first time acquired owner-like possession over their holdings. They became owners of all trees—timber and non-timber—standing in their holdings.

Rights of transfer:

Certain restrictions were, however, imposed on the transfer of lands by a *bhumiswami*—which had not hitherto existed. The guiding principle in imposing these restrictions was, according to the Select Committee, that "no person should be able to accept transfer which will bring in his possession more land than the ceiling which may be prescribed, and no *bhumiswami* should be able to transfer land by sale etc., which would leave him a portion of land less in area than the area prescribed as the minimum holding". This minimum holding which has always to be left with the *bhumiswami* in order that a transfer may be valid is fixed at 5 acres in case of irrigated land and ten acres in case of dry land. Amwar being an unirrigated village, the ceiling applicable to it is ten acres. It would be worthwhile to examine the implication of this provision as regards tenure holders of village Amwar.

Holdings classified by size classes—more than ten acres or less than ten acres.

Name of community	No. of holdings	
	Less than ten acres	More than ten acres
Baiga . . .	14	—
Gond	3	2
Agaria . . .	—	3
Others	2	2
	19	7

It is thus seen that in case of Amwar, the number of holdings which are less than 10 acres in size is 19, as against 26 holdings in all in the village. This means that 73% of landholding families in the village cannot transfer their holding by sale or otherwise. The incidence of this provision on the Baigas is hundred per cent because no Baiga household holds more than ten acres of land in the village. Again, of the two holdings of more than ten

acres in size held by persons of castes other than Baiga, Gond and Agaria, one is recorded in the name of Mohammad Beg Sardar Beg who has left the village since long and whose present whereabouts are not known. His holding is at present being cultivated by Chhote Khan, and a few Gond and Baiga families. If we take note of this factual position which has so far failed to come on official records, the number of holdings in the village comes down to 25: and the percentage of families who can not transfer their holdings increases to 76%. Theoretically, this disability would prevent the holders from raising private credit for improvement of the holding or for any other personal cause on the security of the holding. The legislators, however, were careful to incorporate a provision enabling the tenure-holder to take taccavi loans, or loans from a cooperative society. Thus sub-section (8) and (9) of Section 165 of the Code, dealing generally with rights of transfer of a *bhumiswami,* provide that:

> "(8) Nothing in this section shall prevent a Bhumiswami from transferring any right in his land to secure payment of, or shall affect the right of State Government to sell such right for the recovery of an advance made to him under the Land Improvement Loans Act, 1883 (XIX of 1883) or the Agriculturists' Loans Act, 1884 (XII of 1884).
>
> (9) Nothing in this section shall prevent a Bhumiswami from transferring any right in his land to secure payment of an advance made to him by a cooperative society or shall affect the right of any such society to sell such right for the recovery of such advance."

This is the theoretical aspect of the situation: viz. 76% of land-holders of Amwar suffer from a legal disability to raise credit from private sources, but all of them may take taccavi loans or loans from a cooperative society against the security of their holdings. In practice, at the present level of their intellectual development, the idea of selling land is as yet foreign to the thinking of Amwar. In Amwar land has not yet entered the market. As would be seen in a subsequent chapter, if a family finds it difficult to make both ends meet from its holding, it simply deserts the village, leaving the holding to take care of itself. The land of course continues to be shown in the name of the family on the official records; but in the meanwhile, others start cultivating it with the understood agreement to vacate it, if and when, the holder family chooses to stage a comeback to the village. To quote two examples bearing on this, a holding measuring 49.28 acres is recorded in the name of one Mohammad Beg son of Sardar Beg. The recorded tenure-holders left the village for some unknown destination since the last 20 years, and the holding is at present being cultivated by several persons—Chhote Khan whose mother is said to have been kept by Sardar Beg when he was living in Amwar, and a few Gond and Baiga families. Sardar Beg or none of his lawful heirs has not come forward to claim the land. Another example is that of Dhansingh Gond, who left Amwar for three years in 1958 or so, and while going entrusted his land to Sardu Gond under the stipulation that the latter could cultivate the land as long as Dhansingh did not return. No money entered into the bargain. Dhansingh who returned to the village in June 1961, got back his lands from Sardu. One Gond—Samrath who has a holding of 6.82 acres in the village has left the village during the course of this enquiry; he has made no disposition of his holding. For all one knows, he may come back and take possession of his holding. It is thus seen that abandonment of holdings is common in the village. No sale of land has been effected during the last ten years; or for that matter within the memories of those at present living in the village.

Section 176 of the Code lays down the provision in respect of abandoned holdings. It states—

> "(1) If a Bhumiswami ceases to cultivate his holding for two years either by himself or by some other person, does not pay land-revenue and has left the village in which he usually resides, the Collector may, after such enquiry as he may deem necessary, take possession of the land comprising the holding and arrange for its cultivation by letting it out on behalf of the Bhumiswami for a period of one agricultural year at a time.
>
> "(2) where the Bhumiswami or any other person lawfully entitled to the land claims it within a period of three years from the commencement of the agricultural year next following the date on which the collector took possession of the land, it shall be restored to him on payment of the dues, if any, and on such terms and conditions as the Collector may think fit.
>
> "(3) where no claim is preferred under sub-section (2) or if a claim is preferred and disallowed, the collector shall make an order declaring the holding abandoned and the holding shall vest absolutely in the State Government from such date as may be specified in that behalf in the order."

Apparently, no action appears to have been taken in accordance with these provisions as regards the holding recorded in the name of Mohammad Beg Sardar Beg, or in any other case.

Sub-letting:

Subletting is very common in the village. This is not very surprising with the land hungry population of Amwar, where approximately half of the occupied area is in the hands of persons residing in other villages. Under the M.P. Land Revenue Code of 1959, subletting of holdings is more or less banned. This is again a very vital change in the direction of Land Reforms, and with its enaction, atleast in theory we have realised the much talked of slogan—"Land to the tiller". This measure of land reform is very re-

levant in the case of Amwar, and is quoted below in full:

"168. Leases (1). Except in the case provided for in sub-sections (2) and (3) no Bhumiswami shall hereafter transfer by way of a lease for any period whatsoever any land comprised in his holding :

Provided that nothing in this subsection shall apply to the lease of any land made by Bhumiswami, who is a member of a registered co operative Farming Society to such society."

In the explanation given below the subsection, a lease is defined as meaning,

"a transfer of right to enjoy land, made for a certain time, expressed or implied in consideration of a price paid or promised or of money or any other thing of value to be given periodically to the transferer by the transferee who accepts the transfer on such terms", and "any arrangement whereby a person cultivates any land of a Bhumiswami with bullocks belonging to or procured by such person (lessee) and on condition of his giving a specified share of produce of the land to the Bhumiswami."

Sub-section (2) enumerates the exceptions thus a Bhumiswami who is a widow, or an unmarried woman or a married woman who has been deserted by her husband or a minor, or a person subject to physical or mental disability or a person detained or imprisoned under any process of law or a person in the service of Armed Forces or a public, charitable or a religious institution, or a local authority or a cooperative society may lease the whole or any part of his holding. Sub-section (3) provides for subletting by a Bhumiswami who is unable to cultivate his holding on account of any unforeseen calamity, but such a person has to obtain a certificate about the unforeseen calamity from the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha, or where none of these two institutions exist, by the Patel of the village. Section 168 lays down that if a Bhumiswami leases out for any period whatsoever any land comprised in his holding in contravention of section 168, the rights of an occupancy tenant shall there-upon accrue to the lessee in such land, and section 190 provides for the automatic conferral of Bhumiswami rights on an occupancy tenant on payment by him of a compensation equal to fifteen times of land revenue payable in respect of the land.

I have summarised or quoted above some of the important provisions on the topic of sub-lease, that indicate the fundamental way in which agrarian economy is capable of being transferred under the sweeping changes introduced by the Code: However, the evidence in Amwar has shown that so far no cases have occurred in the village wherein an attempt has been made by a tenant-at-will to secure his being recognised as an occupancy tenant on the village papers. For one thing, in general, villagers were unaware, or only very vaguely aware of these changes in the land policy of the Government. Mangal and Amoli Gonds of the village said that the Patwari noted the names of persons who gave their lands, and those who take them on *adhiya*, and suggested that this may be due to the change in law. The people, however, failed to understand how they could become the owner of a field simply by taking it on *adhyia*, from another. Such an act is against the tacitly agreed moral code of the village, and it appears that for some years to come, the fine provisions enacted by the Land Revenue Code ostensibly to secure greater justice to the landless peasants are not going to find favour with the people of Amwar.

The only form of sub-lease found in Amwar is the one known as *adhiya*. It is a form of share-cropping in which the land is tilled and cultivated by a tenant, and in consideration he gives half of the crop to the owner of the land, after making allowance for the seed that was put in.

Land improvement :

So far there has been nothing in the way of land improvement in Amwar. Cultivators in the village are not yet alive to the necessity of improving their lands. In a village where about one-third of the families practise the most primitive type of shifting cultivation, such a thing should not cause any surprise. There is considerable scope for land improvement in the village. What then are the factors that are responsible for this resistance to a change for the better in the village? One factor, of course, is connected with the low living standards of the population, sustaining on a diet of which the chief ingredients are the inferior millets *kodon*, *kutki* and *macca*. These are very sturdy crops, and thrive on very poor soils. Superior crops of paddy and wheat are not grown in any appreciable quantity, and there is thus no inducement for land improvement. Added to this, is the inadequacy or complete non-availability of the financial resources for the purpose. The villagers are in general shy in approaching Government for help in the shape of loans for land improvement. It was revealed to our investigator that people were hesitant in taking Government loans because (i) there were intricacies of procedure beyond their comprehension in taking Government loans, (ii) it involved their running down frequently to tahsil headquarters at Mandla and (iii) the Government did not give them their own time for repayment but would any day send the peon and forfeit their houses, cattle and lands. We were told that under ideal conditions of borrowing, the instalments and the duration or payment should be left to the borrowers' choice. Indeed, the people of Amwar need a lot of education in the matter, which may be taken up by the agriculture and cooperative extension officers of the Mawai block, and till that is done, the chances of land improvement in Amwar are next to nothing.

Industrialisation:

Mandla district is singularly unfortunate and backward in the matter of industries. Even the district headquarters town of Mandla does not have any industrial establishment worth the name. No major industrial plant is proposed to be set up in Mandla district in the Third Five Year Plan. Industrialisation, in the commonly understood sense of the word, is a thing of the distant future in Amwar. Of course, an aluminium plant and a Thermal Power Station are to be set up near Amarkantak in Shahdol district during the Third Five Year Plan. Amarkantak is about 50 miles away from Amwar and it is unreasonable to expect that these will have any impact on the economy of Amwar except probably to the extent of opening up the tract.

Livelihood classes:

The distribution of population into the livelihood classes recognised at the last (1951) Census is presented in the table below:

Factors of change:

At the outset, it should be made clear that as they stand the two sets of figures-relating to livelihood classes in the two Censuses are not comparable. For one thing, in 1951, the number of workers is not separately given; whereas in the 1961 Census, the number of workers in each working category is shown separately. Secondly, there is no straight, category to categorywise correspondence between the livelihood classes of the two Censuses. At the 1951 Census cultivators were categorised into two livelihood classes-those who cultivated their own lands and those who cultivated land belonging to others. Livelihood class III of 1951 Census corresponds to working Category II of 1961 Census, Category III of 1961 Censuses which includes fishing, forestry, mining and quarrying, livestock and animal husbandry etc., was not treated as a distinct livelihood class in the 1951 Census; these activities were included in an omnibus class of persons and their dependents who derive their principal means of

Livelihood Class	Total	Males	Females	Percentage of total population
I Cultivators of owned lands and their dependents. . . .	84	39	45	87·5
II Cultivators of unowned lands and their dependents . . .	..	..	..	..
III Cultivating labourers and their dependents	1	1	..	1·0
IV Non-cultivating owners and their dependents	1	1	..	1·0
V Production other than cultivation	3	1	2	3·1
VI Commerce.	..	..	..	..
VII Transport	..	..	..	..
VIII Other services and miscellaneous sources	7	5	2	7·3

The pattern of livelihood as returned at the 1961 Census is also given below.—

Category	Total	Males	Females	Percentage of total working population
Category I	44	27	17	49·3
Category II	36	16	20	40·3
Category III	7	3	4	7·8
Category IV	..	..	..	..
Category V	..	..	..	..
Category VI	..	..	..	..
Category VII	..	..	..	..
Category VIII	..	..	..	..
Category IX	2	2	..	2·6
Total workers . . .	89	48	41	100·00
Non-workers . . .	51	24	27	
Total Population . .	140	72	68	

livelihood from production other than cultivation[1]. Again, in 1951 Census the agricultural classes were divided into four livelihood classes as against two working categories of 1961 Census. Non -cultivating owner of land, and agricultural rent-receivers and their dependents were treated as a distinct livelihood class in 1951 while the last Census has treated such persons as non-workers. In fact, at the 1951-Census the concept of work was not introduced and persons were divided into livelihood classes depending on the sources of their income.

Livelihood class I of 1951 gives figures of cultivators of land owned wholly or mainly. The test of ownership was thus described—"The test of ownership is existence of a right which should be heritable, but may or may not be transferrable". It thus included such tenures as those of *raiyats*, in *'rotyatwari'* villages, and 'occupancy tenants' in malguzari and other villages. It is to be noted that, if we could exclude the number of dependents, the first two livelihood classes of 1951 Census would correspond to working Category I of 1961 Census viz. cultivators. The third livelihood class of 1951 Census minus the number of dependents similarly corresponds to the II Category of 1961 Census. With these initial observations, we are now in a position to proceed with the examination of any changes that may have taken place in the economic or livelihood pattern of the village population.

A very striking feature emerging from a comparision of the figures of the two Censuses is the extreme paucity of persons in the class of cultivating labourers and their dependents at the 1951 Census, whereas in its counterpart of 1961 Census, the number of workers in agricultural labour is 36 or roughly 40 per cent of the total working population which may ,without introducing any sensible error be taken to represent the percentage of workers and their dependents in the category to the total population. Could it be that there was only one person depending principally on agricultural labour in 1951, and that within the course of the ten years, thirty-five more persons have joined the ranks of agricultural labourers in the village? During this period, the population of the village has increased from 96 to 140 persons. Since vital statistics of the village for the whole decade were not available, it is not possible to allocate this increase between natural increase and in-migration with anything approaching exactitude. Still, the assumption of a 25% natural increase (the average for the district during the period is 25%) would give us reasonably reliable figures. With this assumption, the natural increase works to 24 persons, and in view of their age, they could possibly not swell the number of agricultural labourers. Of the immigrants also, not more than 60% or 10 persons could possibly be workers and treating all these to have joined the ranks of agricultural labourers, we would still be left with an unaccounted for gap of 25 persons.

If we consider the combined population in the first three classes of 1951 Census, and the working population in the first two categories of 1961 Census we get roughly equal percentages 88.5 and 89.4. There is, therefore, reason to believe that the 1st Category of 1951 Census included a large number of persons who, in 1961 Census were classified as agricultural labourers. The probable reasons for this are—(a) the absence in 1951 Census of any clear cut concept of principal work; (b) the tendency of villagers to return themselves as cultivators, even though the area of land cultivated by them may be insignificant. With reference to (a), it may be noted that since in 1951 Census, the concept of 'work' itself was missing, there could not be any question of a concept of principal work. As a hypothetical case, let us imagine a family of 7 persons; the head cultivates land belonging to the household, the wife helps him in the field. Two of his sons work principally as labourers in the field of other persons, having not much work in the household cultivation. The principal source of livelihood of the household is from cultivation of owned lands. Now, assuming that the working pattern of the household does not change in the intercensal period, we find 7 persons being included in Class I of 1951 Census; while in 1961 Census, two persons will be classed in category I and 2 in Category II. We thus get different picture of the same household under the two concepts i.e., the concept of 'work'—and the concept of 'source of livelihood' —there being no actual change in the working pattern. This rather serious limitation has always to be borne in mind while attempting a comparison of the livelihood classes of 1951 Census with the working categories of 1961 Census.

Reverting to our discussion, one thing seems to be reasonably certain; the proportion of persons depending principally on agriculture—whether as independent cultivators or agricultural labourers—has almost remained unchanged. This static character of the economy of the village is to be expected also, for over the ten years under examination, nothing except migration has taken place to change the industrial or occupational pattern of the village. It has, however, to be underlined that figures in both Censuses bring out the cardinal fact of the village economy *viz.* its agricultural base.

Another significant feature is that the percentage of persons (10.41) in Category V and VIII of 1951 Census, very closely corresponds with the percentage (10.6), of workers in categories III and

1. Census of India, 1951, Vol. VII, Madhya Pradesh, Part I-A—Report; p. 53.

IX of the 1961 Census. This would indicate that the proportion of population deriving their sustenance principally from the pursuit of non-agricultural occupations (animal husbandry etc.) has also not registered any increase. In other words, the economic picture of the village can be summed up as a static picture, in which the proportion of dependence on agricultural and non-agricultural sectors has remained unchanged over the decade. Amwar's is thus a stagnant, change-resisting economy, based principally on agriculture, with a secondary dependence on forestry and household industries.

The picture of the village economy as regards the sectors of trade and commerce, transport, construction etc., has also remained unchanged, with none principally working in any of these activities in the two Censuses. This is an additional corroboration to our conclusion of stagnancy of the village economy.

Ownership of economic resources—land.

Of the total village area of 2,997 acres, only 252.55 acres, or 8.4% is held under the Bhumiswami tenure. This is known as the occupied area of the village in the official records. Even of this rather small occupied area, residents proper of the village own only 113.80 acres* which comes to 44.5% of the total occupied area, or approximately 3.8% of the total village area. About 56% of the occupied area of the village is thus owned by persons living in other—mostly neighbouring villages Sunehra, Mawai, Masna and Bhagdu. Thus more than half of the occupied land wealth of the village does not belong to the residents proper of the village, and this fact alone is sufficient to indicate its impoverished economy.

If we consider the entire occupied area of the village, we get an average of 7 acres of land per family. Taking note of the poverty of soils in the village requiring resting fallows from 2 to 3 years after growing a crop of millets for 2 years, 7 acres cannot be said to be an operationally economic average: and does not even assure security from hunger to a family of five members. Thus even in an ideal situation when residents of the village owned all occupied lands in the village, they would not be in an enviable state. As it is ,however, they do not own all the occupied land in the village, and basing our average on the land actually owned by them, we arrive at an average of 3.0 acres per family, which is pitiably small even for a subsistence economy. The logical and inevitable result of such an unhappy state of affairs is (a) cultivation as tenants-at will, (b) unauthorised cultivation. The considerable extent of cultivation under these two last mentioned categories can be seen from the statement given below which is based on figures abstracted from village schedules canvassed during this enquiry, and broadly confirmed from figures supplied by the village patwari.

Ownership of land by community and by nature of tenure.

Name of community	As Bhumiswami	As tenants at will	As encroacher
Baiga . . .	41·03	48·60	17·35†
Gond . . .	6·01	27·88	20·00
Agaria . .	51·47	5·00	—
Others . .	15·29	14·25	—
	113·80**	95·73	37·35

A broad scrutiny of this table shows the disconcerning fact that though the Biagas form the most numerous section in the village community, they are in fact economically the most backward. The relative position of the various communities *vis-a-vis* the ownership of land is more clearly brought out from the following table.

Name of community	Percentage of households to total	Percentage of land owned to total occupied	Percentage to total owned by villagers
Baiga . . .	59	16	36
Gond . . .	19	2	5
Agaria . .	11	20	45
Others . .	11	6	14

Thus, the most numerous community—the Baigas own roughly a little less than one-sixth of the total occupied land-wealth of the village, and a little more than one-third of the total land owned by the villagers. They are the legal owners of 41.03 acres of land, which gives an average of 1.9 acres per family. As it transpires, however, twelve of the Baiga families do not own any land, and if we restrict our average to landholding families, it swells to 4.1 acres, which again is, by no means, a respectable average looking to the generally poor soils in the village. As regards ownership of the land wealth, the Agarias emerge as the most prosperous section of

*As per information furnished by the Patwari. As per schedules, the area is 132·63 acres.

†Does not include area under *bewar* cultivation.

**More cultivators have since been allotted lands.

the village community, and their four families own approximately 10 acres more than the 22 families of the Baiga. This sound position of the Agaria households is in part due to their being the oldest inhabitants—along with some Baiga families—of the village. The Dhoba household also is in an equally sound position and the reason in this case also is in old residence The Gonds seem to be rather backward economically from the evidence of this table which is contrary to facts. In fact, in addition to the land held by them as Bhumiswami, most families in the village cultivate lands as encroachers or tenants-at-will : the area cultivated as tenants at will is comparable to the area of land held as Bhumiswami; and the area under illicit occupation is also considerable. Hence, from the evidence of legal ownership of land alone, it is not safe to come to any definite conclusion regarding the economic condition, but we should consider the land owned in conjunction with land cultivated otherwise than as owners. Reverting to our point, we noted that the relative sound position of the Agarias in the matter of ownership of land is related to the fact of their old residence in the village. As will be discussed later most of the Baiga families and Gond and Mohammadan families in the village are immigrants in the village with varying periods of immigration.

It is appropriate at this place to point out that an area of 49 acres returned as being held on sub-tenure by Chhote Khan and one Gond and two Baiga families belonged to one Walidad Khan from whom it passed to Sardar Beg probably his son. Even Sardar Beg has left the village for the last twenty years or so; and is at present not traceable. The village records, however, still showed the land in the name of Walidad Khan! Since the lawful holder of land is either dead or is not otherwise traceable, the occupation by Chhote Khan and others of the village of the land recorded in the name of Walidad Khan cannot probably be termed as sub-tenancy I will, however, not enter into a discussion of the legal nature of the rights of these persons over the land in their possession: it is hardly relevant except to the extent that their present status may at any time be challenged by the village Patwari or the village Patel. It was disclosed at this enquiry that Chhote Khan and others who are cultivating the land still recorded in the name of Walidad Khan had applied for regular allotment of the lands in their actual physical possession and their applications were pending for disposal in the revenue courts at Mandla. In the meanwhile, the absence of a legal title hardly matters to the people; it could matter only if the question of transferring the land by sale arose. However, as gathered at this enquiry, sale of land is still a rare phenomenon in the village. Till comparatively recently the villagers' attitude to land was that it did not belong to them but to the Malguzar, who had allowed them to occupy it. Though the various land reforms measures enacted during the past twelve years or so have changed completely the old patterns of land tenure, it appears that the people of Amwar have not yet become reconciled to these changes emotionally and ideologically. That also partly explains the frequency of migrations into and from the village. The land deserted by a tenure-holder is generally disposed of by the village Patel. Recently two new Gond families—i.e. those of Bhim and Bharewa settled in the village. Before they settled they had informally approached the Patel and upon being assured by the latter that they would be given land for 'कमाना *Kamana* (the word literally means earning but used in connection with land it means cultivating), they came to and constructed house at Amwar. The land assigned to them for cultivation is that relinquished by Gond emigrants from the village. Formal allotment of these pieces of lands to the occupiers may take an indefinitely long time, or it may not take place at all and the families may leave the village. Such an action of the Patel has no legal support but there is in practice none to question it; the Patwari of the village by some tacit agreement with the villagers continues to gloss over the fact and record it in the name of the previous holder; the actual occupier of the land is recorded as sub-tenant and he pays the land revenue. The formal receipt if any is passed in the name of the recorded holder.

Ownership of land by size of holdings:

A look at table* shows that 20 or more than half of the total number of families in the village do not own any land. It is anything but fortunate that as many as twelve of these are Baiga families. Eight—or roughly one-fifth of all the families in the village posses less than five acres of land; which—keeping in view the poor fertility of the soil and absence of irrigation etc., is hardly adequate even for a subsistance economy for a family. It is again a matter of concern that six of these eight families are Baiga families. Thus 82% of the Baiga families in the village either do not have any land at all, or the land held by them is grossly inadquate for enabling them to live. If we adopt the definition of a landless person given by the M.P. Lan Revenue Code, all these 82% of families will have to be treated as landless. As would be shown

*Based on land held in Bhumiswami rights. There are a few families cultivating encroached or sub-tenancy lands. These have been treated as landless.

Households owning land (Bhumiswami right) for cultivation by size of holding

Community	Number of Households and extent of land								
	No Land	10 to 20 cents	20 to 50 cents	50 cents to 1 acre	1 to 2·4 acres	2·5 to 4·9 acres	5·0 to 10·0 acres	10 to 15 acres	15+
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All persons	20	1	1	3	2	1	5	1	?
Baiga	12	1	..	2	2	1	4	..	..
Gond	5	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Others	3	..	..	1	..	..	1	1	Others-3

later in this Chapter, most of these families depend principally on agricultural or forest labour, and also practise *bewar*. Thus, the distribution of land in the village is a lop-sided one.

Only seventeen of the twenty-nine cultivating families in the village hold land in owner like possession, and the remaining twelve hold land either as sub-tenants or encroachers. We thus come to the regrettable conclusion that of the total land-wealth of the village, the residents of the village own approximately a half, and even this is not distributed equitably. Much of it is concentrated in the hands of four families, three of Agarias and one of Dhoba. The majority community in the village owns a very small chunk of the landed wealth of the village, and more than one-third of their families do not own any land at all, while of those who hold, more than half are land hungry in the sense that the land held by them is not enough to enable them to eke out a secure living. We have also observed how this has led to the undesirable consequence of illicit occupation of land belonging to the Government or to cultivation on sub-tenures.

Ownership of forest resources: The forest in village economy.

An account of the forest in the village, and in the region adjoining it has already been given; and it has been shown that the forest is rich in the *sarai* or *sal* timber. The forests are of two types from the point of view of their management: the reserved forests and the protected forests. The forests included in the village belong to the latter type. The forest resources of the village are owned by the Government, though the villagers' traditional rights in them have been more or less continued. As regards the reserved forest adjoining the village, the villagers have certain rights of nistar over it also, though the extent of such rights is less than in the village forests. It will be useful at this point to describe both in the historical perspective, and in the present setting ,the nature and extent of rights enjoyed by the village people in the forest included in the village as also in the reserved forest adjoining it.

Village forest :

Dealing with the rights of villagers over commonland of the village, including the forest, the "C.P. Settlement Instructions" observe:

> "Briefly, the circumstances of Indian villages in mediaeval times were almost identical with those of English or other European villages in that the village lands included waste lands, streams and other features over which all residents, whether proprietor, tenant, farm hand, or village artisan, enjoyed communal rights. It is unnecessary to detail the stages by which the State elaborated methods for management and revenue collection. At the time when the mulguzari tenure was created there had come into existence a class of estate or village managers who exercised some control over the village and collected and paid the revenue. But their power of control was not absolute for the tiller of the soil was tenant of the State, and the communal rights above mentioned were still in existence[2]".

It is thus evident that, before the advent of the British on the scene, the institution of village proprietors was not in existence; though there was a class of persons who were responsible for revenue collection and management. They were, however, not the proprietors of the village, much less of the village wastelands and forests and other physical features of the village—which belonged to the village community as a whole. The institution of village landlords was a creation of our foreign rulers principally for securing

2. Opp. cit page 15, para 13.

their interests by way of revenue collection and for ensuring some sort of village management from the limited angle of maintenance of law and order. But even the Britishers, though they created the class of persons known as village proprietors, incorporated terms in the deeds creating the zamindaris and malguzaris intended to secure the traditional communal rights of the village community over the common land of the village. Again, quoting from the Settlement instructions:

> "In creating zamindars, jagirdars and malguzars from this class of managers or headmen, Government gave the village and its lands so far as possible in fee simple; but it was and still is, simple in a very modified form, for inferior tenures were created in great variety, and the powers of the landlord in rental enhancement and other matters were strictly limited."

Regarding the communal rights of villagers over village wastelands, forests etc., the Settlement Instructions observe:

> "At the same time the communal rights of the village were recognised very clearly. It is frequently stated that customs only were recorded at the grant of proprietary rights; but this view is incorrect for the record was a record of rights as well as of customs that had become rights, and further" the grant of proprietary rights is defined in the original sanad of proprietary rights of various districts as a provisional garnt depending entirely upon the recognition by the malguzar of the communal right laid down."

The nature of these communal rights enjoyed by the villagers in the historic past is clear from the entries of them made in the records of earlier settlements. There were entries "of right to graze on common land", entries limiting the rights of collecting *mahua* to actual residents of the village, entries laying down the right for the village herd to graze at large over the holding of individuals after removal of crops, entries permitting the malguzar to take up tenant's land in rotation for communal use under sugarcane, and many similar entries which emphasize communal interest to the exclusion of the individual. Wasteland was included in the village, and settled with the malguzar for communal reasons, to supply the village agricultural requirements in grazing and other items, as well as for extension of cultivation".

Later on, however, the communal rights were restricted. Adumbrating the reasons for this obscurement of the communal rights, the instructions state:

> "In the first place the record of the Malguzar as proprietor of the waste, including the abadi, was inevitable; the community could not be recorded as proprietor, for the waste required a single responsible manager, and moreover Government wished the newly created landlord to enjoy the profits provided by wasteland, either in rents in new buildings or in siwai or excess profits obtained from the forest after the requirements of the village had been supplied. Government, however, while recording the malguzar as sole proprietor, endeavoured to maintain communal rights by specific entry in the wajibularz, and again by legalizing the making of rules for management of forests; those rules were obviously made not for the sake of the malguzar, but to secure communal interest."

It is thus clear that before the takeover by the British, the village forest vested in the village community as such for the satisfaction of the communal rights of the village, that, the vested interests of village proprietors were created by the British principally for securing their interests in revenue collection and maintenance of peace in the village; that the communal rights which were recognized by incorporation of specific terms in the sanads creating the proprietorship were subsequently obscured, and more and more powers, passed on to the malguzar who could enjoy the benefits of village waste and forests after the needs of the village were met with. Though statutory provisions existed for securing the communal rights viz. by incorporation in the village administration paper or the wajibularz, and by making rules under section 202 of the erstwhile C.P. Land Revenue Act of 1917, the malguzar who was the sole proprietor of the village exploited the position by extracting unauthorised levies from the tenants. As has been indicated earlier, the tenantry of the village who were innocent of reading and writing were no match for the crafty and cunning malguzar or his agent. In Amwar village, however, the malguzar was non-resident and even his agent lived in Mawai, about four miles away from the village. There was, therefore, no direct interference by him in the enjoyment of the villagers of their traditional rights in the village forest except that a *tika* of Rs. 100 had to be paid to him by every family every year. In addition, frequent demands were made by the malguzar's agent at Mawai to perform *begar* at his house or in his fields. Though they resented this sort of treatment, still enured as they were to live under the worst possible conditions, they were by and large contented as regards their enjoyment of the forest produce was concerned.

The wajibularz of the village speaks of the following rights etc., enjoyed by the villagers over the village wastelands:

(1) **Grazing**—The agricultural cattle of the cultivators of the village could graze in the village waste free. For other cattle, a fee, known as 'Chari' had to be paid to the Malguzar.

(2) **Fuel-wood, grass, creepers, roots, leaves etc.**—All residents of the village were entitled to free nistar in respect of collection of fuelwood and grass creepers, roots, leaves etc.

(3) **Bamboos**—All residents of the village could take dry or wet bamboos free.

(4) **Timber**—The cultivators of the village could take **Satkatha** timber free of cost for preparation of, or repairs to their agricultural implements, or for repairs to their houses. For obtaining timber from the forest, prior permission of the malguzar was necessary.

(5) **Fruits etc.**—Every person could take the fruits of **mahua** trees standing in his holding free, *Gulli, Chironji, tendu* and *Bhilma* leaves or fruits were collected from the forest free.

It is thus seen that prior to the abolition of malguzari, villagers enjoyed free nistar in respect of their basic needs namely—grass for their agricultural cattle, fuel-wood for their domestic consumption, non-timber wood and bamboos for construction of or repairs to their agricultural implements and houses and forest produce for domestic consumption and also selling to get other necessaries of life in exchange. The definition of agricultural cattle was liberal enough to include all the cattle of a cultivator: thus it included—(a) cattle for ploughing and threshing (b) for transporting the produce, (c) for meeting the domestic requirement of milk etc., of the cultivator, (d) for the transport of the cultivator and his personal goods etc.

In practice, however, it was disclosed during the course of this enquiry, that the malguzar charged eight annas per cultivator and household for meeting the requirements of bamboos—this payment was described as 'Nistari' (not to be confused with *tika*) by the villagers. No payment however was required to be made to the Malguzar for all other nistar.

After the proprietory rights were abolished in 1950, the village forest came to be vested in the Government. Its management continued for some time to be in the hands of revenue officers; but subsequently they were declared by a blanket notification to be 'protected forests' under the Indian Forests Act and were transferred to the forest department for management. The villagers however continue to refer to the village forest as 'nistari' or 'malguzari' forest. Even after the abolition of malguzari, the villagers continued to enjoy their *nistar* as of old; which were recorded in a wajibularz written in 1951-52.

At the time of the nistar enquiry, certain areas in the village were reserved for communal grazing; this area measured 2,570 acres. The grazing from this area was to be free. Actually this area formed grazing ground for five villages—Amwar included. Similarly, these same five villages were grouped for satisfying their requirements of fuel-wood and timber from the waste land area of village Amwar. There was some modification regarding the right to collect fruits of *mahua, achar, tendu, bhilwa etc.* In the old malguzari days the people could enjoy the fruits and leaves of these trees without restriction from the village forest, but at the nistar enquiry a proviso was introduced that the villagers could have free personal nistar of the produce afforded by these trees provided they were not being auctioned by some institution. Of theoretical significance only though this proviso may be in the village context, as so far there is no institution entrusted with the management of the village forest; but it is quite significant from the standpoint of nistar policy. Now, it was possible to stop the villagers from enjoying the produce of these trees under certain circumstances. Another significant change was that the produce could be enjoyed free only for personal nistar—so that sale of the produce was not contemplated by framers of the nistar-*patrak*. Sale of minor forest produce is an important element in the economy of the village, because that is one ready method by which the villagers can get a little cash to purchase the necessaries of life. Insertion of a condition of personal nistar—was, therefore, detrimental to the villagers' interests. However the proviso was again only of theoretical importance for in practice the villagers continued to enjoy the produce as of old. The rights to collect roots, barks, creepers, leaves etc., for agricultural work or for eating were continued as also the right to collect thorns etc. for fencing the *baris* or *khalihans* or threshing floors.

After the forests have been transferred to the forest department for management, the nistar rights of people in most areas of the State were adversely affected because of greater governmental control. The forest policy of the Government was now formulated keeping the interests of the community at large, and not of the particular community resident in the village where the forest was situated. The cardinal principles of the National Forest Policy of India were enunciated by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture vide their Resolution No. 13-I/52-F, dated the 12th May 1952. The former State of Madhya Pradesh also had appointed a committee to enquire ino and report upon certain specific problems connected with the administration of the forest department for management, the nistar mendations of this committee the former Government of Madhya Pradesh enunciated the Forest Policy of Madhya Pradesh vide their Resolution No. 3952—2024/XI, dated the 10th December 1952. The accent of the new policy was on the necessity of regulating grazing to prevent the forests and pastures from deteriorating and at the same time to provide all reasonable facilities to the stock-owners, consistently with the realisation of the specific objects of management of the various classes of forests.

No doubt, the resolution emphasised the need tor meeting all reasonable requirements of the villagers and agriculturists, as far as possible, from the most suitable forests: but the shift of emphasis from the interests of the village community concerned to the necessity of conserving the forest in the interest of society as a whole has got to be underlined. The entire basis of the policy, its fundamentals were changed. Whereas in the past priority was given to the traditional nistar enjoyed by a village community from the village forest and the adjoining reserve forest, now these became of a secondary importance. The major consideration was the protection of the forest and only reasonable requirements of the agriculturists were to be met with to the extent possible; this too, not necessarily from the village forest. These were of course general principles; the local policies formulated by the officials took due notice of conditions and customs existing locally. In Mandla district, after the abolition of proprietory rights, the villagers were allowed to obtain their requirements from the ex-malguzari forest as per conditions and customs entered in the village administration paper. Nistar and paidawar enjoyments from concerned forests were allowed under the commutation system. These arrangements continue even today.

Enjoyment of nistar and paidawar from reserved forests:

Nistar[3] means and includes (a) dry wood fit only for fuel (b) thorns (c) leaves (d) bakkal required for bonafide domestic use and not for sale or wasteful use. Paidawar ordinarily means and includes all edible roots, flowers and gums. Commutation is not allowed unless the entire village agrees to commute and a village commuting for paidawar has to commute for nistar also. Amwar village gets its nistar and paidawar from the reserved forests under the commutation system. The rates for commutation are six annas per plough per annum for cultivators and eight annas per annum for *thalwas* (landless persons).

Timber for construction of houses is supplied from the Nistari depot at Mawai on nistari rates. Only timber of *sal, saja* or *shisham* is supplied; the minimum rate for a log of less than 8′ in length and 9″ to 12″ in girth is Rs. 0.25 while the maximum rate for a log of over 15′ in length and of girth 22″ to 24″ is Rs. 2.00. Bamboos are supplied from the reserved forests neighbouring the village at nistari rate of Re. 1.50 per hundred.

The Agaria family carrying on its traditional smelting industry is entitled to get wood from the reserved forest at the commercial rate of Rs. 1.75 per cartload. Our Agaria informant, however, stated that he was paying Rs. 3.00 per annum by money order for the wood consumed by him. He was, however, not able to furnish details regarding the officer to whom he was sending this amount nor had he any receipts in his possession.

Grazing:

Cattle of Amwar are allowed grazing, at concessional rates from grazing unit number 36 of the Motinala range. The licences for grazing are issued during July-August every year by the forest official stationed at Dhangaon (5 miles from Amwar). The following additional facilities are provided for cultivators:—

(a) When he has upto eight cattle units* per plough, four cattle units are allowed free grazing, and the number in excess of four is allowed grazing at privileged rates.

(b) when a cultivator has more than 8 cattle units per plough, six cattle units are allowed grazing at privileged rates and the remaining units at commercial rates.

The privileged and commercial rates are as below: —

Privileged rates	Under 3 years of age.	Over 3 years of age.
For cows and bulls	2 pice per head	One anna per head.
Buffaloes	One anna per head	Two annas per head.
Commercial rates		
Cows and bulls	8 annas per head	1·00 per head.
She buffaloes	Rs. 1·12 per head	Rs. 2·25 per head
He buffaloes	Rs. 0·56 per head	Rs. 1·12 per head

The procedure for obtaining the nistar requirements of timber and fuel-wood is to get a licence from the licence vendor at Mawai, and then to get the supply from the Forest Guard at Dhangaon on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The cultivator has of course to obtain a certificate from the Gram Panchayat regarding his being a bonafide cultivator of the village, and then with this certificate and the receipt book (for recording payments of land revenue) he has to go to the licence vendor.

In practice, however, the people obtain their requirements of fuel-wood and timber from the ex-malguzari forest as and when necessary. This probably is illicit but the people find it more convenient. It would be too much to expect them to obtain a pass for extracting fuel-wood from the forest. The permit for bamboos is obtained by the villagers from the license-vendor (the villagers pronounce this word as (Laisun-Pindal,

[3]DFO South Mandla Division's No. G/4347, dated 14.6.63.

*All cows and bulls over 3 years of age are counted as a unit each, while each cow and bull under three Years is counted as ½ unit. Each buffalo over three years is counted as 2 units and each buffalo under one year is counted as one unit.

of Sarasdoli. This fact does not stand supported by the pamphlet issued by the forest department; and it therefore appears that in practice, the arrangemens described in the official pamphlets are not rigidly adhered to.

Ownership of livestock:

The table inset below is prepared from the information furnished by the village Patwari from his village record known as Titamma Milan Khasra; it gives a distribution of the livestock wealth according to community or caste.

Distribution of Livestock by Communities

Name of animal	Number of heads of animal mentioned in Col. 1 Owned by—					
	Baiga	Gond	Agaria	Dhoba	Ahir	Muslim
Bull	32	22	9	..	1	9
Cows	60	38	14	3	5	8
Cow-calves	29	11	3	..	..	9
Bull-calves	22	14	3	..	2	8
Total Cattle	143	85	29	3	8	34
She-buffalo	11	3	8	2	3	5
He-buffalo	3	..	2	..	..	3
Pada	2	2	5	2	..	1
Padia	Nil	2	2	1	3	..
Total buffalo	16	7	17	5	6	9
Horse	..	..	..	..	..	1
He-goat	3	3	..	..	6	1
She-goat	2	2	..	..	7	1
Total goats	5	5	..	..	13	2
Pig	2	..	3	..	..	..
Cock	16	7	3	..	4	1
Hen	11	6	7	..	..	1
Fowls	34	17	9	4	7	3
Total Livestock	227	127	68	12	38	51
Total excluding hen, foul and cock	166	97	49	8	27	46

We can use the above table for deriving averages for the sake of comparison, and get the following table:

Average per household by castes of

Caste	All livestock excluding cock, hen and fowl	Cattle including young ones	Buffalos including young ones
All castes	10·6	8·2	1·6
Baiga	7·5	6·5	0·7
Gond	14	12·1	1·0
Agaria	12·25	7·25	4·25
Ahir	13·5	4·0	3·0
Dhoba	8·0	3·0	5·0
Muslim	46·0	34·0	9·0

The table brings out the relative position of different communities as regards ownership of cattle wealth. The Mohammadan family emerges as the most prosperous in respect of cattle wealth; while the Ahir and Gond vie for a second. It may, however, be observed that the Ahirs own comparatively larger number of goats which give them an average higher than those of the Gond and the Agaria. The latter in particular are more prosperous as they own more buffaloes. The Baiga owning on an average 7.5 heads of livestock stand at the bottom. It was also elucidated during the enquiry that even his relatively small cattle wealth is not equitably distributed amongst the Baigas but is concentrated in the hands of five or six families, four of which are those of Loola, Dukal, Kangli and Tenda.

The livestock wealth of the village consists principally of bulls, cows, buffaloes, goat and fowl. The cows and bulls are of local breed, poor

and small in stature, and poor in milk yield. The bulls are used for ploughing and there is only one bull for breeding. The he-buffaloes are not used here for ploughing, and though the villagers did not admit it to us, are sold to itinerant traders etc., who visit Amwar and the neighbouring village every year. The price of one he-buffalo in Sunehra village that was sold to a Gond from Khaloti was Rs. 120.00. The goats are reared by the family of Baisakhu Ahir for milk as well as for raising the stock. Pig is an important animal in the ritual life of the villagers, and is used generally for sacrificial purposes. Of the five pigs in the village, as many as four are being reared for the *larukaj* sacrifice Fowl is reared by almost all the families for sacrificial purposes, and for domestic consumption.

The nearest veterinary dispensary from Amwar is at Bajag which is about 25 miles from Amwar. Obviously, the village cattle do not get any treatment other than those known to the people traditionally.

Cost of Livestock—The following prices of livestock are prevalent in the village and its neighbourhood during the year 1961-62:

Bull . . .	From Rs. 125 to Rs. 200
Cow . . .	Rs. 70 to Rs. 100
He-goat . .	Rs. 20 to 25
She-goat . .	Rs. 20 to 25
Pig . . .	Rs. 30
Hen . . .	Re. 1
Horse . . .	Rs. 100
Buffalo . .	Rs. 100 to Rs. 120

There are nine households in the village which do not own any livestock. These are all Baiga households.

Statistical data regarding principal and secondary occupations and incomes:

Table below classifies the households in the village by income-groups, and by the principal occupation of a household. It shows that 20 or more than 50% of the families in the village fall in the income group Rs. 25—50 which can be said to be the intermediate income-group in the village. Of these 20 families, 14 have cultivation

Monthly Income Per Household by Occupation

Occupation of a household	Monthly income per household in the range of				
	Less than 25 rupees	Rs. 25-50	Rs. 51-75	Rs. 76—100	Rs. 101 and over
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. *All communities*—					
Cultivation	3	14	6	..	1
Agricultural labour	7	5	..	..	..
Animal husbandry	..	1	..	..	..
Total	10	20	6	..	1
2. *Baiga*—					
Cultivation	3	6	2	..	..
Agricultural labour	7	4	..	..	..
Total	10	10	2	..	..
3. *Gond*—					
Cultivation	..	3	2	..	1
Agricultral labour	..	1	..	..	..
Total	..	4	2	..	1
4. *Others*—					
Cultivation	..	5	2	..	..
Agricultural labour	..	1	..	..	..
Total	..	6	2	..	..

as their principal occupation, 5 labour in agriculture and other labour, and one animal husbandry. Ten families fall in the lower income-group of less than Rs. 25.00 a month. Of these, 7 are following agricultural and other labour as their principal avocation and only three are principally cultivating families. The families earning incomes that fall in the higher slabs of Rs. 51—75 and 101 and over are also 7, six in the class 51—75 and only one in the class Rs. 101 and over. All these seven follow cultivation as their main occupation. We can thus reasonably infer a positive correlation between cultivation as a principal occupation and income; while a negative correlation seems to exist between agricultural labour and income. Such a correlation is natural also. Land is in Amwar a status symbol, and only those persons who do not own land pursue agriculture and other labour as their main calling.

A communitywise analysis of the occupations and income-structures of the households also yields significant results. The one thing that stands out conspicuously is that all the ten families with incomes in the lowest class are Baiga families. This is, however, in conformity with earlier observations regarding the impecunity of the Baigas. Another observation pointing to the economic backwardness of the Baigas is, that of the 12 families pursuing agricultural labour as principal occupation, 11 are Baiga families. Agricultural labour being negatively correlated with income, this observation shows that bulk of the families earning low incomes belong to the Baigas. Again, as is to be expected only 2 of the 22 Baiga families lie in the relatively higher income group of Rs. 51—75, and both these are cultivating families.

Four of the seven Gond families canvassed in the schedules lie in the income range Rs. 25—50, two in the range 51—75 and one in the range 101 and over. These figures testify to the relative prosperity of the Gonds. The family earning an income of more than Rs. 100 per month owes its relative prosperity to the fact that it contains two persons engaged in service. Of the eight remaining families, 6 or 75% fall in the intermediate class Rs. 25—50, of which 5 eke out their living principally from cultivation and only one by animal husbandry. Of the two families falling in the Class 51—75, one is Ahir family and the other is the Muslim, both principally dependent on cultivation. Thus, it follows that of the communities residing in the village, the Gonds are comparatively in the best circumstances, the Baigas in the worst, while the other families come in the middle stratum.

Table on next page attempts to break-up the households firstly by their principal occupations and then with respect to the incomes derived from the principal and subsidiary occupations. It would be seen from this table that apart from the principal occupation, most families engage in numerous subsidiary pursuits to augment their income. Of the 24-which represents roughly 2/3rd of the total-families principally depending on cultivation, as many as ten derive incomes less than Rs. 25/- a month from cultivation; 11 families pursuing cultivation as principal occupation derive from their principal activity incomes ranging from Rs. 25 to 50 per month. Only three cultivating families have income between Rs. 50 and 75 from their principal pursuit. All families-whatever their principal occupation—derieve incomes from forest produce, which are always less than Rs. 25 infact are never greater than Rs. 5 per month in case of any family. Agriculture labour, forest labour, *ghi*-making, rope and *gundri*-making and other services respectively from the subsidiary occupation of 6,7,10,7, and 1 families, respectively; and from all, except other service, the families derive incomes less than Rs. 25 a month. From other service, the income derived falls in the class Rs. 50—75.

The twelve—or roughly-one third of all the families principally following agricultural labour as their avocation also pursue cultivation, forest labour, basketry and rope-making *ghi*-making and sale of forest produce for augmenting their incomes. The total income yielded by the principal and subsidary occupations collectively and individually are less than Rs. 25 per month.

The solitary family following animal husbardry as its principal occupation, derives an income between Rs. 50—75 from its principal calling; it also pursues the secondary activities of agricultural labour and cultivation, each of which results in creating of incomes less than Rs. 25/-.

Traditional occupation and changes—if any, therefrom :

Each caste living in Amwar is traditionally connected with some occupation, which its members are still required to follow. Thus, the Baiga are traditionally connected with *bewar*, or the axe-cultivation carried on hill-slopes, and with the making of various types of bamboo artifacts. As regards the first occupation, about half the families have given it up completely, while half still cling to it. The family of Dukal and Lula Baiga are decidedly against *bewar* and they have taken to settle cultivation in all earnestness. There are then those families that practise *bewar* along with plough cultivation. At the other extreme stand the four or five families that depend only on *bewar* as their main activity. An important factor responsible for whatever break

Monthly income per household by source and occupation

Occupation of Household	Source of Income	No. of households having monthly income per household in the range of				
		Less than Rs. 25	25—50	51—75	76—100	100 +
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All Castes						
Cultivation	Cultivation	10	11	3	..	..
	Agricultural labour	6	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	24	..	..	..	..
	Forest	7	..	..	..	..
	Ghi-making	10	..	.	..	..
	Rope making etc.	7	..	..	..	..
	Service	..	..	1	..	..
Agricultural labour	Agricultural labour	12	..	..	..	..
	Cultivation	4	..	..	..	..
	Forestry	12	..	..	..	..
	Rope making etc.	8	..	..	..	..
	Forest labour	7	..	..	..	..
Animal husbandry	Animal husbandry	..	1	..	..	..
	Cultivation	1	..	..	..	..
	Agricultural labour	1	..	..	..	..
	Cultivation	7	3	1	..	..
Baiga—						
Cultivation	Agricultural labour	4	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	11	..	..	..	..
	Forest labour	4	..	..	..	..
	Others, *i.e.*, basketing, rope-making, *ghi*-making etc.	9	..	..	..	..
Agricultural labour	Agricultural labour	11	..	..	..	..
	Cultivation	3	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	11	..	..	..	..
	Forest labour	7	..	..	..	..
Gond—	Basket and rope making etc.	8	..	..	..	..
Cultivation	Cultivation	1	5	..	..	..
	Service	..	..	1	..	..
	Ghi-making	3	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	6	..	..	..	..
Agricultural labour	Agricultural labour	1	..	..	..	..
	Cultivation	1	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	1	..	..	..	..
	Biri-selling	1	..	..	..	..
Others—						
Cultivation	Cultivation	2	3	2	..	..
	Ghi-making	4	..	..	..	..
	Forest labour	3	..	..	..	..
	Forest produce	7	..	..	..	..
	Smithy	1	..	..	..	..
	Agricultural labour	2	..	..	..	..
Animal husbandry	Animal husbandry	..	1	..	..	..
	Cultivation	1	..	..	..	..
	Agricultural labour	1	..	..	..	..

there exists in the case of families practising only settled cultivation is legal compulsion. More about this in the following sections, when we deal with *bewar* in some detail.

As regards the traditional industry of basketry it is to be noted that all but one Baiga family still make bamboo artifacts. It is, however, not much of an occupation because there is hardly any production for the market. Another traditional calling of the Baigas is hunting. Though some of the Baiga families averred that they do go out hunting in the forest in the two months of April and May, this activity has ceased to be much of an income-earner to the Amwar Baiga. Like *bewar*, poaching in the forest is also banned, and this has considerably reduced the importance of this traditional pursuit of the Baigas. Apart from their oral assertions, we could not collect any statistics at this enquiry which might help us in assessing the impact of hunting on the economy of Amwar Baigas.

The traditional occupation of the Gond in the past may have been hunting, as pointed out by Russell and Hiralal, but the Gonds of Amwar have no recollection of it today. They give out cultivation as their traditional occupation, and we have evidence of a universal recognition of their claim in the designation '*Kisan*' given to them by other castes in the village. All the Gond families in the village pursue their traditional calling either as a principal work or as a subsidiary work. In addition some of them have taken to *ghi*-making.

The traditional calling of the Agarias is iron-smelting and smithy. Only one out of the four Agaria families in the village is pursuing the traditional calling. The other three have taken to cultivation, and *ghi*-making. The reason for the change is the inadequacy of the traditional industry to support even a single family. It is to be noted that Sohan Agaria who is pursuing the traditional industry is doing it only as a subsidiary economic activity, and even his main occupation is agriculture.

The Ahirs are traditionally herdsmen. Of the two Ahir families in Amwar canvassed in the schedules, only one is now carrying on the business of tending the village herd, and animal husbandry. The other family has taken to cultivation, though it also carries on the traditional calling of animal husbandry as a secondary occupation.

The Dhoba family of Amwar is engaged in agriculture which is said to be the ancestral occupation of the Dhobas.

Practices connected with Agriculture

As has been seen earlier, cultivation is the mainstay of the village economy being the principal bread winner of about 75% of all families in the village. Two types of cultivation are in vogue in the village. The first, and the more frequently practised in the village is the settled or plough cultivation. The term settled indicates that the same plot is cultivated from year to year, subject only to periods of resting fallows in accordance with agricultural usage to keep up the fertility of the soil. The second type is the *bewar* cultivation, which as has been noted earlier is the traditional form of shifting cultivation of the Baigas. In the following paragraphs, I shall describe the various practices and operations connected with the settled cultivation.

Settled cultivation is carried on seasonally twice in the year. The first known as *kharif* or wet cultivation (because the crop is sown and is in the field in the rainy season) is locally known as *siyari*, while other described as *rabi* or dry cultivation is called *unhari* in the village parlance. *Kharif* and *rabi* are official designations not used by the villagers. The crop statement given earlier in this chapter shows that in Amwar *kharif* crops occupy roughly four times the area under *rabi* crops. The principal *kharif* crops grown in the village are the millets *kodon, kutki* and *macca*, and rice.

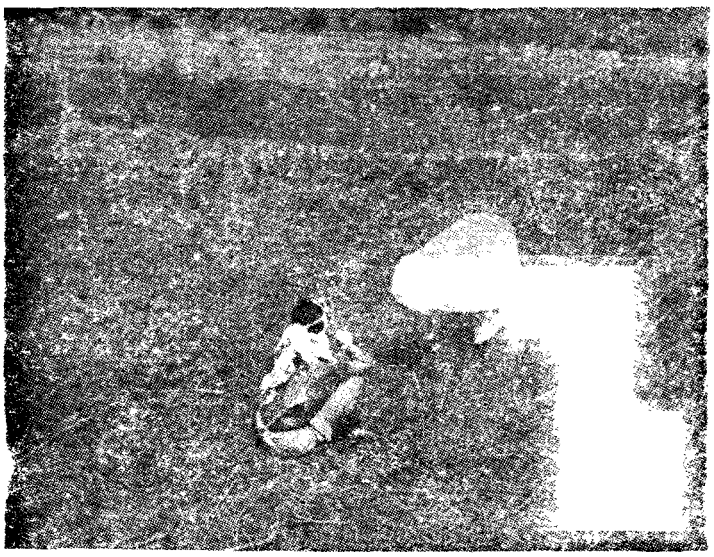
Of these the millets *kodon-kutki* cover the maximum acreage in the village. '*Maca*' is grown as a short duration crop in the *baris* or back-gardens attached to every house in the village.

Agricultural practices and rituals

The soil is ploughed at least once in the hot weather, though, we were told, two ploughings were necessary for a good crop. In the month of June, after the *akhti* or *akshaya tritiya*, a magical rite for inducing fertility and ensuring timely and adequate rains is performed by the *Dewar* at the shrine of Thakurdeo. This is known as '*bidri banana*'.[5] The sowing can then take place any time after the first showers of the rain have fallen. On the day of sowing, the cultivators offer incense in the field in the name of *Dhartimata* and then start sowing. The usual method for *kharif* sowing is to throw the seed broadcast, the amount varying from crop to crop, roughly from ten to twenty seers per acre. After the seed has been sown it is ploughed once again to cover the seed, otherwise it will be eaten away by birds. The fields are then left to themselves, and the cultivator does precious little except watching them against wild animals. Overground watch-huts, big enough for enabling one or two persons to sleep are erected for the purpose in the fields. Scarecrows are also prominently exhibited to scare away animals. Also, in every field, is seen the skull of a buffalo

5. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; pp. 354-355.

Plate XLIII



A Gond woman in the field



Ploughs in the field

Plate XLIV



Village fields with hills and forest in the background



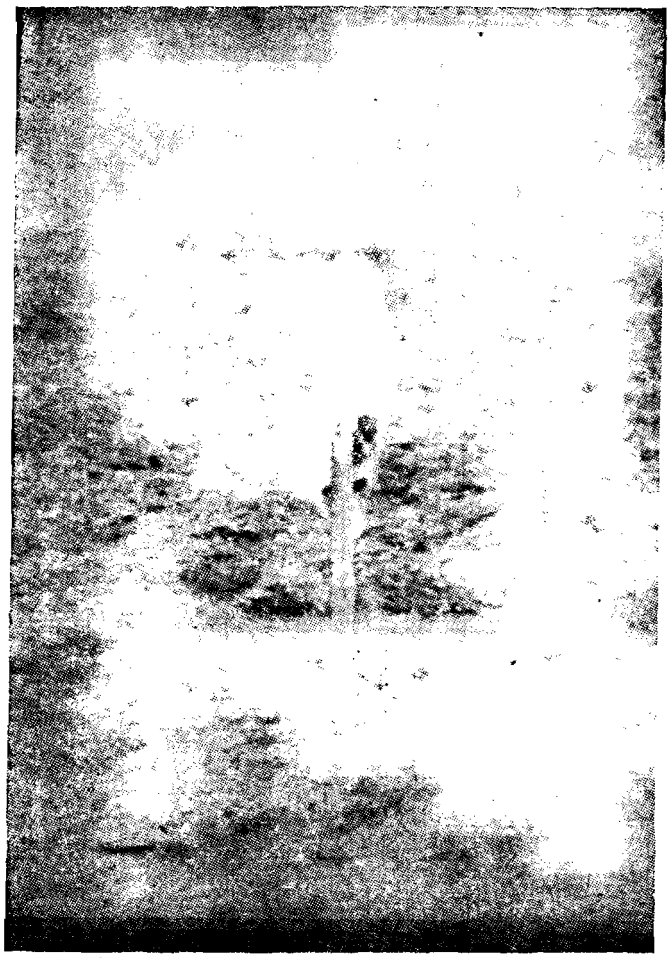
Ploughing—A young Gond man

Plate XLV



Village Herd

Plate XLVI



Magic device for protecting crops from evil eye-skull of a Buffalo upright on a pole.

Watch hut in a field



Plate XLVII

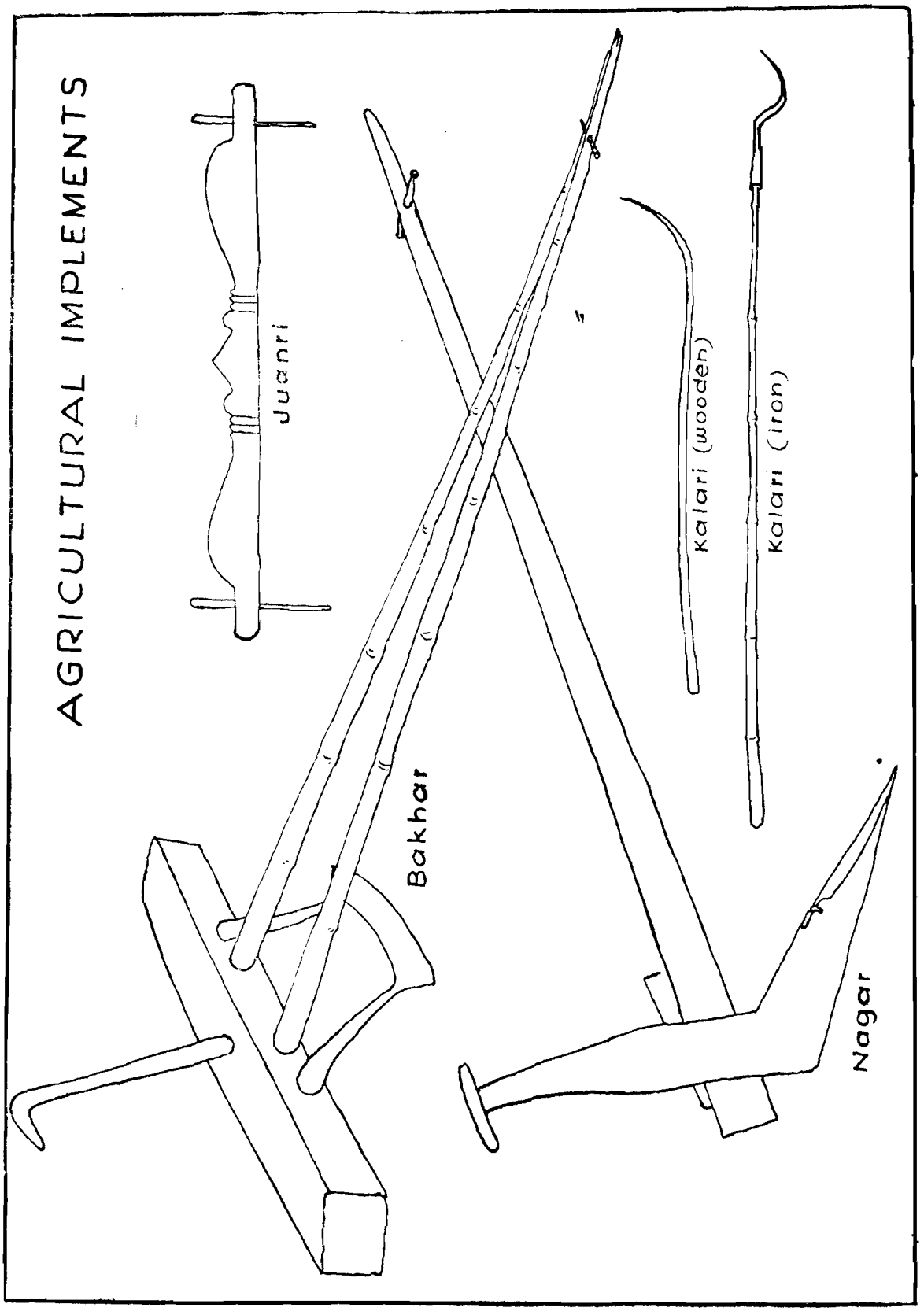
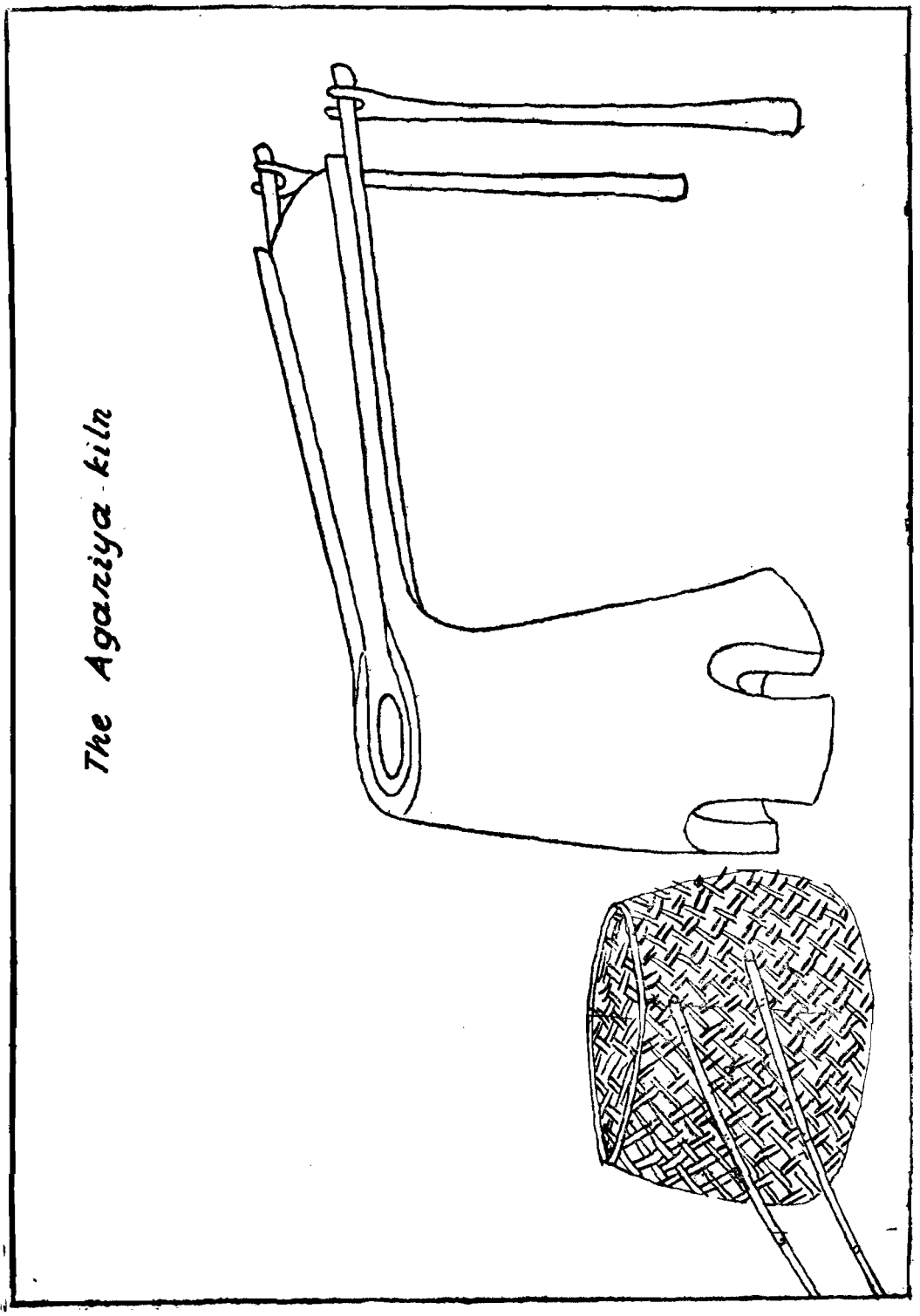

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS
Juanri
Bakhar
Kalari (wooden)
Kalari (iron)
Nagar

Plate XLVIII



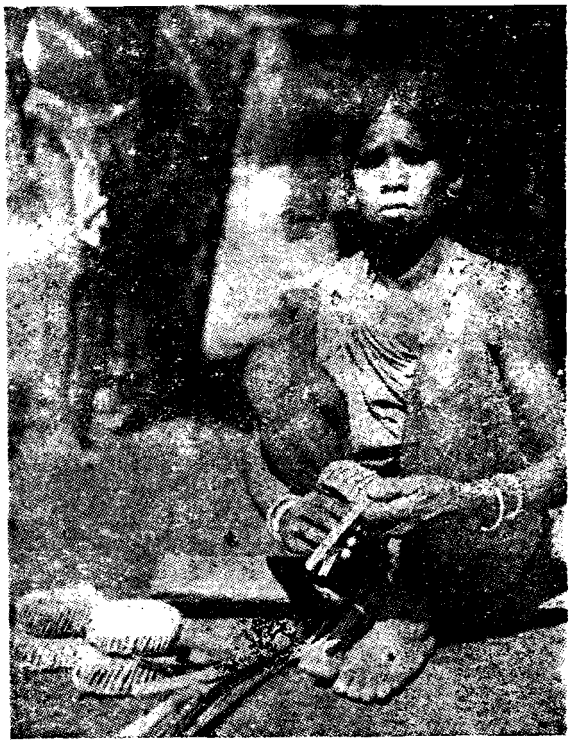


Agaria Youth in his "Dukan"



Baiga Patel splitting Bamboo

Plate L

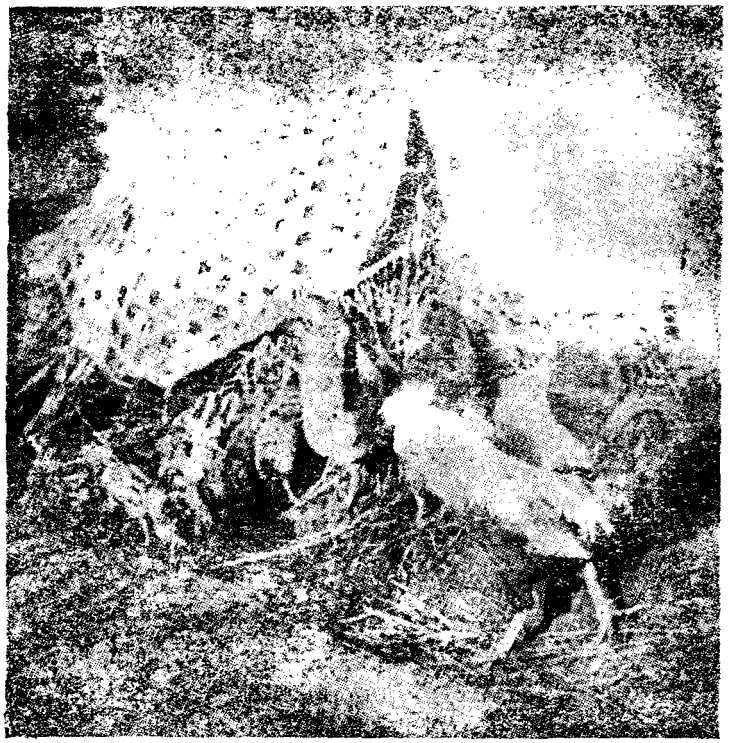


Baiga Woman making Gundi

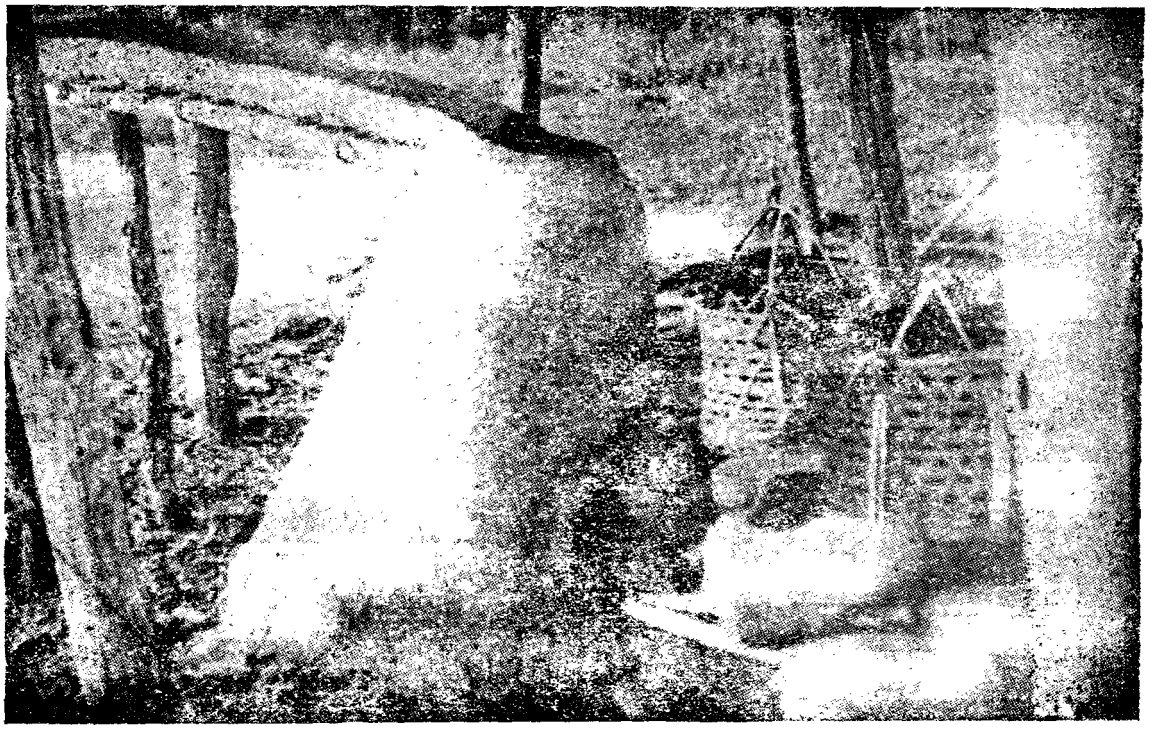


"Maira" of Baiga House

Plate LI



Hen-Coop



Agaria furnace for smelting

hung on the upper end of a bamboo pole—this is a device for protecting the field and the crops from evil spirits and evil eye. A rather peculier device for scaring away animals is a type of scarecrow, which is a circular ring having leaves imbedded in its rim. It is said to be very effective in shooing away deer and *sambhar*. No weeding is generally done in Amwar. Exceptions are three Gond families, and the Mohammadan family who weed the rice crops. The villagers, however, agreed that hand weeding will improve the outturn when done at the time the plants are about six inches high. The harvesting of the *kharif* or *siyari* crops starts in the beginning of *Kartik* and extends well to *Agahan*. At the harvest of the first crop, incense is offered to Annadeo and Dhartimata. The threshing enclosure is built in the field itself. The method of threshing and winnowing are similar to those obtaining in other backward areas. When the crop is taken home after threshing and winnowing, water is poured on the ground at the entrance of the house, to wash the feet of Annadeo. The grain is kept in grain-bins-or *kotha* which are large containers of earth.

Kodon :

Two varieties of *kodon* are mentioned in the Gazetteer of Mandla district, the *bhadeli* and the *katkai*. The *bhadeli* or white variety ripens in August and is thus shorter crop even than *maka*. Cultivators of Amwar knew the names of both of these though only the *katkai* variety is grown in Amwar. *Kodon* is a virile millet and thrives well on very inferior soils. The inferior rice lands *dhanahi* 2 which cover about half of the occupied area in the village grow *kodon* immensely well. About 10 seers of seed are sown in an acre by the broadcast method. Weeding is generally not done. The outturn is anything from 50 to 100 times of the seed sown. But *kodon* and *kutki* are very exacting crops and except in the area which receives the drainage from the village, it cannot be sown more than two or at the most three years on the same field, and requires almost an equal period of fallow. The average area under *kodon* during the decade 1951—60 is 67.5 acres. Caterpillars, grasshoppers and wild animals are the principal enemies of the crop; particularly the weed '*agia*' is fatal to it.

Rice :

Next in importance to *kodon* in the village is rice, which, though not yet accorded the status of a staple food of the people, is still regarded as a superior food. During the decade under examination, the acreage under rice has been steadily increasing, The area under rice was about 12% of the total occupied area in the village, when the schedules of this enquiry were canvassed. The seeds are sown broadcast. Since there are no earthen embankments round the fields *biyasi* is not performed. The amount of seed put in an acre is about 25 to 40 seers.

The main enemy of paddy crop, apart from excessive or deficient rains, is a caterpillar which normally makes its appearance in August or early September whenever there is a prolonged and cloudy break in rains. Once this pest gets hold, nothing but heavy rains can save the crop. Some damage is also done by grasshoppers, but more important in Amwar are the wild animals-particularly deer and pig and the fields have to be very carefully guarded against these.

Maka or Maize :

Maka is a short-duration kharif crop grown by every family in the back-gardens. It is grown early in the month of June when the first showers have been received and the crop is ready for being harvested by August end. It is the least bothersome crop in that it requires no weeding etc. But it has to be guarded against animals and birds—particularly the jackals—which are known to do considerable damage. Along with *kodon*, *maka* is an important article of food in the village and it is used for preparing *pej*, *bhat* or *chapaties*.

Rabi Crops :

The average acreage under *rabi* crops is only 26.7 acres, which comes to about 10% of the occupied area. The chief *rabi* crops are gram, wheat and *rye*. Wheat, the most important *rabi* crop in the district is but sparingly grown in the village. During the decade 1951—60, there has been wheat cultivation only in three years, the maximum acreage six acres being devoted to it in the closing year of the decade. The *rabi* sowing takes place in late November by means of a *nari*, a tube of wood with a tapering projection at the lower end attached to the *hal* or plough. No weeding is done. Harvesting takes place after *holi* festival, in the month of March. By far, the most important *rabi* crop is the cash earner *rye*, which occupied an area of 12 acres in 1960-61 as against a total area under *rabi* crops of 36 acres in that year. The *rye* is grown in the *baris*.

Tools and equipments :

The tools and equipments used by the people of Amwar are of the traditional type, and no innovation has so far been introduced. The most important implements here, as elsewhere, are the *nal* and the *bakhar*—the nearest English equivalents being the plough and the harrow. The *hal*, alternatively known as the *nangar*, consists of a beam (डाँडी *dandi*) of *sarai* wood about 6-7 hands (nine feet) long and serves as a shaft. The body of the plough—attached to one end of the *dandi* by means of an iron *khila*—is made of *tinsa* or *dhamin* wood, and consists of two parts. The upper, slightly curved part is known as

nagar and it ends in the *muthia* or handle by which the ploughman holds the plough when it is being driven in the field. The part, known as *nas* which serves as the bed for the ploughshare or *loha* is about 2½′ long. The *loha* of ploughshare made of iron is a narrow strip of iron, sharpened to a point. It is fixed to the *nas* in such a way that its point slightly overlaps the end of the wood. The plough is yoked to the bullocks by means of a *jauri* or yoke of wood which is simply a beam of wood of *mohlain*, about 5-6 feet in length. The plough is not very heavy and can be easily taken from field to field by a single man. When used for the wheat crop a *nari* or bamboo tube is attached to the body of the plough through which the seed falls into the furrow made by the ploughshare. The plough cuts a furrow in the field about four or five inches in depth but cannot invert the soil.

The Bakhar:

The *bakhar* or harrow is used for breaking down the clods already ploughed up and for rooting up the stubble. It consists of the *dandi* or shaft which in this case consists of two wooden beams joined at one end, and with the other diverging ends fitted on to a horizontal beam about 5 feet in length. It is fitted with an iron share—about 12 to 16 inches in length—which is slightly inclined. The yoke or *juari* is similar to the *jauri* of a plough.

The Datri:

This is also a kind of harrow, which in lieu of the ironshare is fitted with a number of wooden or sometimes iron *khoonta* or teeth. It is used as a rake for collecting weeds in wet soil after it has been *bakharred*. The *datri* is however owned only by two cultivating households in the village-one of the Mohammandan and other of Amoli Gond.

The wooden parts of the *hal*, the *bakhar* and the *datri* and for that matter of other implements also are made by the villagers, while the iron parts—the share and the nails are prepared by the local Agaria Sohan. The *khila* is supplied free by the Agraia, but the iron-shares for the plough and the harrow have to be purchased on cash-payment.

The Khanta:

This consists of an iron-blade fitted on to a wooden shaft of about 2″ diameter. It is used for digging holes for seeds and for other sundry purposes.

Other implements frequently used for agricultural purposes are the *Tangia* or axe used for cutting wood, the *hassia* used for harvesting the crop, the *kudari* or pick-axe used for digging, the *phaora* or shovel for collecting and lifting earth etc; and the *sabbal* or crow-bar for digging. These are common everywhere in the State, and do not have any structural peculiarities to merit a separate discussion. The iron parts of these implements are obtained from the village Agaria on payment.

Most of the activities in connection with agriculture are concentrated at the sowing and harvesting times. Households owning small pieces of land less than say four acres and these are numerous in the village-manage the sowing operations with the manpower resources of the household itself. They do not employ agricultural labourers for the purpose. But substantial cultivators from village standards-Bakhti Agaria, Amoli Gond, and Loola Baiga-have to requisition help of others. The village has preserved an enviable tradition of mutual help which is given on a basis of reciprocity. Thus, last year Bakhti Agaria summoned one man with plough and bulls from every household owning a plough and bulls for ploughing his fields. Bakhti is an oldman, without sons, having about 17 acres of land and it is well-nigh impossible for him to manage his sowing alone. It was observed that Mangal Gond and Amoli Gond spared their sons for doing the sowing of Bakhti's fields, even though that meant suspension of their own ploughing and sowing operations on that particular day. All that Bakhti did was to arrange for the *pej* of the voluntary labourers and of course a helping of liquor in the evening. I found such reciprocal labour quite common in the village, though no statistical data on it was collected. This enable even persons who do not own any plough to cultivate their fields. Here is a practice which easily and in a very simple manner solves, atleast in part, the difficulty of finances-which is a very real difficulty in the village. Here again is a practice which if tactfully and suitably exploited can promote the growth of cooperative institutions in the village. For example, there can be a farm attached to the local school, and the villagers may cultivate that farm on a cooperative basis under the supervision of the school headmaster.

Expenditure in connection with various operations:

The answers returned at this enquiry regarding the cost of cultivation are tabulated below:

Range of expenditure per acre	No. of cultivating families
Rs. 3 to 5	6
Rs. 5 to 10	12
Rs. 10 to 15	5
Rs. 15 to 20	3
	26

Thus, the cost of cultivation is seen to range between Rs. 3 to Rs. 20 per acre. The maximum frequency is in the class 5—10. Obviously these figures represent very low estimates of the cost of cultivation and certainly do not take note of the labour contribution of members of the family and animals belonging to it. Even then, it has to be placed on record that the time-worn and archaic agricultural practices followed by the people of Amwar rule out any sizeable expenditure in cash. The only item of expenditure which requires some cash outlay is seed; because most of the families in Amwar do not put by any seed. The millets for seed are reportedly procured from the Mawai market but the more costly seed of paddy is procured by different families from different villages, of course on cash payment. The amount of seed of the millets per acre is about 8 to 10 seers and this costs about Rs. 2 to 2.50 per acre. Those returning higher expenditure per acre are found to be those who cultivate rice also in some of the fields. As has been indicated earlier, the labour for agricultural operations like ploughing prior to sowing is obtained on a basis of reciprocity, and normally does not entail cash expenditure because no cash wages are distributed. There is no manuring of lands in Amwar nor is there any irrigation done. There is thus no expenditure incurred in Amwar on these two accounts-which, elsewhere swell the cost of cultivation to considerable extents. It is thus seen that people do not require much of cash outlay for the agricultural operations, and therefore there does not exist any problem of resource, generally.

Most families utilise the produce entirely for domestic consumption. The produce is stored in large earthen containers or grain-bins; and the grain-*bandas* or underground repositories as are found in more developed tracts of the Jabbulpore country are not to be met with in Amwar. There are only three families in Amwar who are able to save for the market. These are the families of Amoli Gond, Chhote Khan and Lula Baiga. Others sell only the cash crops like *jagni* and *sarson*. Of course the Baigas sell the *Baiganidal* produced by them mostly in their *bewars*. There is no problem of marketing in the sense that there are itinerary traders from villages Mawai, Motinala etc. visiting the village, and they reportedly collect the produce directly from the villagers. Of course, the villagers are deprived by this method of marketing their produce of a little extra profit which they could make had they taken their produce to the market. But, this would raise the problem of transport. As is shown earlier, there are no bullock carts in the village, and all transporting is done on head. The practice of using pack-animals prevalent elsewhere is also not reported to be prevalent in Amwar. Small amounts of grain are of course taken by villagers to Mawai on the weekly market day—whenever they purchase other domestic requirements.

Other Problems :

The most important problem in the village is that of introducing improved methods of cultivation. There is, at present, no attemp at improving the lands by constructing embankments and by levelling the land. There are not wanting in Amwar cultivators who can be encouraged to embank their fields and to level it. The Gonds, who in the village are carriers of change can be induced to take the lead in this matter; then there are two families of Baiga—those of Dukal and Lula, and the Mohammadan family who are all good subjects for introducing improved techniques of cultivation. The method of paddy cultivation practised in the village is of the crudest type and needs a lot of improvement. They can be induced to take to the practice of *biasi;* of course after they have levelled and embanked their fields. Sowing by the transplantation method could also be introduced on a somewhat limited scale. Again, there is hardly any weeding of crops done by the villagers. In a nutshell, the most important problem in the village is that of land improvement, and gradual diversion of more and more area to the superior *kharif* corp—paddy. Land improvement is of course a proposition requiring cash. The villagers are averse to taking loans from the Government for reasons indicated earlier. They can, however, be induced to make the maximum use of the co-operative institution that is established for the village under the auspices of the tribal welfare department of the Government. So far precious little has been done by way of educating the villagers on the role of the cooperative in village life and they are only vaguely aware that it will advance loans to cultivators, though on what terms, is not known.

Another important problem is that of land hunger. The previous discussion has shown that the residents proper of the village own but an insignificant part of the land-wealth of their village. More than half of the families do not own any land. We have also drawn attention to the cultivation on an extensive scale of encroached lands or lands belonging to others. There is considerable land in the village declared as fit for cultivation at the nistar enquiry. Moreover, there is considerable land (49.31 acres) recorded in the name of a person who has left the village since the last two decades. Bulk of this land is already being cultivated—masquerading as sub-tenancy. Allotment of lands to the land hungry families is therefore a burning problem. There are already applications pending before the revenue court at Mandla, mostly in respect of lands already under the actual cultivating possession

of the families. These require to be disposed of early. Besides, the considerable area lying as old fallow may be brought under the plough by invoking the provisions of extant statutory provisions e.g., the Fallow Lands Act.

Shifting Cultivation :

The traditional form of shifting cultivation of the Baigas, having sanction of their mythology, is known a *bewar*. It was not possible to get a local account of the myth from the Baigas of Amwar, because they did not know it. All they knew is that *bewar* is a legacy bequeathed to them from their first ancestors Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin. It is, however, necessary to have the mythological background for this practice which is still rampant extensively in the most backward sections of the Baigas of Eastern Mandla, Shahdol and the Chhattisgarh Zamindaries. The myth recorded by Elwin runs as follows: "The Baiga were established in the practice of *bewar* by Bhagwan himself who when he called all the tribes of the world together to make a king, at first chose the Baiga. But Nanga Baiga begged that Gond, his brother might be king in his place. Bhagwan was pleased at this request, and as a mark of his favour took Nanga Baiga by the hand and placed him on the throne by his side. He granted his prayer to make the Gond king but he gave the Baiga an even greater blessing.

"All the kingdoms of the world, he said" may fall to pieces, but he who is made of earth and is *Bhumiaraja*, lord of the earth, shall never forsake it. You will make your living from the earth. You will dig roots and eat them. You will cut wood and carry it on your shoulders. Your wife will pick leaves and sell them. You must not tear the breasts of your Mother, the Earth, with the plough like the Gond and the Hindu. You will cut down trees and burn them and sow your seed in the ashes. But you will never become rich, for if you did, you would forsake the earth and then there would be no one to guard it and keep its nails in place[6]". The myth at once affords the *raison d'etre* of *bewar* along with the other activities enjoined upon the Baigas for eking out a living and the method for it. The Baigas of Amwar, though some of them have taken to settled plough cultivation, still are not yet completely rid of a feeling of guilt in doing a thing specifically prohibited by their mythology.

Out of the 22 Baiga families in Amwar, eight (nine if we include Baisakhu, son of Tenda, who had returned to Amwar from Bandhan after an absence of about five years) exclusively practise *bewar*. Six families practise only plough cultivation; while four practise settled cultivation in addition to *bewar*. According to the report furnished by village patwari, only eight families practised *bewar* in the year 1962-63; which is however, not correct. Again, three of these families are reported to practise *bewar* on lands held by them in *Bhumiswami* tenure (though it is beyond explanation as to how even these three families could be allotted lands on hill slopes). All others are doing it on unauthorisedly occupied Government land.

Area under bewar :

From *ad hoc* field enquiry conducted by the Patwari, the area under *bewar* in the village is reported to be about 34 acres. The details of these are given below:—

	Name of Bewar cultivator	Area under Bewar	
		Under tenure	Under encroachment.
1	Bhukau	4·38	..
2	Ratu	..	4·57
3	Amri	..	3·87
4	Panku	..	3·93
5	Netu	3·99	..
6	Jhuna	..	4·39
7	Bhagwa	4·22	..
8	Tenda	..	4·51
		12·59	21·27

The patwari has not taken note of the areas *bewar* of Jhitu, Manglu and Nangu Baigas. If these were taken into account, the area under *bewar* would easily swell by another ten to twelve acres. Thus, in round figures we can place *bewar* cultivation in Amwar at about 45 acres, and of this is held on tenure.

Technique :

Bewar which represents practice as well as the plot on which it is practised is done on slopes of hills which lie about what is called the frost-line[7] (the reason is that above the frost-line, the forest grows well, as the young shoots are not destroyed by frost; also some of the Baiga crops (i.e. *kutki*) which are late ripners must be sown where they will not suffer, from frost which usually comes as early as the middle of November). The *bewar* which was visited by us at Amwar was about 300 feet above the ground level. The main criterion governing the choice of a *bewar* is that it should have luxuriant forest growth—but not, according to people of Amwar

6. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939, pp. 106-107.

7. Rudman, F.R.R. Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. A, 1912; p. 78.

—*sal* trees which, they said, they were not permitted by Government to cut. The incline is sufficiently steep, and the area is about an acre. This area is cleared of its forest growth, including the grass and brushwood sometime in the month of March. Help of other Baigas in the village is requisitioned for clearing the forest, and allowing for some exaggeration, it was disclosed that 15—20 persons cleared an acre of land in a couple of days. The wood is generally left *in situ;* but if necessary, it is shifted a bit to obtain a more or less even distribution over the whole area cleared. About a month before the onset of rains, i.e., in the month of May, the dried stuff is burnt. We were informed that it was not permissible to kindle the stuff by ordinary artificial means or even by a flint and stone. The fire is made by the fire-drill or *agisra* method i.e., by churning a bamboo-stick in the cleft made in another bamboo. The tree first to be kindled is the one which was first felled. After burning, the *bewar* is covered with an ash-bed about one inch in thickness. The *bewar* is then fenced to protect it from animals. The seeds are sown after the *bidri-banana* ceremony usually after the first shower of rains. It is sown broadcast by hand. The seeds thus sown are the *kodon, kutki* and *sama.* The seeds of *baigani dal* are sown in holes dibbled by a *khanta* in the ash-bed. Three seeds are put in each hole. No paddy is sown in the bewar[8]. A variety of vegetables—cucumber, gourd, potatoes, etc., are also sown in the *bewar.*

After the sowing is done, all that the Baigas do afterwards, is to guard the *bewar.* For this they construct overground watch-huts. Scarecrows, and a multiplicity of other devices to scare away animals are put at various points. Some traps are also put. The harvesting of the crops takes place late in November-but *kodon* is harvested earlier in September. Threshing ground is prepared in the *bewar* itself. No bullocks are used for thrashing, which instead is done by stamping the loosened sheaves of grain with feet. Winnowing is also done in the *bewar,* by allowing the threshed grain to fall from a *supa* when a gentle wind is blowing. The lighter *chaff* is blown away by the wind, but the heavier grain falls on the ground below the *supa.*

In the Baiga-chak we were told that each bewar-cutting family owned simultaneously two plots, situated on different hills. One of them is known as the *bewar* while the other, smaller in area, was known as *kandabari,* which literally means root field and is probably utilised for growing potato, etc. The people of Amwar however, did not report to have *kandabari* plots also along with their *bewars.*

Period for which a bewar lasts :

During this enquiry, we were told that a *bewar* plot lasts usually for three years. Usually in the second year, they burn the wood left over unburnt in the previous year. It was however reported that in the third year, they did not do any burning nor sow any fresh seed. The unsprouted seed of the last year is said to sprout in the third year. The vegetables and pulse are however sown every year afresh. In the fourth year, the family abandons the *bewar* and cuts another plot. This second plot is said to last for three years and in the fourth year the family stages a comeback to the original *bewar* by which time the forest is grown thick enough to permit a second *bewar.* It however appears that few families in Amwar stages a comeback to the first *bewar* in three years. Most of the *bewar*-cutting families own three or more plots—and from this it would seen that it is not before five or six years that a comeback is staged to the original plot. It also appears to be doubtful whether a family sticks to the same plot for three years. They do not put any fresh seed in the old plot in third year and this suggests that in the third year they cut a fresh *bewar,* but watch the old *bewar* also for whatever they may get out of it. This explains why some of the families have as many as five plots.

Poverty as a justification for bewar-cutting :

It is pertinant to note at this stage that *bewar* has been banned in all areas of the district except an area of 2,858 acres consisting of four villages in the Dindori range, which is known as the Baiga Chak or Baiga reservation*. The ban which dates back to the year 1890 was promulgated by an executive order of the Commissioner of Jabalpur division. Enquiries from the Divisional Forest Officer showed that there were no reports of *bewar* being practised outside the Baiga-chak and that even inside the *chak* it was progressively on the declines. Amwar though on the fringe of the Baiga Chak is still well outside it, and we were therefore very naturally surprised when we learnt of *bewar* being practised by Baiga families of Amwar. This discovery makes it probably that *bewar* is being practised in other areas also outside the Baiga Chak. Our evidence at Amwar shows that *bewar* is still extensively practised in what is known as Bandhan or Baiga *des* by the Baigas

8. Ward mentions that the Bigas sow occasionally 'a poor specimen of rice, called here *Bygana.* This appears to be incorrect: Probably, it was the Baiganidal to which Ward thus refers.

*The names of the villages are Dhurkutta, Aigar, Tantar and Silfiri all forest villages.

of Amwar. This is a group of some twenty villages in the Kawardha tahsil of Durg district some of which adjoin Amwar. Thus Banguara, which has the credit of sending some Baiga families to Amwar, is only three miles from Amwar. Strangely enough the Baiga of Amwar were ignorant of the area known as Baiga Chak in Mandla district, and by our reference to Baiga-chak they always understood the area known to them as Bandhan.

The only village of Mandla district other than Amwar where *bewar* is reported to be practised is Patpara, a Baiga predominant neighbour of Amwar. In fact the same set of hills is used by both the villages for *bewar.*

When pertinently asked as to why they preferred this type of cultivation, the answer was that apart from *bewar* being their traditional mode of cultivation, it was the only type of cultivation within the reach of their poor resources. They said that settled type of cultivation involved considerable initial expenditure by way of procuring a pair of bulls, a plough, and a harrow; apart from the generally high cost of cultivation involved in other operations. In contrast, they said, in the *bewar* they put the seed once and literally reaped the harvest for three years in succession. It is interesting to remark that almost a similar justification was advanced by the Baiga families of villages Tantar and Silfiri in the Baiga chak, visited by us during this enquiry. Being an argumentative type of people it was difficult to satisfy these people about the superiority of the settled type of cultivation, for they had always a counter-argument ready to meet all the arguments that we put forward to them.

Regarding the argument of poverty, it is a fact that nine of the heads of the families practising *bewar* own no land. No bulls or ploughs are owned by these nine families and therefore the question of their taking to cultivation on some sort of sub-tenure, or doing plough cultivation on lands unauthorisedly occupied also is ruled out. The remaining three persons who practise *bewar* even though they own lands in Bhumiswami rights prefer *bewar* to settled cultivation because of long usage and their mythological tradition. Two of them of course practise *bewar* on their own lands as per the report of the Patwari and it is a debatable point whether they could be weaned away from the practice of *bewar* by coercive process. Of course being Bhumiswami they are owners of the trees in their holdings and they could probably be prevented from cutting these trees under the regulatory power given to the State Government under section 240(1) of the M.P. L.R. Code of 1959. Even then, it is always better to employ some sort of persuasive method with these diehards, and before that can be done adequate alternative arrangements may have to be made for enabling the uprooted families to earn their bread. There are schemes of Government for weaning away tribals from shifting cultivation and the application of some such scheme might be helpful in weaning away the Amwar Baigas from axe-cultivation. There is however need of a cautious approach, and as observed in the brochure on the First Five Year Plan[9] "the introduction of improved methods of agriculture has to be attempted after a study of local conditions and with due regard for the level of understanding of the tribal communities concerned." The agency, in any attempt at weaning the Baigas from the shifting-cultivation, of the more progressive Baiga families who have taken to settled cultivation with a conviction as to its superiority should be exploited to the fullest extent possible. Two such progressive families in the village are those of Dukal and Lula Baigas.

Practices connected with animal husbandry and poultry rearing :

As has been observed earlier one family in the village follows the calling of animal husbandry as its principal occupation. This is the Ahir grazier family. Its principal duty is to take the village herd for grazing to the village pasture, and to milk the village cows. Besides, the family does a little goat-breeding. No special practices connected with goat-breeding were related to investigators during this enquiry. The breed of the cattle is poor and local. The cows are not rich in milk-yield. As yet no attempt on governmental level has been initiated to improve the breed by castrating the local scrub bulls and by introducing high pedigree bulls from outside. Similarly though almost all the families in the village reared hens no peculiar practices connected with poultry came to light.

A subsidiary industry allied to animal husbandry is *ghi*-making and ten households in the village are engaged in it. In this also, no peculiarity was observed in the manner of making *ghi.*

The village is rich in pastures and there is no problem of feeding the village cattle. No expenditure in cash is involved in the various practices connected with animal husbandry. The products-generally *ghi* are disposed of in the Mawai market, or is more frequently collected in the village itself by itinerant traders. Problem of finance is simply non-existent at present.

9. Brochure on the First First Five Year Plan, page 638 para 20.

Village Industries :

The most important cottage industry in the village is the iron-smelting industry carried on by one Agaria family in the village. It is not a whole time, or even the principal occupation of the family. It is carried out all the year round except the months of rain but is intense seasonally at the time of the agricultural sowing operations—April to July and October to December. The industry consists firstly in smelting iron from the iron-ore and secondly in producing the various implements of iron required by the villagers. At the same time, it includes repairs to the agricultural implements of the villagers.

Till about five years ago, the industry was carried on by Bakhti Agaria, who since gave it up. The present smith is Sohan Agaria, who came to Amwar from Bhajitola (6 miles) leaning that Bakhti had stopped carrying on the traditional industry. In Bhajitola, Sohan's father was carrying on the industry, and being grown up, Sohan had to set up an independent household. He therefore seized on the opportunity offered by Bakhti's retirement and came to Amwar. Here he has married the sister of Sukhlal Agaria, who has also given him some lands to cultivate.

Description of the forge and furnace :

The smelting of iron, as well as the work of preparing articles from raw iron is carried on in a hut without walls, or a fencing; rectangular enclosure, approximately 12′×8′ in dimensions. Elvin has recorded a taboo that the Agaria carries on his work in the shade because he is forbidden form working in the Sun. Sohan professed ignorance of this taboo. In Amwar, the hut stands in the compound of Sohan Agaria, adjacent to his field. In the village Tantar of Baiga-Chak we found it outside the square arena round which the Baiga houses were built. In village Bhibsa near Motinala, and in Motinala itself also, we found the Agaria's forge well away from the residential houses of other castes in the village. In the first half portion is installed the furnace or *bhatti,* which is an earthen, roughly cylindrical structure, slightly tilted forwards. Its height from the base to the top is about 3 feet. It is broadest at the base, and gently tapers towards the top, which has got an opening 8″ in diameter, called the मुंह or mouth of the furnace. The mouth of the furnace is to receive the feed of raw materials from a मचान or rectangular trough-like structure of earth on a base of bamboo wickerwork, one end of which rests on the top of the furnace while the other on a horizontal bamboo pole which itself rests on two wooden *thunhi* 4′ in height. The *machan* is about 2½′ long and 1½′ wide, and it slopes towards the mouth of the furnace, with a view to facilitate the passage of the raw materials into the furnace. At the base of the *Bhatti,* there are two openings; one known as *duari* (i.e., a small door) is an incomplete circle of about 11″ diameter and is meant for taking out iron when smelting is complete. It is in front. The other opening known as *hagan*—literally meaning an opening for throwing out the excreta—is slightly narrower in diameter and is meant for allowing the *mail* मैल or slag to come out. Into the *duari* is imbedded the नरिहा or an earthen nozzle—whose exterior narrower opening is about 1″ in diameter, and it admits the ends of two hollow bamboos—known as *bahilongs,* whose other extremities are joined to the bellows. The *bahilongs* are kept in position by means of a heavy stone or *pathar* kept on them. It is from this practice that the caste derives its name Patharia in Mandla district. The bellows are made of a circular wooden basin, topped by ox-hide, in the centre of which is a small circular opening which acts as a valve when pressed by a foot—the latter itself serving as a stopper to the valves and forces the air through *bahilongs* or bamboo tubes into the *nariha* and thence into the furnace. The centre of the skin-cover of the bellows is joined by means of rope to two bamboo sticks one on either side—which are curved and when free have a tendency to pull the skin of the bellows upwards. When the foot is released from the bellows the bamboo-stick lifts up the cover and the bellow is refilled with air. The operation of lifting the foot and pressing the cover is cyclical so that when the one bellow is pressed the other is released. This secures a constant flow of air into the furnace.

Raw-materials :

The raw materials required for the industry are iron-ore, locally known as *patthar* or stone: and charcoal. The ore is dug from the hill to the east of the village towards Patpara, and is about three miles away. The charcoal is prepared by the family by burning *sarai* wood. Sohan told that he was paying anually Rs. 3.00 to the authorities of Mandla by Money Order for the *sarai* tree that he was cutting from the jungle. This was, however, not confirmed by the forest authorities according to whom the charge is only Re. 1.75 per cartload. Besides the charcoal and ore, another material required is *kodon*-fodder. It does not enter into the chemical changes that go on in the furnace but acts as a bed for the ore, as also for kindling the furnace. The charcoal is prepared about a couple of days ago in the jungle and is brought to the house in bamboo containers known as *dhunga.* The ore is similarly brought from the pit in containers known as *dhadhu.* One *dhunga* we were told could hold about 4 *kuros* (20 seers) of charcoal, while the *dhadhu* could hold about an equal weight of ore.

Technique :

The first operation is to break the lumps of ore into pieces of smaller size. This business is attended to by the woman of the house the even-

ing preceeding the morning of the smelting operation. The ore is roasted in the ordinary fire of wood. After that the woman attends to the work of repairing the mouth, the *duar* and the *hagan*, and other preliminary operations like arranging the bellows in front of the furnace, putting *kodon* chaff in the furnance, and filling up the furnance with charcoal. Four *supa*-fuls of charcoal are fed to begin with.

The actual operation of smelting is done in the morning on the next day. Sohan Agaria informed us that they start the smelting operation just before the cock crows the first time in the morning and the operations in the furnace are complete before the first streaks of sun light appear on the eastern horizon. The wife of the Agaria puts some fire in the mouth of the *nariha* or twyer, and thereafter she mounts the bellows and starts blowing them with her feet. The blast ignites the *kodon*-chaff and charcoal inside the the furnace; then the charge of ore (about a seer in the beginning) is put on the *machan* and it slides down into the furnace and mixes with the charcoal. Four more feedings of ore are given —each time about a seer in weight. After sometime, when the coal is exhausted the *hagan* is broken with a stick, and the *mail* or slag is pulled out by means of a stick. About four *supas* of coal are then again fed (about 8 seers in weight). The process lasts, as indicated earlier, about three hours. When the iron is ready—it is a matter of judgment for Sohan and he was not able to tell us exactly how he judged that the iron was ready—the *duari* is broken, the *nariha* removed and the sponge iron which is still red-hot is taken to the anvil by means of the tongs, and there beaten. This is done with a view to remove whatever of slag is there in it. After that, it is again put into the furnace with a view to burn away the last remnants of slag in it.

According to Sohan, a charge of about a *kuro* of ore and about sixteen seers weight of charcoal produces about $1\frac{1}{4}$ seers of sponge iron, and this on purification gives only $\frac{3}{4}$ seer of iron.

The Forge :

The forge is called *dukan* or shop in local language. In the *dukan*, is found a big stone, roughly rectangular in shape, which serves as an *anvil* or for rougher work. The other anvil or *matorna* is much smaller in size, it is also rectangular in shape, flat on one side but a bit hollow on the other. Before, however, beating iron into shape on the anvil or bending or cutting it, it is reduced to a semi-molten red hot state by heating it in charcoal flame produced in a small hole in the forge. Air is blown on to this forge, by means of bellows, connected to a 'नरिह' or nozzle whose narrow end points towards the forge, by means of bamboo tubes or *bahilong*.

Instruments used by the Agaria :

The instruments used by the Agaria are the *ghan* or hammer, the two types of *sansi* or tongs, the *hathodi* or light hammer, the *tussa*, and the *suja pawari*. The *ghana* is a solid mass of iron, fairly heavy, with a wooden handle passing through a hole in it. The *sansi* are of two types—one is the straight-lip type which has straight pointed ends; and the other has its end, bent to provide firmer grip. The *hathodi* is a smaller edition of the *ghan*. The *tussa* is a piece of iron flat at one end, but tapering rapidly into the other. It has got sharp edges. It is used for cutting iron or making deep indent. The *Suja-pawari* is a round iron-bar about $3\frac{1}{2}''$ long and it is used for cutting holes in iron.

Other things used by the Agaria in connection with the work on the furnace or the forge are *dhunga* or the bamboo basket for carrying charcoal, the *dhadhu* which is used for bringing ore from the pit, and the *kotna* or a rectangular wooden trough for keeping water.

Business of the Agaria :

The business of the Agaria of Amwar falls under two heads. Firstly, he fulfils the traditional contract into which he enters with the cultivators of Amwar and according to which he has to render certain services to them in his forge. Under this contract, he has to supply, once in a year a *jaroo* and an 'arai'. He does not charge any cash price for these articles. Besides, the Agaria has to repair the iron parts of their agricultural implements. For these services, he gets paid in kind—at the following rates :—

(1) from every cultivator who owns a *bakhar* and a *hal* he gets 10 *kuros* (about 50 seers) of grain per year.

(2) from cultivators who own only a *hal*, he gets 5 *kuros* of grains every year. There are twelve cultivating families in Amwar who own a *hal* as well as a plough, while the remaining do not own a hal or a *bakhar*.

The second type of business of the Agaria is that for which he gets paid in cash. The articles produced by him are the *loha* of the *hal*, the *phal* or share of *bakhar* the *tangiya* or axe, and *hassia*. These are the articles mostly in demand. Their prices are :—

Nagar Loha .	. From Rs. 1·50 to 2·00
Share of a *bakhar* .	Rs. 5·00
Tangiya or axe	. Rs. 1·50
Hansia or sickle	. Rs. 0·37 to 0·50

Sohan said that occasionally, he produces these articles for the market at Mawai also. But he was not able to give any quantitative idea of

the volume of articles produced by him. From the fact, however, that smelting or smithy is not his principal occupation, it is not unreasonable to suppose that production for the market is not very sizeable and most of the articles are produced when there is clear demand for it.

Organisation of Work-group :

The industry is carried on the level of household and no labour from outside is employed. The workers are Sohan his wife and his small daughter about eight years old.

Transmission of technique:

The usual mode of transmission of technique is from father to son. Sohan has learnt it from his father.

Expenditure and Finance:

As is clear, the industry does not require anything by way of cash outlay. For the charcoal, which is prepared by burning *sarai*. Sohan said, he was paying Rs. 3.00 per year by M.O. The Divisional Forest Officer, South Mandla Division did not corroborate this and informed that every Agaria family has to pay only Rs. 1.75 per cartload for the wood they require in connection with their business. In any case, a small fixed amount is required to be paid every year for the wood. The ore is acquired gratis from the hill. The labour is supplied by family members. There is therefore no question of any finance in this industry as it run by the Agaria.

The only problem relating to the industry seems to me to improve the technique so that wastage of iron from a given quantity of ore and coal may be reduced to a minimum. As observed by Elwin, some sort of a flux can be mixed with charcoal for this purpose. Alongwith this, a wider market, if necessary through the agency of the Block, should be ensured.

Commerce:

There is no commercial establishment in the village. Of course, Sardoo Gond keeps *biris* and a few other things for sale. But the capital invested by him in the business is less than Rs. 5.00, and his establishment does not deserve to be elevated to the status of a shop.

Indebtedness:

The most significant feature is the small extent of indebtedness in the village. There are only five families in debt in village. Two of these are Baiga, two Gonds and one Mohammadan. Of the two Baiga families in debt, one belong to the lowest income group Rs. 20 and below, and the other to the group Rs. 31.40. In the Gonds, indebtedness is found in families belonging to the income groups Rs. 21.30 and Rs. 41.60. The Mohammadan family in debt comes in the higher income group 61—80. From the paucity of cases of indebtedness in the village, it is hardly possible or justifiable to draw inferences of any relations between levels of income or indebtedness. We can only state, without drawing any such inference, that of the five families in debt, two are in the lower income groups while the other three are in relatively higher income groups.

Indebtedness by cause:

The maximum amount of debt is taken for the construction of house. In fact, the total amount of debt under this cause is 62.2% of the total indebtedness in the village. Marriage accounts for 20% of the indebtedness; while funeral and ordinary wants account for 8.9% each. The small number of cases of indebtedness in the village, however, again forbid, us from drawing any conclusions from these figures.

Indebtedness by communities :

Gonds answering for more than half the indebtedness in the village—emerge as the most indebted community; the Baigas share only slightly more than one-fourth of the indebtedness, while a fifth of the indebtedness is borne by the single Mohammadan family in the village. The Dhoba, Ahir and Agaria households in the village are not indebted.

Debt by period:

Of the total indebtedness of Rs. 225, Rs. 105.00 were less than a year old, while Rs. 120.00 were taken within a period of one to two years. There was no debt older than two years in the village. Repayments only to the extent of Rs. 100.00 were made till the time of filling up the household schedules.

Of the five loans, three—aggregating in amount to Rs. 80.00 were raised locally; two from Loola Baiga and one from Sonaooram Gond. The Mohammadan had taken the loan from one of his relatives at Pankhwar, while one of the Gond families had taken the loan from village Harratola. The persons who had lent the money were not professional moneylenders.

In case of the Mohammadan, no interest was charged, but in all other cases, an interest of 25% was charged. The loans were paid without demanding any security. Apparently the security was the confidence reposed by the creditors in the debtors possibly based on the common village ethics which attach a high premium on honesty.

Cooperative:

Growth of cooperative institutions is still in the incipient stages in the village. A service co-

Indebtedness

Income Group	Indebtedness by Income Group			
	Total No. of Households	No. of Households in debt	Percentage of Col. 3 to Col. 2	Average indebtedness per Household in debt
1	2	3	4	5
Baiga				
Rs. 20 and below	5	1	20	40·00
Rs. 21 to 30	10	..	..	..
Rs. 31 to 40	4	1	25	20·00
Rs. 41 to 60	2	..	..	..
Rs. 61 to 80	1	..	..	..
Rs. 81 to 100	..	..	..	..
Rs. 101 and above	..	..	..	..
Gond				
Rs. 20 and below	..	..	..	..
Rs. 21 to 30	2	1	50	..
Rs. 31 to 40	2	..	..	..
Rs. 41 to 60	2	1	50	100·00
Rs. 101 and above	1	..	..	..
Others				
Rs. 21 to 30	1	..	..	..
Rs. 31 to 40	2	..	..	..
Rs. 41 to 60	3	..	..	..
Rs. 61 to 80	2	1	50	45·00
All Communities				
Rs. 20 and below	5	1	20	40·00
Rs. 21 to 30	13	1	8	20·00
Rs. 31 to 40	8	1	12½	20·00
Rs. 41 to 60	7	1	14-2/7	100·00
Rs. 61 to 80	3	1	33	45·00
Rs. 81 and above	1	..	..	..

Indebtedness by Causes

Causes	Amount of debt	Number of families	Proportion of debt due to cause to the total amount of debt
1	2	3	4
(*a*) Purchase of land	..	..	..
(*b*) House construction or repairs to existing buildings	140·00	2 (One Baiga, One Gond)	62·2
(*c*) Marriages	45·00	1 (Mohammadan)	20·0
(*d*) Funerals	20·00	1 (Baiga)	8·9
(*e*) To give dowry	..	..	..
(*f*) To clear outstanding debts	..	..	..
(*g*) Sickness	..	..	..
(*h*) Ordinary wants	20·00	1 (Gond)	8·9
(*i*) Household cultivation	..	..	..
(*j*) Industry run by the household	..	..	..
(*k*) Business run by the household	..	..	..
(*l*) Others	..	..	..
	225·00	..	100·00

operative society has been established in the name of Amwar, vide the decision taken by the District Advisory Committee of Mandla on 12th September, 1961. It is, however, found that the headquarters of the Manager of the Society were fixed at village Mawai—which is neither included in the area of operation of the society nor has any other connection with it.

Regarding the purpose of the service cooperative societies proposed to be set up in Madhya Pradesh, during the Third Five Year Plan and of which the Amwar Society is one, the Director of Tribal Welfare of the State wrote to the Collectors—

> "The need of Service Cooperatives especially among the tribal farmers needs no emphasis. A tribal farmer is always in deed of good seeds, fertilisers and other services and has to worry for sale of his agricultural produce at proper time and place. Being illiterate, he does not know from which sources good seeds and fertilizers can be promptly and cheaply obtained and is exploited by unscrupulous money-lenders and traders when he goes to sell his farm-produce. Organised system of buying and distributing promptly at very reasonable rates the seeds, fertilizers and other requirements of the cultivation will help them to improve their financial conditions and in getting out of the clutches of the money-lenders. All these services can be properly and efficiently rendered by Service Cooperative only. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the tribal cultivators should be encouraged to organise such activities."

Thus, the purpose of the service cooperative at Amwar is—(i) Distribution of seeds, fertilizers and other requirements of cultivation to the members at reasonable rates by way of loans; (ii) helping the cultivators to sell their farm—produce, (iii) saving members from the clutches of money-lenders. The area of operation of the society is in villages Amwar, Nunsarai, Belgaon, Sarasdoli, Ramtala, Sunehra, Patpara, Mohgaon, etc. The society has a manager appointed and paid by the Government, whose duty is to maintain day-to-day accounts of the society, and who is responsible to Government for the successful and efficient functioning of the society. At present, the headquarters of this Manager is at village Mawai, though none of the office-bearers of the cooperative stays in that village. The Government has given a subsidy of Rs. 10,000 to the

cooperative, which stands deposited to the credit of the society in the District Cooperative Bank at Mandla. Another subsidy of Rs. 7,500 has been given to the society for the construction of a godown for storing the seeds, fertilizers etc. The amount has not so far been utilised because there is no standard plan of construction of a godown with the district authorities, and the matter has been referred to the Chief Architect to the Government at Bhopal. The finances for advancing loans etc., to members and for purchase of seeds, fertilizers etc., are to be provided through the agency of the Madhya Pradesh State Tribal Cooperative Development Society Ltd., Bhopal, which is also the agency for providing technical guidance to the cooperative.

So far, i.e., till the writing of this report none from Amwar had taken any loan from the cooperative. As will appear later in this report, most of the people in Amwar were quite ignorant either of the existence itself of the society, or of its functions etc. and in what way they could utilise its agency for their financial improvement! Such a state of affairs is not very improbable when we find that the only official of the cooperative stays in Mawai and not in Amwar or one of the villages where the society is to operate. With their backwardness in respect of education and their very poor levels of awareness, it is a fond hope that people of Amwar and other villages, will in the foreseeably near future transform the society into an instrument of their welfare, which it is intended to be. It all depends upon the vigilance and interest of the officers at the district level, who are concerned with the proper working of the cooperative. There is no doubt that with proper direction and management, the cooperative can render some real benefit to the poor people of Amwar and neighbouring villages.

Income and Expenditure:

The distribution of households by various income groups has been discussed earlier. To recapitulate, the average income of a household in the village Rs. 38.24. The range of variation is, howerver 87, which is more than double the average income. Obviously, the average is not of much importance, unless we have information of how the incomes are spread about this average. Fourteen or roughly 38% of all the households have incomes spreading 25% on either side of the average income. Obviously this indicates a somewhat lopsided distribution of incomes. Widening the belt on either side of the average income by 5% admits five more households i.e., nineteen households lie in the range of 30% on either side of the average income. Still about 50% of the households have incomes either too high or too low of the average income. Extending the range to 40% on either side of the average admits 7 more families i.e., 26 families or 70% of all families have income within 40% on either side of the average income. This leaves eleven families, five of which are too high of the average income and six too low. Another significant observation is that 26 or 70% of all the families have incomes less than the average income.

The average income of a Baiga family is Rs. 28.90. This is about 24% below the average income for all the households. In contrast to this, the much better average i.e., Rs. 48.57 of the Gonds is in conformity with their better standard of living observed earlier; and which is also confirmed from the lower expenditure on food in their case. The per capita income for the village as a whole is Rs. 9.08 per month; while for the communities Gond and Baiga it is 10.63 and 7.85 respectively.

Expenditure Pattern:

Table on the next page presents breakup of expenditure by families in the village by 10 broad heads—viz. (1) Food, (2) Conventional necessaries, (3) Intoxicants, (4) Fuel and lighting, (5) Clothes, (6) Social Obligations, (7) Other domestic utilities, (8) Recreation, (9) Education, and (10) Others. Further the expenditure levels are correlated to the income levels for the village as a whole, and for the two major communities Baiga and Gond.

As is to be expected in a society with a pitiably low standard of living, major portion of the income is spent on food. For the village as a whole, for all income-groups, the expenditure on food is as high as 76%; while for the highest income-groups it is 74%. Obviously, the so called higher income groups, are also spending a disproportionately high amount on food articles; and this fact calls attention to the low standards of living in the village. The expenditure on food is higher (76%) than in the one above it in the lower income group of Rs. 31.40; but quite unexpectedly it is low (74%) for the lower income group Rs. 21.30. These are departures from Engel's Law (if it is permissible to apply the Law to the present case) which is to the effect that with rise in income the proportionate expenditure on food decreases. The deviations should, however, not be taken with any degree of confidence. The information on expenditure furnished by the villagers is only broadly representative of their true expenditures because none in the village subscribes to the practice of keeping any account of the expenditures and the returns entered in the schedules represent the best estimates according to the judgment of the investigator. The departure from Engel's Law is therefore not to be attached any significance. To get a correct idea, the size of the family also should have been taken note of; but that has not been done in the table. Broad verification of Engel's law is available from the fact that the Baigas whose average incomes is lower than the average for the village as a whole spend more on food (76.8%) than that spent by the village as a whole (76%). Similarly the Gond, with a average income higher than the average in-

Expenditure (Total and average per household) under certain specified heads by community and by income-range

Income Slab	Group	Food	Conventional necessities	Intoxicants	Fuel and lighting	Clothing	Social obligations	Other domestic utilities	Recreation	Others	Incomes	% expenditure on food to total expenditure
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
All persons												
60 & over	Total	187·11	5 50	4·75	4·50	17·50	10·00	23·00	..	..	297·60	74·20%
	Average	46·77	1·37	1 14	1·12	4·37	2·50	5·45	..	..	74·40	..
41—60	Total	228·00	4·50	10·25	4 50	23 17	..	25·00	..	3·25	343·00	76·5%
	Average	32·60	0·64	1·46	0 64	3·31	..	3·57	..	0·46	49·00	..
31—40	Total	173·00	5·00	7·00	4·33	20·76	0·50	18·00	..	0·75	267·30	75·5%
	Average	21·60	0·62	0 87	0·54	2·59	0·06	2·25	..	0·09	33·41	..
21—30	Total	251·50	6·25	7·75	6·75	30·92	9 50	30 50	..	1·00	350·00	74·9%
	Average	19·35	0·48	0·59	0·52	3·35	0·04	2·35	..	0·07	26·91	..
Below 20	Total	62·25	0·75	2·25	1·00	7·11	..	2·75	..	..	79·00	81·8%
	Average	12·45	0·15	0·45	0·20	1·42	..	0·55	..	..	15·80	
All Incomes	Total	901·86	22·75	34·25	22·08	106·57	11·00	102·50	..	5·00	1415·90	76%
	Average	24·36	0·59	0·93	0·59	2·88	0·30	2·76	..	0·13	38·24	..
Baiga												
60+	Total	46·66	1·00	2.00	1·25	4·00	1· 0	5·00	..	..	63·00	77·0%
	Average	46·66	1·00	2·00	1·25	4·00	1·00	5·00	..	..	63·00	
41—60	Total	64·00	1·00	4·00	1·50	5·31	..	8·00	..	0·25	98·00	76·2%
	Average	32·00	0·50	2·00	0·75	2.65	..	4·00	..	0·12	49·00	
31—40	Total	91·00	3·00	4·50	2·08	10·39	0·50	6·50	..	0·50	131·80	81·2%
	Average	22·75	0·75	1·50	0·52	2·59	0·12	1·62	..	0·12	32·95	
21—30	Total	190·00	4·75	5·25	5·00	21·92	0·50	23·50	..	0·50	264·00	75·7%
	Average	19·00	0·47	0·52	0·50	2·19	0·05	2·35	..	0·05	26·40	
Below 20	Total	62·25	0·75	2·25	1·00	7·11	..	2·75	..	..	79·00	81·8%
	Average	12·45	0·15	0·45	0·20	1·42	..	0·55	..	..	15·80	
All Incomes	Total	453·91	10·50	18·00	10·83	48·73	2·00	45·75	..	2·00	635·80	76·8%
	Average	20·63	0·47	0·82	0·49	2·21	0·09	2·08	..	0·09	28·90	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Gond												
60+	Total .	39·14	2·50	1·00	1·50	6·00	5·00	10·00	..	..	110·00	60%
41—60 .	Total .	74.00	1. 0	3.00	1.25	9.50	..	9·00	..	0·25	108·00	75·5%
	Average .	37·00	0·50	1·50	0·62	4·75	..	4·50	..	0·12	54·00	
31—40 .	Total .	39·00	1·00	1·50	1·25	6·10	..	6·00	..	0·25	63·5)	70·9 %
	Average	19·50	0·50	0·75	0·62	3·05	..	3· 0	..	0·12	33·25	
21—30 . .	Total .	38·00	1·00	2·00	1·25	6·50	..	4·50	..	0·50	56·00	70.4%
	Average .	19·50	0·50	1·00	0·62	3·25	..	2·25	..	0·25	28·00	
All Income .	Total .	190·14	5·50	7·50	5·25	28·1)	5·00	29·50	..	1·00	340·00	69·8%
	Average .	27·16	0·79	1·07	0·75	4·01	0·71	4·21	..	0·14	48·57	

come of the village as a whole spend much less on food (69.8) than the village as a whole.

Next to food, other important articles of expenditure are clothing (average 2.88), domestic utilities (average Rs. 2.76), intoxicants (average Re. 0.93). The average expenditure on these items is rather insignificantly small as compared to the expenditure on food. Generally, the expenditures on all these items show a declining trend with declining income levels. This is what is to be expected also. It may be noted that the Baigas spend somewhat less (0.82) on liquor than the village as a whole (Rs. 0.93), and conspicuously less than the Gonds (Rs. 1.07). Of course, in part this is due to the lower income of the Baigas. The Gonds spend on an average Rs 4.01 per household on clothing, which is almost double the amount spend by the Baiga on clothes. There is no expenditure incurred on education and on recreation from month to month. The very low average expenditure per household (Rs. 0.30) on social obligations may be noted. Obviously, it does not take note of the expenditure incurred at the time of the major crises of life. The expenditure on fuel and lighting is Rs. 0.60 per month per household ,and it obviously represents the modicum of amount spent on lighting, mainly kerosene. It is, however, clear that the most of the households probably do not burn even kerosene because then we would have expected a better average. The writer of the present monograph, however, knows from his personal observation that in many a house in the village the only light in the early hours of the night is the light of the kitchen or courtyard fire.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Demographic data-population variation over the past seven decades:

The pattern of population variation of a village is an important element of its demography. For one thing, variations of population which diverge significantly from the trend for the region in which the village is situated at once put the investigator or research worker on the alert for the possible existence of some factors peculiar to the village. For another, population dynamics plays a very significant role in the process of economic development of the village. The variation in the population of Amwar at the past eight Censuses except for the 1931 Census (figures for which were not available) is presented in the table inset below. For establishing comparison, figures relating to Mawai, a roadside neighbour of Amwar, and the region viz. Mandla district are also given to the extent they were available.

It appears that during the period under review population variation has not been uni-directional even in the region in which the village is situated. The direction of variation was reversed in two decades, viz. 1891—1901 and 1911—21. In all other decades the variation has been positive. In fact, as regards the region, the population variation has shown an increasing trend since 1921, and for this reason, the Registrar General, of 1951 Census had described the 1921 Census as the 'great divide'. It also appears that in respect of population variation Mawai has been behaving as a relatively stabler neighbour of Amwar, generally partaking of the regional trend. The demographic history of Amwar has however been significantly different from that of the region. In particular, when the population of Mawai, of the district and of the State had gone down considerably during the decade 1911—21 owing chiefly to the outbreak of the deadly influenza epidemic in the closing years of the decade, Amwar showed an increase which is seconded only by the phenomenal increase in population during the decade just gone by. Amwar also shows divergence from the regional and State trends of population variation during the decades 1901—11, 1921—41 and 1941—51. In all these decades, the population of the State and the district had registered noticeable increases, while Amwar's population showed a downward trend. The sharing by Amwar's neighbour Mawai of the general trends of population variation, and Amwar's failure so to do clearly point to the operation of some local factors in Amwar, militating against its conforming to the general pattern. In the paragraphs that follow, an attempt is made to examine as far as possible the data collected during this enquiry with a view to bring out, or in any case, suggest the factors responsible for the peculiar population behaviour in each decade.

Population variation in Amwar and Mawai villages compared to the variation in the district

Census Year	Amwar				Mawai				District Percentage variation.
	Persons	Males	Females	Percentage variation	Persons	Males	Females	Percentage veriation	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1891 . . .	245	N.A.	N.A.	..	287	N.A.	N.A.	..	..
1901 . . .	224	N.A.	N.A.	—8·6	212	N.A.	N.A.	—24·7	—6
1911 . . .	84	40	44	—62·5	265	137	128	+25·0	+27
1921 . . .	117	60	57	+39·3	192	97	95	—27·5	—5
1931 . . .	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	..	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	..	+15
1941 . . .	97	51	46	..	..	..	..	..	+13
1951 . . .	96	47	49	—1·0	222	120	102		+9
1961 . . .	140	72	68	+45·8	382	187	195	+70·00	+25

1891—1901:

During this decade, the population of Amwai declined by 8.6%, during the same period Mawai reduced its population by 24.7% while the decrease in district as a whole was of the order of 6.5%. Adumbrating the causes of this downfall in population, Martin, Superintendent of Census Operations of Central Provinces and Berar wrote in his report. "The decade 1891—1901 was one of continued calamity. In seven out of the ten years there were severe epidemics of cholera and in four years besides the two great famines of 1898 and 1900 there were partial failures of crops". Mr. Bell, who conducted the settlement operations of the district during the period 1904—10 also referred to the great mortality in, and emigration of, the aboriginals during the first famine. That Amwar also had its quota of starvation deaths owing to the pestilence and famine is borne out from the testimony of one of its older inhabitants Bakhti Agaria. The decrease of 8.6 % in the population of the village is therefore not at all surprising and is comparable with the decrease for the district as a whole.

The population variation of village gave the first instance of its erratic behaviour in the count of 1911, when the population of the village declined by 140 in absolute numbers or by 62.5%[2]. And this, when the population of the State, the district and neighbour Mawai had registered increases of 15.3%, 27.3% and 25% respectively. Unfortunately, there are not many in the village who could recount events of about 50—60 years ago. Bakhti Agaria who is one of the oldest men in the village disclosed that about fifty years back, there broke out *girani* or famine with its usual concomitant epidemic and many people in the village had died and many left the village. Bakhti's account however cannot help us in fixing with reasonable confidence the period when these calamities befell the village. The famine referred to by him was in the year 1900 and that should have affected the count of 1901. Apparently these people left the village after they had been mauled by the famine and the pestilence. Another event which might have encouraged emigration from the village was the construction of the rail-link between Nainpur and Mandla during the decade.

A second example of the erratic demographic behaviour of the village is found in the succeeding decennium 1911—1921. Generally, this was a decade of a very complex agricultural history; but the most important single cause affecting population growth was the visitation of all parts of the State by the fatal influenza epidemic in September 1918. This disease continued to decimate the population well into 1919 and according to the Census Report of 1921 of Central Provinces and Berar, the number of deaths in that State from this epidemic alone was 824,949. The aboriginal population was reported to have suffered most due to the pest. Mandla district with a majority of aboriginal population was therefore severely mauled by the epidemic, which, we have it on the authority of the Settlement Report of 1927—1930 fell with special severity on the more backward groups of the Niwas and Dindori tahsils. We therefore find the population of the district falling by 5% at the count of 1921. Amwar's neighbour Mawai had lost 27.5% of its population during the decade. We are therefore naturally surprised to find Amwar registering an increase of 39% in its population at the 1921 count, surpassed only by the phenomenal growth during the last decade. The only probable explanation is immigration into the village of families from other villages, after the epidemic had taken its toll of human lives, and after conditions had stabilised. Such a thing is not at all surprising in view of the rapidity with which migration has been taking place in the village. These must have been Dhoba families—because at the settlement of 1904—10, there was no Dhoba land-holding family in the village; but at the settlement of 1927—29 we find at least nine Dhoba families holding land in the village.

Population of the village for the 1931 Census is unfortunately not available; and what is worse, we have no other source to judge the nature of population variation in the village during the decade 1921—31. The 1941 count in the village returned 97 heads i.e. thirty less than the 1921 population. In the absence of data for 1931 Census, it is not possible to say whether this decline of 17.1% since 1921 in the population of the village was a steady process, or whether the population had first gone on increasing and then showed a steep downward variation. It may however be stated that during both these decades, the conditions were generally favourable to steady population growth; in fact during the two decades, the district population had risen by 30.6%. The decline noticed in the population of Amwar is thus again a corroboration of its irregular demographic behaviour. Paucity of convincing and cogent evidence prevents us from pinpointing the particular local factors that were responsible for this, but general surmises can be made. As has been adverted to earlier, Dhoba families had settled in the village sometime during 1911—21 (reflected in the surprising increase in population during that generally bad decade). We have definite evidence that these families continued to reside in the village till the settlement operations of 1927—30. Most of them, in fact all except one, left the village after that. Mangal Gond's evidence to the

1. Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlements of the Mandla District, 1904-1910; p. 11.
2. Ibid.

effect that he was allotted the holding deserted by a Dhoba helps us in broadly fixing the period of this emigration. Mangal had first settled in the village about 30 year ago, so that the Dhoba families must have deserted Amwar sometime between 1930 and 1933.

The population remained more or less constant during the decennium 1941-51, there being only a decline of 1% in it. For the causes of this decline, we have again to fall back upon the testimony of Mangal Gond recorded in the case-history to be given later in this chapter. According to Mangal Gond, when he first settled at Amwar, (about the year 1933) there were four or five Gond families already living there. His first sojourn in Amwar lasted fifteen years or so, and then he left the village because the village had become denuded of its Gond population owing to death or desertion. Thus the absence of growth of population in 1941—51 decade in the village is to be ascribed to extinction of the Gond population there.

During the last decade, however, the population increased literally by leaps and bounds, overshooting the 1921 mark by 28 in absolute terms. The percentage variation reached an all time high of 45.8. As will appear presently, much of this increase owes itself to immigration of new families into the village, mostly Gonds, and a few Baigas. It is, therefore, only appropriate to examine this migration factor, which singly has been responsible for the capricious population trends in the village.

Migration:

Migration is, in all conscience, the most important single factor reacting on the population growth of the village. Some idea of the extent of migrational activity in the village can be formed from the fact that except for some fifteen or sixteen families (some 13 or 14 of which have sprung from three old families) all the rest have settled in the village within the last 25 years. Thus the first settlers of the village, except for the three old families referred to above, have all left the village. Even of the newer families many have emigrated. Some idea of the extent of migration in the village can again be formed from the fact that the number of families as it stood on the reference date of the Census viz. 1st March 1961 was 35, and this has increased to 37 families at the time the household schedules for this enquiry were canvassed i.e. in May 1961. Even while this enquiry was going on i.e. till May 1963 fifteen families were involved either in leaving the village or newly settling, or leaving and again coming back to it (counting families who left the village and then came back twice). Four of these were Gond, three Agaria, two Ahir and six Baiga.

Evidence of Settlement Reports:

Settlement Misls of the village are of great help in studying the extent of migration in the village. This is because these documents contain details of all the landholding families in the village at a particular period of time. The table inset below shows the number of families that were residing and holding land in the village at the Settlement of 1904—10.

Name of community	Families residing and holding land in the—village at Settlement.	How many of the families can be identified.
Baiga . . .	1	1
Gond . . .	6	Nil
Agaria . . .	3	2
Dhoba . . .	Nil	Nil
Ahir . . .	2	Nil
Mohammadan . .	1	Nil

Before making any observations, I would like to make clear that the families mentioned in column 2 are only those that held land in the village and the possibility of there being a few more families resident in the village having no land and consequently not finding a mention in the settlement misl cannot be ruled out. That most of such families (if any) must have been Baiga families would emerge from the fact that the Baigas being shifting cultivators would not normally acquire tenancy right in the land and would consequently escape being mentioned in the settlement misl.

The descendents of the two Agaria families that have been identified are Bakhti, Bhobha and Sukhlal Agarias. The remaining Agaria family is a new settler. Similarly the solitary Baiga family which is now identified has two representative families in the village—i.e. those of Loola Baiga and his son Kangli. It is significant that except these three families, rest have now ceased to be identifiable and this fact shows that the families in Amwar have undergone almost a complete change since 1903-04. At the Census of 1901 Amwar had a population of 224 i.e. 30 to 40 families. In the year 1903-04, we find only 13 families holding land in the village. Since in 1901, Amwar's age was not likely to be more than 30 years and it was still in the stage when its virgin soil was being broken by new settlers, it appears to be improbable that it could have had many landless families then. We can therefore assume that at the most there were 5 to 10 landless families at Amwar then so that in 1903-04 the total number of families in the village was in the neighbourhood of 18—23. Thus, in the three years

after 1901 count there was considerable emigration from Amwar. As has been adverted to earlier on the testimony of the scion of an old settler family of the village, this emigration was a sequel to the famine of the year 1900, and the pestilences that had routed the population at about the same time. This huge emigration was reflected in the census count of 1911, which returned a population only of 84.

The year 1929-30 is another landmark in the village in that we have a record for that year of landholding families in the village in the settlement misl of 1927—30. Their details according to communities and the number of families out of them that are identifiable now are given in the table below:

Name of community	Number of families holding land	Number of families now identifiable
Baiga . . .	10	5
Gond . . .	4	Nil
Agaria . . .	3	2
Dhoba . . .	9	1
Mohammadan . .	1	Nil

Thus of 27 families holding land in the village at the settlement of 1927—30, only 8 are identifiable to-day and the rest i.e. about 71% have left the village or have otherwise become extinct. The evidence of the two settlements thus conclusively establishes the migratory nature of the village population. A very significant feature is the migration *en bloc* of the Dhoba families. In fact, as would appear presently it was after the migration of the Dhoba families that most of the Baiga and Gond families settled in the village. It thus appears that during the last 32 or 33 years, the family composition of the village has undergone substantial changes. Inset below is a table which gives a break-up of the migrant families who settled in the village within the last 40 years.

Of the families that are not covered by the above table the period of immigration of two families, one Baiga and one Dhoba dates back to about 45—50 years. The remaining twelve families are the descendents of the first settler Baiga and Agaria families. A look at the table shows that roughly 50% of the present families have settled in the village within the last 20 years. We have not taken note here of families that must have settled in the village and subsequently left it; but, looking to the unsettled population history of the village, it is reasonable to assume that they were considerable in number.

Causes for migration:

The section of the community which is most susceptible to migration is that of the Gonds. Explaining this, Mangal Gond stated:—"We are *kisan* or cultivating people. Except agriculture, we have no other occupation. Like Baigas, we may not make things for selling. Hence, when we find the land in a village unable to support us, we 'run away'—(i.e. leave the village)." In order to appreciate the causes that lead to such frequent migrations, it is instructive to consider a few case-histories of migration which will help in bringing out their variety.

Case I: (*Mangal Gond s/o Darbari*). Mangal Gond lived with his parents in Banjra, a forest village, about 7 miles from Amwar. It may be interesting in this context to note that he was born in village Basni in Mandla tahsil which was left by his parents for livelihood in the forest village. At Banjra, Mangal lost his parents. Being the only earning male member of his family he left Banjra because, being required to perform labour compulsorily as a condition of his stay in the village in the forest he was not able to

Name of community	No. of families settled in the village. (counted from May 1961 backward)					
	Within 5 years	Within 5 to 10 years	Within 10—15 years	Within 15—20 years	Within 20·30 years	Within 30·40 years
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Baiga . . .	1	3	4	1	1	1
Gond . . .	2	1	2	..	1	..
Agaria . . .	..	1	1	—	—	—
Dhoba . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ahir . . .	—	—	1	—	—	1
Muhammadan . . .	..	..	..	1	—	1
Total (23) . . .	3	5	8	2	2	3

look after his family.* This was about thirty-two years ago and at that time village Amwar was still held by the firm of Raja Gokaldas of Jabalpur. Mangal was settled on the land deserted by a Dhoba (of nine Dhoba families who were holding land at the settlement of 1928-29, eight had left the village about two or three years afterwards) on payment of a *Nazrana* of Rs. 35. This may be considered to be rather on the high side, judged from the low-price level of those days. When he first settled at Amwar there were already four or five families of Gonds residing there, and that ,apart from the easy availability of land, was the incentive for his choosing Amwar. Mangal lived in Amwar for about 15 years, after which period he left it and settled in Murta. The reason for this departure is stated to be the depopulation of the Gonds in Amwar either owing to death or desertion. About the year 1950, he lost most of his cattle in Murta and wanted to leave that village. On being contacted. Tenda the Patel of Amwar, told him to come and resettle at Amar as his land was still there. So Mangal came back to Amwar about the year 1950 and has been living there since then.

Case II (*Dhansingh Gond*). About 13 or 14 years ago, he was living with his father in Soorajpura, a forest village, about 10—12 miles from Amwar. His father deserted Dhansingh's mother and the village for another woman of village Phatari, again a forest village. In Phatari he lost his father after a year or two, and being thus left alone, he left Phatari along with his relative Amoli. The cause was again reluctance to perform compulsory labour as he was the only male member in his family. Here he got about 10—12 acres of land through the village Patel Tenda. (This must have been encroached land for no land is recorded in the name of Dhansingh in village papers). In Amwar, he lost his mother (who had come to live with him). His *mamma* (father's sister's husband) who lived at Harratola, also died in the meanwhile leaving only his widow. Dhansingh had to look after the lands of the relatives also. At about the same time he fell out with the village Patel Tenda and on that pretext left Amwar for Harratola, entrusting the management of his lands to Sardoo Gond. After about three years he again became friendly with Tenda on whose persuasion he staged a comeback to Amwar just after the 1961 Census. Now he looks after the lands at Harratola also from Amwar.

Case III (*Amoli Gond*). He migrated from forest village Phatari as he did not like to perform the compulsory labour in the forest works. He had acquired about 10 acres of land by encroachment in Amwar and has been living here since then.

Case IV (*Samaratr Gond*). He is Mangal's son-in-law and followed the former to Amwar in or about 1951.

Case V (*Johan Agaria*). He came to Amwar about 6-7 years ago on learing that Bakhti Agaria (distantly related to him) of Amwar had stopped the traditional iron-smelting industry. Prior to coming to Amwar he was living with his father in village Bhajitola, about 6 miles from Amwar and helped him in his work. Johan told our investigator that the Agaria usually moved from place to place in search of work.

Case VI (*Sardu Gond*). He previously lived in village Harratola. He was landless. On the death of his first wife he developed intimacy with the daughter of Amoli who was married in village Harratola. He eloped with her and settled in his father-in-law's village Amwar. He has encroached upon some four acres of land and has been eking out his living from it since then.

Case VII (*Sonauram Gond*). He lived previously in Karanjia village in Dindori tahsil. He came to Amwar about three years ago to set up the school at Amwar on behalf of the Banwasi Sewa Mandal. He has also encroached upon about 12 acres of land and has been cultivating it in addition to working for Banwasi Sewa Mandal.

Case VIII (*Jhuna & Panku Baigas*). They are real brothers. They first came to Amwar about 6-7 years ago from Darrai in the Bandhan (Kawardha tahsil) and cut *bewar*. After living here for about three years they migrated back to Darrai. But they lived there only for about one year and came back to Amwar. They have no land in their name; but they cut *bewar*, both of them have now been married to daughters of Tenda, the village Patel.

Case IX (*Samaru or Dupti*). He also came from a village Badai in the Bandhan area of Kawardha tahsil about 7 years ago in search of livelihood. He has been cutting *bewar* in Amwar since then.

Case XI (*Bhursu Baiga*). He came to Amwar by his parents who lived in Tewalpani village. They were poor and wandering from village to village in search of livelihood. Ultimately they settled in Amwar. They were landless and hence cut *bewar* in Amwar. After his parent's death Amari continued to stay in Amwar and is now the son-in-law of Tenda. He is also cutting *bewar*.

Case XI ıBhursu Baiga). He came to Amwar when he was a boy of hardly 13 or 14 i.e. above 35 to 40 years ago. The village to which he originally belonged was Rajadhar in Kawardha

*It may be rcalled that families settled in forest villages have to undertake to supply compulsorily one able-bodied man for forest labour.

State. The reason for the migration is that he wanted a wife and his father's sister who was living in Amwar promised to help him in finding one in the village. Later on Bhursu married the sister of Tenda and settled in the village.

Case XII (*Ramhai Dhoba*). (Age about 56 years). He came here from village Sarisdol, about 5 miles away about 41 years ago. The immediate cause of the migration was the death of his parents and his being rendered without a means of livelihood. He lived in Amwar for about 10 years before he was allotted land by the proprietor.

Case XIII (*Baisakhu Ahir*). (50 years). He first came to Amwar with his father when he was about 10 years old. His first village was Bharratola, nine miles from Amwar. The reason for migration was the lack of a means of livelihood. About fourteen years ago he had run away to Masna-Harratola 8 miles from Amwar because he was offered better terms by these villagers. He hardly stayed there for four years, when he was offered inducements to come to Amwar. He came back to Amar and settled here. Presently he has again quarrelled with Tenda and is thinking of leaving the village. Tenda had apologised to him, and the villagers have for the time being pursuaded him to stay on.

Emigrations:

Case I (*Bhobha Ahir*). This is a very recent migration having taken place in the month of July or August 1962. The reason for migration is said to be Bhobha's feeling slighted at villager's request to him to shift his house slightly away from the road, as the large number of she-buffaloes he had, created insanitary conditions on the road. Rather than comply with this reasonable demand of the villagers Bhobha left the village and settled in village Tilaibhat (a hamlet of Nansarai—one mile from the village).

Case II (*Ghasiram Gond*). His emigration is linked up with that of Bhobha Ahir. The latter was grazing the she-buffaloes of Bhobha, and when he left the village, Ghasiram too left it. It is interesting to note that both of them have settled in the same village.

Case III (*Baisakhu Baiga*).* He is son of Tenda, the Mukaddam. He left the village about six years ago because he had quarrelled with his father over the latter's misbehaviour with his guests. He then settled in a village in the Kawardha tahsil but has recently come back because he is facing trial in a Kawardha court for allegedly distilling country liquor.

Case IV (*Itwari Baiga*). This again is a recent migration. The cause this time is a superstition that there is something wrong with the water of Amwar or it is obsessed by a magic spell which causes leprosy. Itwari was suffering from leprosy and he has left the village in the hope of getting himself cured in some more healthy place, or one free from such a magic spell.

Case V (*Aklu Agaria*). He left the village because he could not earn enough for sustaining himself and his family at Amwar. He was landless.

Case VI (*Samarath Gond*). He left Amwar recently because he lost, some heads of cattle here and because he used to fall ill here. He has gone to village Chhatarpathara (7 miles).

After a consideration of these cases cited above, one arrives at the following probable causes which give rise to migration to and from the village.

I. Compulsory forest labour:—This is by far the most important reason for migration. When owing to death, or some other causes, the number of adult male workers of a family in a forest village is reduced to one, the family is almost certain to migrate. This is because being the only working member in the family, there is none to take care of the family affairs when he is drafted for forest labour. During our conversation with the villagers, we gathered that they did not like the forest villages (known simply as a 'village' in the parlance of the village) because of the conscription to forest labour and also because no rights in land are created in their favour in a forest village. Still, to begin with families, having more than one worker generally settle in a forest village on account of the ease with which they can earn their living there. But once settled they would ever after be on the look-out for another village having some unbroken or relinquished lands. It was also disclosed during our chat with the villagers over a winter evening bonfire, that of the three types of villages viz. the forest villages, the malguzari villages and the raiyatwari villages in the past, they liked the raiyatwari villages most. The dislike for the malguzari villages arose from the excesses perpetrated on the tenants by the landlord or his agents.

II. Problem of livelihood:—In many cases migrations take place because the families do not have enough to sustain them in the village in which they lived. There being not much mobility of labour—horizontal or vertical—and in any case there being no choice to take to alternative occupations, most families depend

* While this report was being written, Baisakhu has come back to Amwar.

on their traditional calling of agriculture and migrate from village to village in search of land. The Agaria and Ahir families likewise frequently migrate to villages where they are needed for their traditional services.

III. Shifting cultivation:—In the case of Baigas, shifting cultivation is again a factor of some importance which gives rise to migration.

IV. Superstitions:—Quite frequently families leave the villages of their residence when they lose their relations, or even their cattle. Sometimes, families who had tenency lands in the villages left them for such reasons. (Example Mangal Gond).

There is, however one important fact which should be mentioned. That is, most of the families that are concerned in migration are landless. Once they come to own lands in a village, families are normally slow in leaving it. One possible approach, therefore to check migratory trends is to allot available lands to landless families, and not to allot land to such families that have deserted their lands in other village.

Sex-ratio :

The sex-ratio i.e. the number of females per 1,000 males for the last three and 1921 and 1911 censuses (for others the variate is not available) of Amwar is presented in the table inset below. For the sake of comparison, corresponding figures for the village Mawai and the district are also given.

Yer	Females per thousand males		
	Amwar	Mawai	Mandla District
1911 .	1,100	934	1,017
1921 .	950	979	1,012
1931 .	N.A.	N.A.	1,014
1941 .	902	N.A.	1,009
1951 .	1,043	850	1,035
1961 .	944	1,042	1,006

It may be observed that the sex-ratio was advantageous to the weaker sex in the 1911 Census. The high value of 1100 for the ratio is more apparent than real, because the actual excess of females over males in the population was only four. The two succeeding censuses saw a steady increase in masculinity in the village. The obviously high disparity in the proportion of sexes in 1941 is again to be attributed to the low population of the sexes, the absolute difference being only of the order of 5. The next census again witnessed a reversal of the character of the ratio; at the 1951 count, the village population had a feminine excess of 43 for one thousand males. During the last decade, however, the masculine numerical supremacy was restored.

Apparently, the sex-ratio has been behaving in an unpredictable manner over the past seven decades. The factors that generally lead to disparity in the proportion of the sexes are—(i) higher birth-rate for one sex; (ii) sex-selective mortality in general; (iii) greater susceptibility of the weaker sex to epidemics; (iv) social attitude which results in neglect of the weaker sex children; (v) institution of early marriage.

As regards the 1st and 2nd causes, it is unfortunate that vital statistics of the village were not available even for the decade just gone by. It is therefore not possible to determine the trends of sex-wise birth and death rates in the village. With respect to (iii), the adverse sex-ratio in 1921 may be attributed to higher feminine mortality as a result of the historic influenza epidemic of the 1918-19. Factor (iv) is not operative in Amwar, because girls are not 'eye-sore' in Amwar. Though the institution of early marriage of girls does exist to some extent, the harmful effect on the girl-wives are more than compensated by the out-door life they lead.

A biological explanation for the generally observed adverse sex-ratio in the country was put forward by the Census Superintendent of Bombay Presidency in 1921, and by the Census Commissioner of India in 1931. "According to the former,[3] 'the Indian endogamous caste with its exogamous division is a perfect method of what is called in genetics the *pure line*'. The edogamy precents external hybridization, while the exogamy prevents the possibility of a fresh pure line arising within the old one by the isolation of any character not common to the whole line. With the preservation of the pureline the perpetuation of all characters common to it necessarily follows. And there is no reason why the sex-ratio should not be a transmissible character." Agreeing broadly with the view taken by the Bombay Superintendent, the 1931 Census Commissioner remarked: "Whether this proposition be entirely acceptable or not, it may be conceded that, if once a caste, whether as a result of inbreeding or some totally different factor, has acquired the natural condition of having an excess of females, the condition is likely to be perpetuated as long as inbreeding is maintained". It is, however, difficult, if not altogether improbable to apply these principles to a small, and open population like that of Amwar. In Amwar, migration is an important factor, affecting all demographic variables and the rather capricious variation of the sex

3. Mamuria, C.B., India's Population Problem, 1st Edition; p. 198

ratio is to be ascribed to this factor more than to any other cause. However, it is not possible to deduce any correlation between sex-ratio and the tribal or any other character of the population; though it may be stated that over a long period the sex-ratio tends to change so that there is an excess of males over females.

Sex-ratio by tribes and by castes—1961:

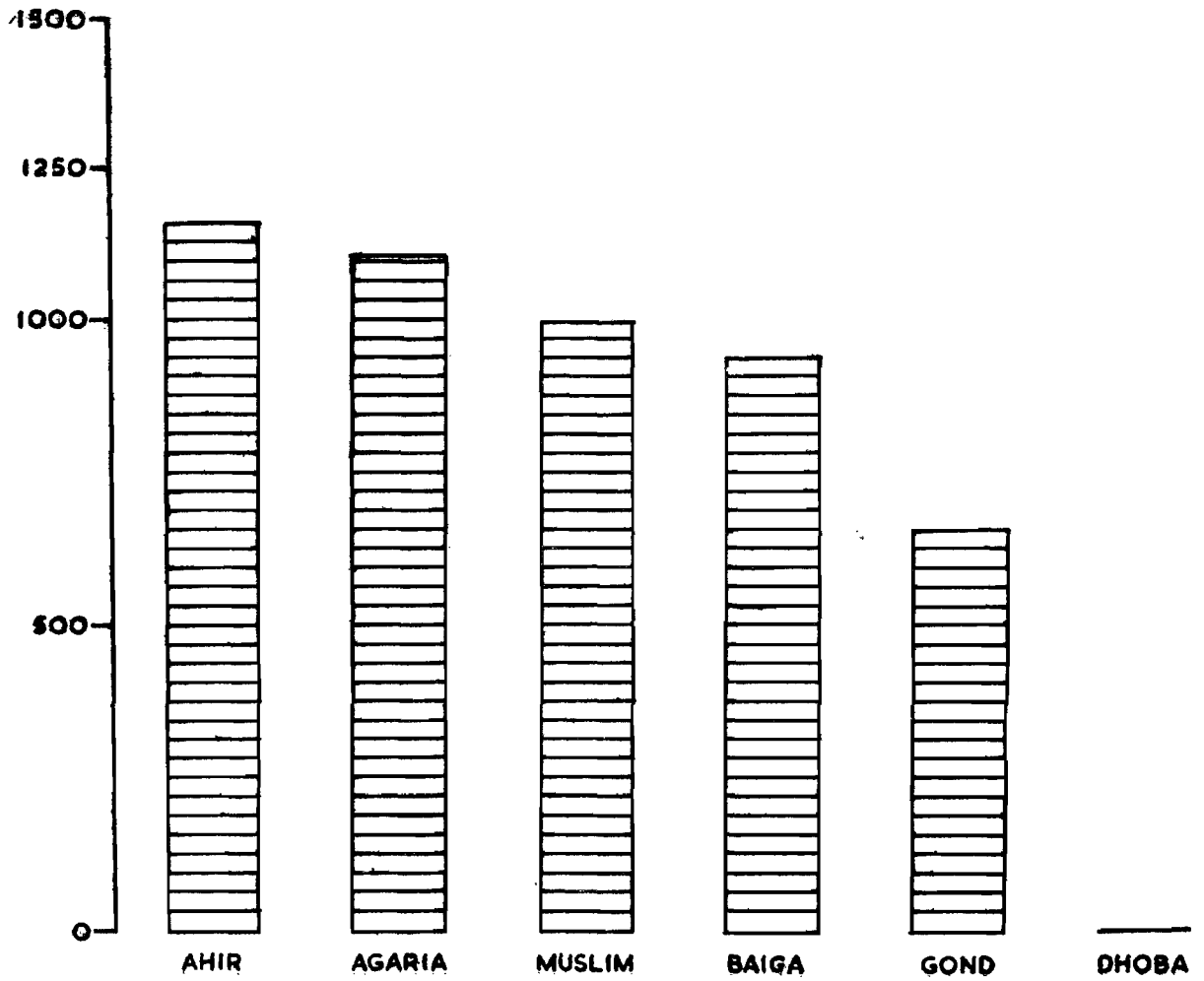
The sex-ratio of the communities living in Amwar is presented below:—

Community	Sex-ratio.
Baiga	884
Gond	636
Agaria	1,111
Ahir	1,166
Dhoba	No females
Mohammadan	1,000

It should be observed that both in Gonds and Baigas, there is a masculine preponderance, the difference is more pronounced in the case of Gonds. This is *prima facie* ascribable to the relatively unstable character of Gonds in the village, because as observed earlier, the Gonds have the most migratory character in the village. The excess of females in the Agarias and Ahirs may be noted, but, in view of the small number of families, that cannot be the basis of any inference. Diagram represents sex-ratio in the village.

Age and sex distribution:

The classification of a population by age and sex is of considerable importance from the twin points of view of demography and socio-economic structure of the society. School-going, being in the working force, marital status are some of the aspects of social life that are controlled by the age and sex composition of the population. The preponderance of very young, and very old and consequently imbecile persons in a population is known to act as a powerful drag on its economy. Further in order to understand and forecast future demographic trends—the age and sex structure of the population assumes great importance; for it influences the birth and death rates of the population. These are some of the ways in which



age and sex can affect the future growth of a population; the actual number is legion. Hence the importance of correct analysis and proper appreciation of the role of age and sex data in the socio-economic study of a given population.

It seems necessary, however, to sound a word of caution. It is the universal experience of census authorities in India and elsewhere in backward countries that the age-returns of the census are extremely inaccurate. The principal source of error in age-returns generally is that the age is more often than not unknown to the respondent, and has consequently to be estimated from outward appearances, or from comparison with previous known events, or from the relative seniority ranking in the household or the village population. Such estimation has of course to be made by the investigator whose preference and biases therefore creep into the age-returns, and may even distort them. In appreciating the age and sex data of a population—more so of a small population one has to deal with in a village survey—these facts should invariably be borne in mind.

Table below presents breakup of the village population by caste, sex and by the age groups 0—4, 5—9, 10—14, 15—24, 24—34, 35—59 and 60+. The age-distribution is shown pictorially by all these age-groups in the age-pyramid. If age distribution of the population conforms to the general pattern in which the populations at successive ages go on decreasing, the base of the pyramid is the broadest, and if the ages have been grouped into intervals of equal width, the pyramid goes on narrowing as the higher age-groups are reached. In illiterate and superstitious populations where age-mis-statements, deliberate or inadvertant, distort the age-returns, the pyramid generally does not have the form it should have. The pyramid for Amwar clearly shows the lopsided distribution of ages in the villages. Its truncated apprearance may in part be ascribed to inaccuracies in the age-returns, but also to an appreciable extent it bears testimony to the importance of the migrational factor. The age-pyramid of the population of the district is also shown, which though not confirming wholly to the ideal shape is a nearer approximation to it.

A study of table enables the following observations to be made:—

(i) 18 per cent of all persons in the village are either infants or very young children below four years of age. This is almost the same as the relevant percentage for the district as a whole which is 17.9.

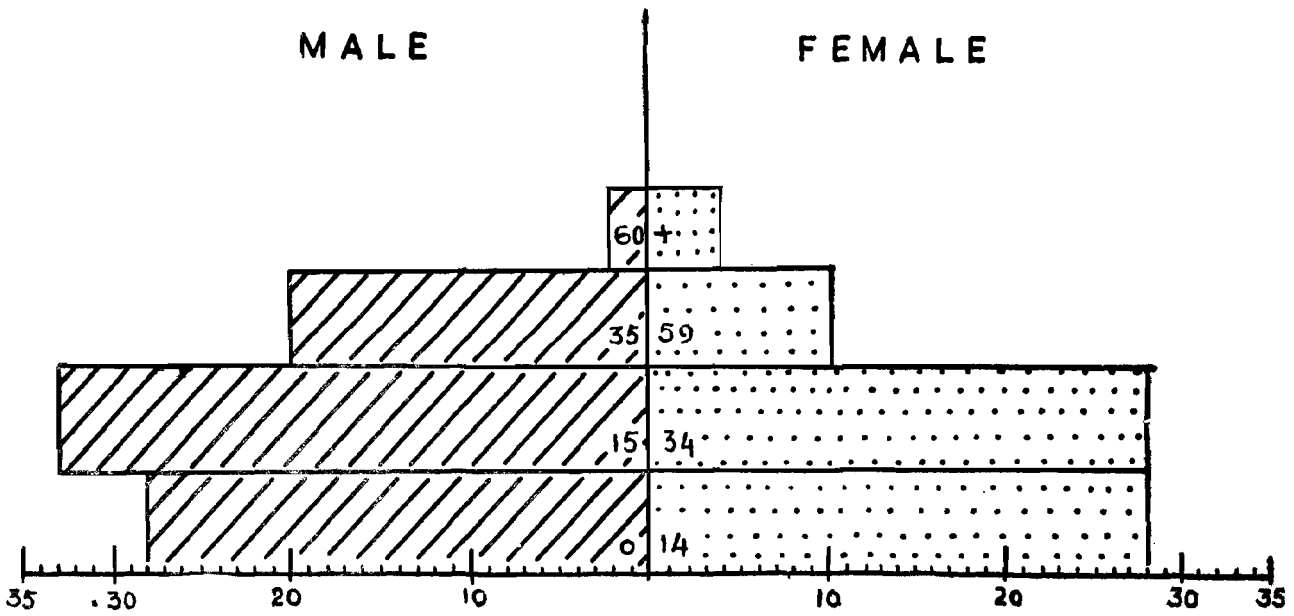
(ii) The number of children in the school going age 5—14 is equal to the number of infants and children below four years of age. Combining these two age-groups i.e. 0—4 and 5—14, we get the percentage of children and young girls and boys in the village. This is 36; so that roughly one out of every three persons in the village is a child or a small boy or girl below 14 years of age. It should be noted that under normal conditions these 36% should not contribute to the working force in the village.

(iii) A noteworthy feature of the age-group 5—14 i.e. the school-going age-group is the relative preponderance of girls over boys. Females roughly constitute two-thirds of the population in the age-group. The total absence of males in the age-group 10-14 deserves more than passing attention. This certainly points to wrong estimation of the ages of persons in this age-group to some extent; but otherwise there is no plausible explanation for it except migration. In the age-group 0—14, however, there is parity in the sex-ratio.

Population by Caste, Sex and Age-groups

Caste.	Total of all ages			0—4		5—9		10—14		15—24		25—34		35—59		60+	
	Persons	Males	Females	M	F	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	15	16	17	18
Baiga .	82	43	39	9	5	9	5	..	6	6	7	9	6	8	6	2	4
Gond .	36	22	14	6	4	2	1	..	2	5	3	4	2	5	2	..	..
Agaria .	19	9	10	2	2	..	1	..	1	1	3	3	1	2	1	1	1
Ahir .	13	6	7	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	4	2	..	3	2	..	..
Dhoba .	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Mohammadan	4	2	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	1	1	..	..	..
Total	156	84	72	17	11	11	7	..	10	15	18	18	10	20	11	3	7

AGE PYRAMID-II



(iv) The population of youths i.e. persons falling in the age-group 15—34 is the maximum (38%); this means that roughly two out of every five persons in the village are youths, more than 15 years in age but less than 34 years. In the younger half of this age-group of youths, women dominate men by 6 to 5; but in the elder half the sex-ratio is reversed; and males preponderate over the females by 2 to 1. In the combined age-group of youths, males outnumber females in the proportion 11 : 9. The relative preponderance of females over males in the age-group 15—24 and the reversal of this preponderance in the age-group 25—34 is not difficult to visualise: the wives of the men in age-group 25—34 fall in the age-group 20—24, while the number of wives of men in the age-group 35—59 is not able to compensate the loss.

(v) The middle-aged component i.e. age-group 35—59 forms one-fifth of the population. In this age-group also there is a masculine preponderance in number roughly in the ratio 2 : 1. Explanation for this imbalance in sex-ratio is partly to be found in the fact that there are many widowers or persons otherwise separated from their spouses in this age-group.

(vi) Old persons i.e. those over 60 years of age form a small proportion accounting for only one-twentieth of the population. There is preponderance in this age-group of females over males. This observation accords well with the almost universal phenomenon of greater feminine longevity. Thus, in this respect Amwar partakes of the district pattern where also we find that in the older ages the hands of death fall partially on the members of the weaker sex. The position is just the reverse in the younger age-group 0—4, which shows a masculine preponderance. This again is in conformity with the general pattern in the district, and is either owing to greater male than female births or to the selective incidence of infantile deaths on the fairer sex. The figures of sex-ratio at birth are not available at Amwar, but it is matter of general observation that there is no significant imbalance in the sex-ratio at birth. We would therefore be left with the alternative cause—viz. that number of females in the lowest age-group is due to greater number of deaths in that rank. This would confront us with the interesting contrast: at young ages, members of the female sex are most susceptible to death than the males, but at the other extreme of life, the males show greater vulnerability.

(vii) Combining the 0—14 and 60+ages, we notice that roughly two-fifths of the population fall in the non-working ages.

(viii) The figure 1 is the age-pyramid of the population, showing pictorially the sex-wise age distribution of the population. Figure II is another pictorial representation, showing the age-distribution of population by four-broad age-groups namely infants (0—4) and children of school-going age (5—14); youths (15—34); middle-age (35—59) and old-age (60+).

The marital status by broad age-groups of the population of Amwar is presented in table given below:—

Marital status by age-groups

Age Group	Total population			Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorsed/ separated		Unspecified status	
	Per-ons	Males	Fe-males	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0—9	45	28	18	28	18	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
10—14	10	0	10	0	7	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	..
15—24	33	15	18	6	..	8	16	..	..	1	2	..	..
25—34	28	18	10	..	..	16	10	..	..	2	..	..	..
35—59	31	20	11	..	..	15	9	4	2	1	..	..	..
60+	8	3	5	..	..	2	2	1	3	..	..	..	..
Age not stated.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
All ages .	156	84	72	34	25	41	40	5	5	4	2	—	—

The table divides the population into four classes depending on whether a person was never married, married, widower or widowed, and divorced or separated from his or her spouse. An examination of this table leads to the following observations.

(i) Infant marriages do not seem to be in vogue in the village, there being no married person in the age-group 0—9.

(ii) In the next higher, quinquennial age-group i.e. 10—14, bachelorhood appears to be the rule as regards the males, but girls start getting married when they are in this age-group. Unmarried girls outnumber the married ones even in this age-group by 3:7, and even the three out of every ten that are married belong to the upper half of the age-group. Thus our evidence shows that in Amwar, boys do not get married before fourteen years of age, and that girls start getting married when they cross the age of twelve years.

(iii) There are no unmarried girls in the age-group of 15—24, as indeed in none of the higher age-groups, thus showing that in Amwar society girls are invariably married after they cross the age of 15 years. We can therefore take with some degree of confidence 14—16 to be the ages at which most of the girls in the village are married.

(iv) As regards boys the table indicates that their marriages start taking place when they step into this age-group (15—24), and that before reaching the upper extremity of age, majority of them have entered the married state. This conclusion seems to flow from the fact that in this age-group married males out-number the never married males by 3:2 and there are no unmarried males in the higher age-groups. Oral enquiry in the village also shows that boys are generally married when they are about 18—20 years of age, thus broadly confirming the picture emerging from a study of the statistics.

(v) No person remains 'unmarried' when he has crossed 25 years of age. There is a complete absence of widowed persons in the ages below 34, though there are even in these ages four persons who are divorced by, or separated from their spouses. These figures thus seem to support the observed fact that remarriages of widowed persons is widely prevalent in the village, the only conditioning factor being the ability of a man to incur the expenses involved in paying compensation, and to the persons concerned belonging to the marriageable age. (Generally only the widow's age is taken into consideration, because men marry even in old ages).

(vi) There are six cases in the village involving persons who have been divorced by, or otherwise separated from their spouses. This fact is of great social significance because it shows how frequent cases of conjugal desertions are in the village. Four of these six persons are males, and only two females, which again is a fact of some social significance in that it indicates that more married women run away from the village than return to it from other villages. This trait may probably be attributed to the poverty of the village, or to the high incidence of the disease of leprosy. Case-studies, however, of these cases could not be made, and no definite opinion can therefore be hazarded regarding it. It may be mentioned, *apropos* this, that desertion of persons by their wives is a fairly common thing in the society of the region in which Amwar is situated.

Medical facilities and health:

Amwar does not have a very encouraging tale to tell on the public health side. There is an utter lack of medical and nursing facilities and preventive health measures in the village. The nearest dispensary from the village is at Mawai. It is in charge of an Assistant Medical Officer. People of Amwar did not seem to be deriving much advantage from the dispensary. Partly, of course, this is a result of the distance factor, but in the main, it is due to the belief the majority of the people in the village have in the efficacy of the locally available demonological treatment. To a small but nonetheless—appreciable extent, this apathetic attitude to hospital treatment appears to be a part of their mental make-up; it is a change-resistant attitude typical of backward cultures. One can only wonder that Amwar has thus far been able to keep up this aloofness, being so near to Mawai, where the dispensary, I believe, has been in existence for a considerable space of years. Also responsible for this absence of interest in the hospital is the typical rural Indian mentality of bearing pain and hardship till either the illness is tired out, or till the pain seems unbearable and something must be done about it. It would not be out of place, in this context, to recount my own experience in the village. One old Gond who lived close to the hut in which I was staying in the village suffered from an acute type of cough. This would be more severe—or would, in any case, seem to be so—during the nights and many a time I was aroused out of my sleep by the monotonous drone of his seemingly endless coughing. I later on learnt that

he was not taking any indigenous medicine. I naturally enquired as to why he did not go to the Mawai hospital and take medicine from the doctor there. After giving me an initial questioning glance (as, it seems, my ignorance of the fact that going to Mawai hospital would be equally unavailing) he retorted that unless I wrote to the doctor, he doubted whether any effective medicine would be given by the latter. He agreed to go only on condition that I wrote a letter to the doctor to give him proper medicine! I was simply astounded at this somewhat odd request because I could not bring myself to think of any way in which a letter from me would alter the situation. But my surprise notwithstanding, I was touched by the suffering of the old man (though he himself withstood it with heroic non-chalance!), and gave him a letter, stating therein the nature of his ailment, and requesting the doctor to prescribe and give medicine for four or five days to save the old man the trouble of visiting the dreaded dispensary much too often. Later, I was told by the old man that my letter had apparently done the trick, because the doctor had given him really potent medicine (tables—as against mixture that is customarily given) and that my letter had also saved him from a lot of unnecessary waiting at the hospital because the doctor disposed him of early. And this old man was none other than the father of Sunaooram, the office-bearer of the Banwasi Sewa Mandal, who is the most *modernised* man in this otherwise old world village. If the evidence of this old man does, in fact, indicate the common feeling of the villagers *vis-a-vis* the Mawai dispensary, it is indeed a distressing aspect.

Statistical information pertaining to health in the village shows that 21 of its 37 households i.e. 57% were visited with illness, each lasting for more than three days, during the period June 1960 to May 1961. A breakup of these families according to caste, and the number of persons involved is furnished in the following statement:—

Name of community	Number involved in diseases		Percentage of households in column 2 to total households in the caste.
	Households	Persons	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Baiga	14	21	64
Gond	3	5	43
Agaria	2	3	50
Ahir	1	1	50
Dhoba	1	1	100
Total	21	31	59

It is seen that roughly three-fifth of the households in the village were attacked by illness and of these two-thirds were Baiga households. This relatively high incidence of diseases in the poorest section of the village should not cause much surprise.

Types of diseases:

Tabulated below is the information regarding frequency of type of illness, according to castes:—

Type of disease	Number of persons suffering from it				
	Baiga	Gond	Agaria	Ahir	Dhoba
Malarial fever	3	3	1	—	—
Ordinary fever	9	1	1	1	1
Leprosy .	5	1	1	—	—
Cholera .	4	—	—	—	—
Total .	21	5	3	1	1

The diseases were diagnosed by the villagers themselves. Some scope for errors of judgment must therefore be allowed; particularly in the cases reported as cholera. These were, in all probability, cases of acute diarrhoea, as would appear from the case-histories recorded later in this section.

Malaria :—Malaria seems still to be an important factor, and a force to reckon with in the village. Not very long ago, malaria was the top public health problem in the country. According to somewhat conservative estimates made by Dr. Sinton,[4] malaria assailed every year about 100 million individual in the country and about 25 to 75 million more suffered from an indirect morbidity due to malaria. About one million deaths occurred every year due to this scourge. Recognising it as public health enemy number 1, the Government of India launched upon the nation-wide Malaria Eradication Programme with the help of the T.C.M. The tract of Mandla district in which Amwar is situated had always been notorious for being hyper endemic centre of Malaria. The District Gazetteer of Mandla also observes that[5] "owing to the wide stretches of forest, which cover more than a third of the area of the district, malaria is very ripe especially in the lowlying tracts". Motinala reserve in which Amwar was situated had become so ill-famous for being a malaria-infested area that 'forest officials usually put in a strong protest' against being posted to it. After the region has been covered by the malaria eradication programme, the disease has ceased to be the scourge it used to be in the past; but even then the incidence of the disease in the village is fairly high. Possible places of breeding of the mosquitoes are the cess-

4. Quoted from 'India's Population Problem' by Mamoria, page 227,

5. Opp. Cit. page 45,

pools in the local perennial streams and the vicinity of the *kutcha* wells dug in the lowlying beds of the fields. The malaria fever in the village is reported to be accompanied by chilly cold, and sometimes it is not continuous but recurs after regular intervals of one or two days.

Fevers :—The incidence of 'fever' is the highest in the village, accounting for 44% of the total attacks in the village. The usual symptom was disclosed to be high temperature and pain in the head. In the absence of correct diagnosis—that of the villagers' being of a rough and ready nature—it is not possible to pronounce upon the exact nature of these ailments.

Leprosy :—By far the most important disease in the village is leprosy. It is indeed a curse upon the village, and I should not blame a section of the villagers if they ascribe such an origin to the disease. Seven cases of the disease were reported in May 1961, when the household schedules were filled in; but during my visit to the village in 1962 one more case was reported, bringing the total number of those afflicted to eight. Five of these cases were in Baigas and one each in Gond, Agaria and Ahir. In two of these cases, the disease has reached an advanced stage, manifested by the wearing away of the affected parts of the hapless victims; while in the others, it was in various stages of morbid development.

In view of the numerousness of the victims of the disease, the matter was referred to Collector Mandla, with a request that the cases might be got examined by the medical authorities; and it might be reported whether these cases were infectious, and what were the probable causes of the high incidence of the disease in the small population of Amwar. As a result, the Collector first informed us that according to the Civil Surgeon of the district, leprosy was rare in the district and a doubt was expressed whether the cases observed by us at Amwar were in fact those of leprosy, and not of some other skin disease resembling it. Subsequently, however, it was confirmed that the cases were those of leprosy. The other two points, however, on which opinion was sought by us, were reported to be still under enquiry. No further communication was received by us till I started drafting the report, and consequently, we remain in the dark about the nature of the disease—i.e. whether it is infectious or not, and what are the probable causes of the disease in the village. According to the Public Health Commissioner for 1929,[6] "high leprosy rate is associated with a poor soil, where cereals, vegetables and fodder do not thrive and do not contain adequate nutriment, and where the cereal crops are apt to fail; with the inadequate consumption of vegetables and milk, and with the consumption of food of bad quality, such as spoiled rice (which has been allowed to ferment) and rotten or dry fish which is highly unbalanced." Enumerating other subsidiary reasons for the spread of the disease the Health Commissioner observes that "Poor conditions, overcrowding of houses and prolonged periods of drought and frequent famines are responsible for increased susceptibility to the disease on account of resultant starvation and dirtiness of cloth". Most of the conditions enumerated above—viz. poor soil incapable of producing cereals, inadequate consumption of vegetables and no consumption of milk, overcrowding of houses etc.—exist in Amwar also. Besides, as was observed by Collector, Mandla Shri S. Mathur in an interview with me, what with the rigorous implementation of forest laws against poaching and the spread of vegetarianism amongst the tribals, the protein—rich meat supplement of their diet has also vanished. Though the Amwar populace does not subscribe to the high-sounding principles of vegetarianism still, as observed by me in an earlier chapter, meat dishes are a rarety to them. The higher incidence of the abominable disease amongst the Baigas may be due to the fact that the causes tending to increase susceptibility of the population to the disease operate with greater rigour in the Baigas.

That leprosy is a big public health problem in the country would be clear from its recognition in the First and Second Five Year Plans. The number of cases of leprosy was estimated to be at least one million in the country at the inauguration of the First Plan[7]. The Second Five Year Plan also has specifically called attention to this communicable disease, and had estimated the number of lepers to be at least 1.5 millions. Madhya Pradesh was included in the belt of the highest incidence of the disease[8]. Whether certain areas of Mandla district are endemic centres of the disease or not is of course not known. But in view of the high incidence (6%) of the disease in Amwar, and evidence to the effect that some persons suffering from it are to be found in one or two neighbouring villages do indicate the possibility of such a thing. In any case, it is a problem deserving greater attention from the public health authorities of the district.

Irrespective of the technical medical opinion, the people of Amwar think that the high incidence of leprosy in the village is due to its possession by some malevolent spirit who infects the water they drink. A few persons insinuated sorcery and witchcraft, and (though specifications were not forthcoming), we were told that a Baiga

6. Quoted from India's Population Problem, pages 216-217.

7. First Five Year Plan, page 506.

8. Second Five Year Plan, page 548.

and a Gond family had left the village in the none-too-remote past suspecting some witchcraft or sorcery when first symptoms of the disease appeared on the persons of some members of their family. It is, however, very significant that none has so far taken recourse to medical treatment for leprosy. Equally significant is the observation that the lepers are not regarded with reproach, as is done in the case of a person, when he develops vermin in a wound. People unhesitatingly accept *chongi* from a leper, and admit him to all privileges of commensality, quite ignoring the sores on his person. People parried the question regarding this treatment of lepers by vaguely stating that leprosy is divine punishment inflicted on a leper, and there could not be any objection in having social dealings with him. It may be remarked that this facile explanation goes counter to the suggestion mooted earlier that leprosy in Amwar may be occasioned by its water getting infected by some supernatural being.

According to Elwin[9], the Baiga ascribe leprosy to breach of tribal law. Incest, for example, may bring leprosy. He also expresses surprise that lepers are not regarded with reproach. Fuchs[10], however observes that lepers are not put out of caste or separated from their families as long as their sores do not grow too repulsive. I must, with due humility, remark that in Amwar lepers are not treated with scorn, or segregated, even when their sores have become repulsive.

It is said that cases of leprosy were rare in the past. According to the Gazetteer of Mandla district,[11] (1912) leprosy was very uncommon in the district, and the Civil Surgeon of the district in those days had observed that during the course of three and half years he had seen in all about a score of lepers. Surprisingly enough, after the lapse of about two score and half of years, an almost identical observation is made about the prevalence of the disease in the district by his successor-in-office; and this when we run against at least eight lepers in a single small village with a population of 140 persons! I may add that cursory and fleeting enquiries made by me in the villages neighbouring Amwar revealed that there were lepers in Amwar's neighbour Patpara also. In fact, I may record here that in all the villages visited by me during the course of surveys like the present one, I have come across persons suffering from leprosy. This does indicate that this dreadful disease, is not as uncommon as it is commonly taken by the health authorities to be. Of course, it must be admitted that owing to the social stigma (as stated earlier Amwar society attaches no such stigma) attaching to the disease, there is considerable under-reporting of its incidence.

It is now possible to cure leprosy completely by the sulphone therapy if it has not advanced to the stage when decaying of the affected limbs sets in. That being the case, it is a matter of regret, that the unfortunate victims of the ugly disease at Amwar are rotting, either owing to their ignorance of the potency of medical treatment, or for want of the necessary wherewithal.

Other diseases:

Besides these major diseases, there are legion unreported minor ailments. There are many persons suffering from the common itch or scabies. This is ascribable in part to their lack of cleanliness. Bathing is not regular, and clothes are also not regularly washed for lack of a change. Malnutrition and even under nutrition which is an universal phenomenon in their poverty-ridden society lower their resistance to infection and makes them more vulnerable to various deficiency diseases. Inspite of their marvellous capacity to walk very long distances with loads, people in general do not enjoy good health. Most of these minor ailments are cured by the application of indigenous medicines which will be described later in this chapter.

Treatment and cure of diseases:

The table inset below gives frequencies of cases treated by medical treatment by the doctor at Mawai and by 'magic' treatment.

Caste	Number of families taking recourse to		
	Magic treatment or guniyai	Medical treatment	Number of persons taking injections
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Baiga . . .	11	3	3
Gond . .	3	..	..
Agaria . .	2	..	..
Dhoba . .	1	..	..
Ahir . . .	..	1	..
Total .	17	4	3

The table shows that primarily people of Amwar are believers in demonology, and recourse to regular medical treatment is rare. Out of the 21 families involved in sickness, only four took recourse to regular allopathic treatment; and of these four, three took injections in addition to medicines for oral administration. All other cases were either referred to the local *gunia*, or were treated by the administration of *jaributi* or herbal medicines. According to the schedules, *guniyai* or demonological treatment was successful

9. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 375.

10. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; pp. 320.

11. Opp. Cit., page 4

in controlling the disease in all the cases referred to him. In the four cases which were referred to the Mawai dispensary, probably the magic treatment had proved abortive.

A note on demonology:

Previous discussion is enough to show that people of Amwar are believers in demonology. They generally attribute cases of illness to the wrath of some supernatural agency—a god or goddess or simply a malignant spirit, and believe that the illness cannot be cured unless the enraged god or goddess is propitiated by the performance of the required *pooja* and sacrifice. The wrath of the god is reported to be occasioned by some conscious or unconscious neglect on the part of his unfortunate victim in keeping the god in good humour. As soon as a man falls ill he sends for the *guniya*-Bhursu*—who atonce proceeds to find out the supernatural agency whose wrath has occasioned the disease. Thereafter he tells the patient the type of sacrifice demanded by the god or goddess. In order to facilitate proper appreciation of such cases, a few selected case-studies of persons who had got themselves treated by the local *guniya* and were cured—are being given below:—

I. *Dukal and Nandlal Baiga*:—Dukal Baiga and his son were laid up with what is called by them cholera. They sent for the *guniya* of the village who diagnosed the disease to be due to the wrath of Murihapat. The diety demanded a sacrifice of two pigs, one goat, six coconut fruits and five areca nuts. (This heavy sacrifice was demanded probably owing to the serious nature of the ailment). With these animals of sacrifice, and the articles of *pooja*, the *guniya* went into the forest to the seat of Murihapat. The two pigs were sacrificed in the jungle but the goat was sacrified in the house of the patient. The coconut fruits and areca nuts were offered to Khermai and Marhi the cholera goddess who lives in the village itself. After propitiating the enraged god, and the goddess of the village, the *guniya* went to the patients and recited *mantra*. The process of reciting the *mantra* was repeated every day in the morning and evening till the patients were cured. It is said that Nandlal was cured in eight days, but his much older father took about one month for complete recovery.

II. *Samru Baiga*:—Samaru Baiga *alias* Deputy fell down with a fever of malaria. The *guniya* diagnosed the disease as being due to the anger of Budhadeo and demanded a sacrifice of six hens. The hens were sacrificed in the forest; in addition, the *guniya* recited his *mantra* once every day at Samaru's bedside for eight days. Samaru was cured after eight days.

III. *Mansingh S/o Suklal Baiga*:—This again was reportedly a case of cholera and fever in the family of Suklal son of Dukal who himself had fallen ill with the same disease. the *guniya* divined the cause of illness to be the wrath of Marihapat who through the *gunia* again demanded a sacrifice of a pig, four coconuts and four areca nuts. The pig was sacrified in the jungle while the coconuts and areca nuts were offered to the shrine of *Khermata* and *Marhi* in the village, *mantras* were recited by the *guniya* at the bedside of Mansingh three times—in the morning, in the afternoon and at night—daily. Mansingh got well in about eight days.

IV. Ghasiram Gond and his wife Shekho were caught up by malaria fever. The *guniya* prescribed a *pooja* involving offering of fifteen coconuts and twelve areca nuts at the shrine of Khermai. The requisite *pooja* was performed by the *guniya* who also chanted *mantras* at the bedside of the patients. Recovery took about seven days.

Sometimes people do not require the services of a *guniya* for the propitiation of the god or goddess, but themselves perform the requisite *pooja*. Two such cases were reported at Amwar. In one, Ramhai Dhoba, who fell ill, went to the shrine of Khermata and propitiated her with the offerings of coconuts and areca nuts. He got well in about three or four days. In the second case, Amoli Gond's son Lula had an attack of fever. Amoli himself went to the shrine of Khermai and offered her two coconuts and two areca nuts. He thus propitiated the goddess for five days. His prayer is reported to have been answered because Lula got well on the eighth day.

The case-studies show the belief in supernatural forces of the villagers generally. The methods of divination of the disease by the *guniya* are the same as are prevalent elsewhere in the region. The divination is done by means of the *supa* and *tooma*.

Other diseases and their cure:

Besides the diseases reported above, various types of diseases are frequent in the village which do not necessitate the services of a *guniya* for cure. These are mostly treated by indigenous herbs and other preparations, which have the sanction of years of trial and effectiveness behind

*Another Guniya Leela is also sometimes called from a nearby village.

them. It is, therefore, quite interesting to list some of the less serious ailments—and the indigenous treatment prescribed for them.

1. *Stomach pain*—Root of a certain tree (bitter in taste) is chewed.
2. *Cough and Cold*—A preparation of fish and crab in chilly powder is given for drink with butter-milk.
3. *An ordinary wound*—The bark of *sarai* (*Boswellia servata*) tree is pounded and dried. The dried powder is then applied to the wound.
4. *On incisions*—Red stone is powdered, applied on the incision and then bandaged.
5. *On burns*—Burnt mango-leaves are mixed in *jagni* or *ramtila* oil and then applied on the burns.
6. *Scabies or itching* (*khujli*)—Powdered bark of *sarai*. chilly powder and common salt mixed and applied to the itching part in the belief that the pain of the itches may be subdued by the pain of the medicine.
7. *Eye-sore*—A poultice of grounded *aonla* fruit is applied to the eyes.

Education and literacy:

The educational standards of a population are indicators of its quality. For the Census of 1961, literacy was defined as the ability to read and write a simple letter. With only three males returned as literate or educated, Amwar is certainly very backward educationally. This, however, is not surprising because the village did not have a school till June 1960; so that the nearest school to which the children had to go for receiving education was at Mawai. It would have indeed been too much to expect the children of Amwar to negotiate the difficult mountain paths through thick jungle for Mawai. All the three persons returned as educated and literate belong to the Gond community, and all of them are comparatively recent settlers in the village. One of the three—Sunaooram has in fact settled in the village for organising the village school. Only two of the three persons returned as literate and educated have formal schooling; the third is simply a literate "without educational standards". It is significant that except Gond all other castes in the village are innocent of reading and writing. At the 1951 Census, no person was returned as literate or educated; thus the intercensal period has witnessed some sort of improvement in the situation. It should again be remarked that the improvement is not in the natural population of 1951, but is in immigrants.

Primary school at Amwar:

The primary school at Amwar was started in June 1960 through the pioneering efforts of the Banwasi Sewa Mandal, a body dedicated, as the name suggests, to the service of the downtrodden forest tribes, financed from aids and grants received from the Government, from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, or from donations and from subscriptions realised from its members. The choice of the Mandal fell on the village under survey, it is said, chiefly because of its remoteness from the tahsil and district headquarters, and its situation in a corner of the district some four miles from the fair-weather Mawai-Chanra road. As has been stated earlier the service cooperative at Amwar also is there chiefly through the instrumentality of the Mandal, the initial spadework in that connection having been done by the Mandal The Mandal, I must say, could not have chosen a better village for its activities, actuated as it is by the ideals of service. In June 1960, Sunaooram, a Gond worker of the Mandal belonging to *Kusro got*, was sent by the Mandal to organise the school at Amwar. He came to the village, constructed a house and settled there. At this stage, I should be excused for a little digression. This settling by Sunaooram in the midst of the villagers was an important step. If we really want to change the villages to a better way of living (according to our concepts—for it does not seem that tribals consider their way of life inferior in any way to ours), it can be done only in one way. That way is by helping them in growing and developing useful institutions like a school, the cooperative, Yuwak Mandals, etc. by drawing upon their existing village institutions as much as it is possible. I cannot over-emphasize the cardinal fact that the villagers must themselves be helped in growing their institutions, they must feel a sense of oneness with it, and not take it as a thing imposed on them from outside. This is true also of the way of introducing social or economic reforms in them; and as much help as possible should be taken of the indigenous institutions already existing in the village. Such a condition pre-supposes that trained, service-oriented, and inspired workers should live with, and in the midst of the people whom they want to serve; study the indigenous institutions and take the villagers in confidence. Then it will not be difficult for them to start their constructive activities; of course taking care to assess their needs in the order of their priorities. From this point of view, I attach considerable importance to Sunaooram's settling in the village, and at the same time question the propriety of setting up the headquarters of the Manager of Amwar Service Cooperative, (even though temporarily) in the village Mawai. Of course, there are initial difficulties of finding out suitable accommodation, but at the same time it should be pointed out that it is not very difficult to construct a habitable hut in a village. The villagers—I mean the remote tribal villagers who are as yet unsophisticated, unlike their brethren in easily accessible non-tribal villages—are always willing to help provided they are approached in the right way.

It appears that initially the villagers cooperated very well with Sunaooram, because they constructed mostly through unpaid voluntary labour, a building for the school. This hut was however destroyed in the month of June 1962 when a big uprooted tree fell on it. Since then the school has been meeting in a hut erected in the compound of Sunaooram; but the villagers are busy constructing another house for the school, near its original site.

The school started with an initial strength of twenty-four students only four of whom, three boys and a girl, were from the village. The remaining were from neighbouring villages Sunehra (12 boys and 7 girls), and Nunsarai (1 boy). The low strength from Amwar in the initial stages was principally due to its Baiga population, who are comparatively backward and are slow in taking to any change. Sunehra contributed the bulk of the students because it is a bigger village, and also because it has largely a Gond population who are on somewhat higher cultural and material level and are comparatively quicker in responding to change. This is attested to by the fact that out of the total initial enrolment of 24, 16 were Gond, 4 Baigas and only one Agaria. Amwar had, in 1961, as many as 28 children in the school-going age and though an year earlier this number may have been a little less than 28, yet it would not be so small as to justify Amwar's paltry contribution of only four boys and girls to the school. The probable reason as indicated earlier was the pre-dominance in Amwar of Baiga population, who besides being an argumentative type are also shy of adopting new ways of living. It would however appear from the table inset below that as the school got going, Amwar also sent more and more children to it.

Table Showing Advance of Enrolment and Average Attendance per Month, 1960-61.

Month	Strength	Average attendance	Percentage of total
1	2	3	4
June 1960 . .	24	23	95
July . .	25	20	79
August . .	31	22	71
September . .	34	22	65
October . .	35	26	74
November . .	37	18	49
December . .	37	17	46
January 1961 .	37	14	38
February . .	37	19	51
March . . .	37	21	57
April . . .	37	19	51
May . . .	37	17	46

It is seen that starting from 24th June 1960, the strength of the school rose to 37 in November 1960. The increase was steady and was almost entirely due to people of Amwar sending more children to the school. The village-wise strength of the school in November 1960 is given below:—

Village	Enrolment		
	Total	Boys	Girls
Amwar . .	11	10	1
Sunehra . .	21	13	8
Nunsarai . .	1	1	..
Patpara . .	4	3	1
Total .	37	27	10

The communitywise position was: Gonds 15 boys and 4 girls; Baiga 11 boys and 2 girls; Agaria one boy; Mehra 2 girls; and Bharewa one girl. The percentages were: Baiga 35, Gond 51, and others 14. The figures are sufficient to show the relatively greater awareness in the Gonds of the importance of education. The performance of the Baiga, though poor looking to their numbers, was still encouraging when their very slow susceptibility to change is considered. Another heartening feature was the somewhat respectable proportion (27%) of girls, again due chiefly to the Gonds.

In the year 1961-62, the school had two classes; the first class had 16 (8 boys and 8 girls) and the second had 20 (18 boys and 2 girls) on roll. It thus appears that the strength slightly fell and most of the boys failed to get promoted to the higher class. The village-wise position was:—

Village	Number of students in								
	1st			2nd			Total		
	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G
Amwar .	1	1	..	9	8	1	10	9	1
Sunehra .	10	3	7	11	10	1	21	13	8
Patpara .	4	3	1	..	..	..	4	3	1
Nunsarai .	1	1	..	..	..	..	1	1	..
Total .	16	8	8	20	18	2	36	26	10

T. Total, B: Boys, G: Girls,

Communitywise the population during 1961-62 was Baiga 13 (11 boys, 2 girls); Gond 19 (15 boys, 4 girls), Agaria (1 girl), Mehra (2 Girls and Bhareva (1 girl). There was thus hardly any change in relative proportions. This rather lukewarm attitude of the people of Awmar and neighbouring villages should be attributed to the fact that Sonaooram, the organiser of the school was

drafted by the Mandal on duties somewhat more responsible in nature and entailing extensive touring. He started remaining absent from the village for long intervals, leaving the school in the hands of another teacher appointed probably to relieve Sunaooram. The attendance position in 1961-62 also deteriorated, again for the same reason.

The school has not thus for been given recognition. That is another reason for the stagnancy of the school. The teacher at present working there is not paid on par with teachers in schools run by local bodies or the government. The school was inspected by the Assistant Inspector of the Education Department and various other officials of the Government and of Banwasi Sewa Mandal.

Higher education:

As regards higher education, there is a middle school at village Mawai. But for education at the higher secondary and secondary stages, the village will have to depend upon Bajag, or Sijhora, or Bichhia which are very distant. As things stand, however, the villagers are not in need of sending their children to a middle school for the next two or three years.

Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes:

The village has 33 out of its 37 households belonging to scheduled tribes. There are no scheduled castes in the village. The Scheduled Tribes population in the village consists of the Gond, the Baiga and the Agaria. Ethnographic notes in respect of each of these tribes have been given earlier in the report. At this stage, I will only make a few observations that seem to me germane in the context. The first is with respect to the treatment of Agaria as a subtribe of the Gonds in the President's Order.

No doubt writers on tribes in the past had been referring to the Agarias as a Gond sub-caste. One of the chief reasons for such a view was the identity of most of Agaria and Gond sept-names. I should however observe that this is not a peculiarity with the Agarias only. Even the Baigas have numerous *goti* names like the Gond *gots*. Some of the sept-names of the Ahir (*Kusro* for example) resemble Gond sept-names. To me, it appears more probable that the sept-names are regional in nature rather than belonging to a particular tribe, Elwin in his Agaria has given examples of many sept-names of the Agarias prevalent in Mirzapur district of U.P. which have no resemblance whatsoever with the sept-names in vogue in Mandla district. Fuchs has also given Agaria sept-names which do not resemble the Gond sept-names. The propriety therefore of treating Agaria as a sub-tribe of Gond on this meagre evidence is questionable. On the other hand, as observed by Elwin the myths of the Agaria have hardly anything in common with Gond mythology. Culturally the Agarias of Amwar appear to have more in common with the Baigas, than with Gonds. There does not therefore seem to be much justification for treating the Agarias of Mandla and Mahakoshal districts as a sub-tribe of Gonds. In fact in the same Order, in the districts of Shahdol, Sidhi, Rewa etc. the Agaria is not bracketed as a sub-tribe of the more numerous Gonds.

Secondly, the extension of benefits on some sections of the village community on the ground that they belong to scheduled tribes seems to be invidious in the village context. There is not even a shred of doubt that the Ahirs and the Dhobas living with the Gonds and the Baigas share most of the culture-traits in common. Economically also all the communities whether tribal or non-tribal are more or less at the same level, except the Baigas whose economic condition is even more precarious. It is also known that the Dhobas —who are not very numerous—and the Kaora Ahirs live with their tribal neighbourers in the same villages. It is just possible that if a particular electoral area is declared as reserved for scheduled tribes, the Dhobas and Kaora Ahirs may virtually be denied their right of seeking election to the legislature. Theoretically in the extreme this supposition is, but still it does serve the limited purpose of focussing attention on the kind of possible injustice that may be done in the process of scheduling communities under the Consituation. It is quite possible that denial to the Dhoba and Kaora Ahirs of the concessions and facilities that are doled out to the scheduled tribes, may act by way of perpetuating the economic and cultural backwardness of these unfortunate people. The advisability of rethinking on the whole question is indicated, so that in the remote areas, particular section of the people may not be excluded from opportunities of economic and cultural development simply because they do not happen to be designated as scheduled tribes or castes. The possibility of having economic criterion irrespective of scheduling, in the area as a whole is at least worth being examined.

The Baiga of Amwar who still cling to their traditional cultivation—known as *bewar*, deserve particular attention. They are at the lowest rung of economic ladder; and the majority of them have still not reconciled themselves to a settled way of life. Though some of them have acquired lands, still that is far from ensuring them a secure living. Baiga appear to be distributed in a fairly compact belt consisting of the eastern and southern portions of the Mandla district, the erstwhile Padaria and Kawardha States, and parts of Shahdol district adjacent to Mandla district. They deserve to be treated with special concern and sympathy, because among backward tribes they can appropriately be called 'very backward tribes'. Special efforts are also called for weaning many of them from their traditional axe-cultivation.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, SUPERSTITIONS AND FESTIVALS

With the exception of one household which professes Islam, others in the village declare that they are Hindus. In the past many authorities, more particularly, the Census Superintendents of the earlier Censuses of this century, had questioned the inclusion of the tribes in the Hindu-fold, and some of them had even gone to the extent of suggesting an artificial division of the tribes into Hindus and 'Animists' according as they worshipped the Hindu Gods or what were described by them as 'tribal gods'. The result of this rather arbitrary dichotomy was a division of the tribes into Hindus and non-Hindus: an artificial division not recognised by the tribes themselves. In a later Census, the designation 'animism' to denote the 'religious practices' followed by tribes was dropped and another, equally artificial, combination of words, "followers of tribal religon" was substituted therefor. Mr. W. V. Grigson had referred to this empty controversy regarding the name to be given to the bundle of practices followed by the tribes in his book "The Aborginal Problem in Central Provinces and Berar". He rightly criticised the figures relating to tribal religion in 1931 Census tables as 'meaningless' and observed that "it is impossible to say where a man's religion ceases to be tribal or begins to be Hindu's. His view was that fluctuations in the percentage of aboriginals returned as animists or tribal by religion occurring in different districts were no true indication even of the degree to which the tribal religion was becoming Hinduized. In the late thirties, Verrier Elwin published the pamphlet "Loss of Nerve" dealing with the problem of tribal religions, which according to Grigson summed up the true position. Elwin observed that the religion of the Indian aboriginal outside Assam should be regarded as a "religion of the Hindu family', with a special relation to the exciting, dangerous, castastrophic, Shivaite type', but as having a distinct existence of its own. He criticised the test proposed for distinguishing 'animists' or 'followers of tribal religion' as meaningless and observed that while "The aboriginal is always willing to worship a few more gods if by so doing he can gain some material or social benefit" the 'Hindu has no objection to including tribal gods in a pantheon of thirty-three crores of deities". (Not a very happy commentary on the catholicity of Hindu religion as manifested by its amazing power of synthesising indigenous creeds). The problem according to Elwin was not 'whether Gonds or Murias are Hindus or not, but 'how far contact with Hinduism has affected tribal religion". Thus it would appear that even Elwin was not prepared to concede that the tribals followed Hindu religion, but only that theirs was a religion of the Hindu family.

J. H. Hutton, Census Commissioner for India in 1931 Census, has dealt somewhat exhaustively with the relation of Hinduism with primitive religions in India, in the section on "Hinduism and Primitive Religions" in his book "Caste in India". Though appreciating the claim of certain politicians that the term Hinduism should cover all religions having their origin in India, he observes that "the claim is less logical when applied to tribal religions which have not yet reached the stage of accepting Brahamins as priests or of attaching any sanctity to the cow or of worshipping in Hindu temples in their own villages". With due deference to the authorities quoted earlier, I must observe that each of them took a parochial view of the compass of Hinduism. The accent on accepting Brahamins as priests or of worshipping in Hindu temples in their own villages is not very happy. For one thing there are sects of Hindus who do not abide by the authority of Brahamin priest; and, though Brahaminism occupies an important position in the rituals of a large majority of Hindus, it is not an essential element of Hinduism. Even the so called non-tribal Hindus at a lower cultural level employ a tribal for worshipping the village gods and goddesses. But, worshipping of gods also is not an essential element of Hinduism, their being some sects who do not subscribe to the practice of image worship in temples. The accent on the sanctity of the cow is also not conclusive. In fact, putting the accent on any particular widely prevalent aspect of Hinduism and proposing it as a test for deteming whether a person was or was not a Hindu was tanamount to taking a very narrow view of Hinduism, which has a place for Buddhism which is agnositic and for Jainism which is atheistic. To a Hindu, observes Swami Vivekananda, "all the religions, from the lowest fetisnism of the human absolutism, means so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress". Reverting to the worship of the so called 'tribal gods', it is a well-known fact that in a village the non-tribals also worship and pay reverence to the numerous deities which are worshipped by tribal priests. The pantheon is in fact common except for one or two gods who are worshipped only by a particular caste, or persons belonging to a particular clan. As observed by Dr. Radhakrishnan, "the anthropomorphic conception of divine is relative to our needs, and

the 'supra personal and personal representations of the real are the absolute and relative ways of expressing one reality". That is why Hindusim accepted the "Multiplicity of aboriginal gods and others which originated, most of them, outside the Aryan tradition and justified them all". Hinduism brought together into one whole all believers in God; and this would explain the variety of sects professing different types of beliefs within the Hindu fold. Again as Dr. Radhakrishnan put it, "Inspite of the fact that Hinduism has no common creed and its worship no fixed form, it has bound together multitudinous sects and devotions into a common scheme." It is in fact this fusion of diverse sects and worships with Hinduism that drew unknowingly from Hutton the remark—"the line is hard to draw between Hinduism and tribal religions" or from Grigson the observation: "It is impossible to say where a man's religion ceases to be tribal or begins to be Hindu". Clearly this means that these English writers were pursuing the impossible objective of trying to draw a line between the religions of tribals and non-tribals, because no such line existed. In fact the two are not separate entities but different levels of the same entity—i.e. what is known as Hinduism. No one should therefore raise critical fingers at the Amwar people when they return themselves as Hindu, but should take it only as a proof of the observation that Hinduism is "a tapestry of the most variegated tissues and almost endless diversity of hues." The question for our examination should therefore be the type of Hinduism with which the people of Amwar are associated.

Religion of Amwar people as a body of practices of prayers, sacrifices and rituals:

It is significant that oral prayers which occupy a place of their own in the religious practices of the Muslim and Christian and majority of the Hindus, have no place in the day-to-day life of Amwar people. There is also no daily, personal worship offered to the gods. In fact the communities living in Amwar do not worship but propitiate or appease the gods, and this business of propitiating or appeasing the gods is left almost entirely in the hands of Bhursu Baiga, who is the village expert in matters spiritual or divine. Bhursu invokes the gods by means of *mantra* or hymns,, possibly known only to himself, either not understood by the people at large, or in any case they do not bother to understand them. The *dewar* (Baiga epithet for the village sorcerer and priest) was significantly reticent about the *mantras*, and all my attempts to get them from him or from the other informants proved futile. The communal propitiation of deities is regulated by the religious calendar and save on these occasions, and on such other occasions as illness when an enraged diety is appeased by or on behalf of the ill person, there is hardly any worship of the gods in the daily lives of the people.

While oral prayers have no place in the religious life of the people, sacrifies occupy a very important place. By nature, believers in demonology and witch-craft the people consider it wiser to prevent a disaster altogether rather than curing it when it has actually befallen. The practice is therefore to appease the gods in advance, and this is done, for all the important gods, once in three years or ' सिसाल ' Usually each god is statisfied by, the sacrifice of some particular animal. Thus the god Narayandeo is satisfied only by the sacrifice of a pig. So is the case with *Bhainsasur*. But a large majority of the gods are appeased by sacrifice of the comparatively inexpensive hens, or even chickens.

As has been indicated earlier in the monograph, rituals play an extremely important role in the life of the villagers. Almost right from the moment a child is born till sometime after his or her death, he is subjected to numerous rituals. These are meant partly to preserve the purity of the family and the caste but partly also to ensure safety from divine displeasure. Description of the rituals prevalent in Amwar has been given earlier, and it is sufficient to underscore their importance.

The Village Pantheon

As stated earlier, Amwar is inhabited by tribal Hindu castes Gond, Baiga, Agaria and the so-called non-tribal Hindu castes Ahir and Dhoba. The pantheon of gods worshipped by them admits of a fourfold classification (i) Gods whose worship has a regional spread and which are worshipped by all communities in the village; (ii) Gods worshipped by a particular caste or tribe; (iii) Gods peculiar to particular families, and (iv) the Sanskritic or puranic gods who are revered but regarding whom the villager have no clear ideas. It is possible to reclassify the gods in (i) and (ii) as (a) those that are installed at a particular place in the village common to all residents (b) those that have allotted abodes in each house and (c) those that have no fixed abode. The scheme below attempts to present the important gods in the village according to this classification.

A (ii) *Gods revered by all communities in the village or village gods having fixed abode at particular places in the village.*

	Name of God	Seat allotted in the village
1	Thiakhurdeo	Below the *mahua* tree in the *Khirka*.
2	Dhartimata	
3	Bhimsen	
4	Khermata	On the platform near Bakhti's house.
5	Hanuman	
6	Hardulal	
7	Chharidar	
8	Chobdar	
9	Ghamsan	

	Name of God	Seat allotted in the village
10	Muriha Pat	On the hill of the same name on the way to Amwar
11	Bhainsasur	On the platform of Khermai
12	Marhi	
13	Nagdeo	Snakepits or '*Bamhi*'

A (ii) *Gods revered by all villagers but installed in each house.*

12	Narayandeo	Threshold of the house
13	Dulhadeo-Dulkhiria	Behind the hearth
14	Ratmai	Near the grainbin.
15	Kutkidai	
16	Annadai or Annakuardai	In the sleeping room
17	Paniharin	*Ghinochi* or the place where water-pots are kept
18	Khoot-pith	In the cattleshed
19	Bahirbas	At the gate outside the house

A (iii) *Gods revered by all villagers but having no fixed abode either in the house or outside it.*

18	Sooraj deo.	
19	Baradeo for communities other than Gond	
20	Nagdeo	
21	Banspati	

B *Gods worshipped or revered by particular tribes or castes*

Name of Caste	God worshipped	Seat, if any
Gond	(*i*) Baradeo	*Saj* ree in the forest to North-East
	(*ii*) Ningodeo	Different Villages for different *gots*
Baiga	(*i*) Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin	The same seat as Thakurdeo
	(*ii*) Joona Dawar Joona Dawarin	" "
	(*iii*) Maswasideo	Forest
	(*iv*) Dalihakhoot-Dadiha khoot	Cattle-shed
	(*v*) Charwaha-Charwahin	" "
Agaria	(*i*) Lohasur	At the pit (Abode not revealed
	(*ii*) Agaisur	
	(*iii*) Koelasur	
	(*iv*) Kansasur	
	(*v*) Jwalamukhi	
Ahir	(i) Charwaha—Charwahin	Cattl -shed
	(2) Dalihakhoot	Khirka
	(3) Dudhia Khoot	
	(4) Krishnadeo	No fixed abode
	(5) Khirkut deo	In the Khirka
	(6) Guraya deo	In the Cattle-shed
	(7) Khila Mutha	Threshing floor in a *Saj* tree
	(8) Maldeo	
Dhoba	No Particular gods reportedly worshipped	

C *Gods revered by particular families*

	Name of God	Families revering
(i)	Bagesur or tiger god	All persons of Kusro *Got* irrespective of tribe
(ii)	Holera	The families of Sonauram, Dhansingh and Mangal Gonds, Dukal, Tenda Baiga and their kingroup
(*iii*)	Banjari	Dukal Baiga and his son Nandlal
(*iv*)	Dhanya-badawan Anna-badhawan	Sonauram and Amoli Gond.
(*v*)	Har Thakur-Har Thakurain.	" "
(*vi*)	Marhai	Dukal Baiga and his sons.

D *Sanskritic or Puranic Gods revered by the villagers but regarding whom they have no clear ideas.*

(1) Ram
(2) Krishna
(3) Lachhmi
(4) Narmada mai
(5) Ganesh
(6) Sarsetimai or Sardamai.

It should, however, be noted that the number of gods in the pantheon of the castes of Amwar is legion and those named above are only a few, important ones, among them. It is a difficult, it not an altogether impossible, task to list all the gods or godlings worshipped or revered by the people. What complicates matters is the fact that the pantheon is always receiving Gods mainly from contact with non-tribal or higher echelons of Hinduism.

I would first deal with gods that are common to the village and the region. At the head of these stands Thakurdeo, the deity regarded as the Lord of the village. The worship of a god represented by the name of Thakurdeo is of more than regional spread. In fact, as observed by Fuchs[1] 'this name is very common in Bengal and as far west as the Bilaspur[2] district"; where 'the Hindus commonly address their main god, that is to say, the principal god of the particular seat to which they belong (whether Shiva, Vishnu or Rama) as Thakurdeo". About the year 1868-69, Captain H.C.E. Ward had, while referring to the religious ceremonies of the Gonds, observed[3] that "In Mundlah, Thakoor Deo is supposed to represent especially the household deity, and to preside over the well-being of the house and farm-yard; he has no special residence, but has the credit of being omnipresent, and is consequently not represented any image. "In the section on the religious ceremonies of Baigas[4], Ward observed "Thakur Deo is supposed to have special charge of the village, and is honoured accordingly". It thus appears that in Wards' time, 'Thakoordeo' was (a) the chief God of the Baigas (b) only a household god of the Gonds charged with the function of protecting the house and the farm-yard, and (c) it had no fixed abode in the village. From the facts collected during this enquiry, it appears that in Amwar (and presumably in other villages of the region), (a) Thakoordeo has been elevated to the status of a village deity even as regards the Gonds though it has still not become their chief deity, which privilege is enjoyed by "Burhadeo" (b) it continues to be the chief god of the Baigas and (c) it has now been given an abode. The abode fixed for the god in Amwar is the base of the *'mahua'* tree in the *khirka* or the place where cattle assemble in the morning before they are taken charge of by the village Ahir. The godling is represented by a collection of stones which do not have any identifiable or characteristic shape. Thakurdeo is the lord and protector of the village. He is supposed to keep the village immune from disease and misfortune and to help them in becoming prosperous by securing them good harvests. The god is worshipped principally in the month of *jeth* at the 'bidri ceremony' by Bhursu Baiga.

According to Fuchs, Thakurdeo has no parents or wife. The people of Amwar, however, regard Dharti Mata or Thakurani as the consort of Thakoordeo. It is significant to note that she is also worshipped along with Thakurdeo at the 'bidri ceremony'.

As regards the form of the god the villagers scarcely had any clear idea except Bhursu Baiga and Mangal Gond who said that Thakurdeo is an (*sayan*) old deity, of the benevolent type; as against the host of malignant deities which are of a piquant nature and bring harm to persons with whom they become dissatisfied. The remarks of Bhursu about Thakurdeo may well be compared with Elwin's description, which is as follows: "He is a jovial old god, with a white beard nine hands long, fond of a bawdy joke, wholly benevolent, almost a Pickwickian character, though I fancy Mr. Pickwick would not have approved his curious interest in excreta. Among the world's deities, he is an individual and a striking figure. He lives on earth, in the *pipal* tree. He sometimes rides abroad on a white horse". There is a *jhooman* karma sung in the village which shows that Thakurdeo has such a long beard that it touches the ground: (*Nachat awe Thakurdeo Bhuiya lore kesh*)

I must however observe that people of Amwar did not seem to know anything about the 'curious interest in excreta' of Thakurdeo. As has already been observed, the seat of Thakurdeo in Amwar is under a *mahua* tree and not a *pipal* as stated in the quotation above; and Fuch's observation that the tree selected, by Thakurdeo

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1. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 383.

2. Fuchs, on page 385 of his book 'The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla' enumerates various points which suggest similarity between Thakurdeo and the God Dharma of West Bengal, I can do no better than quote him *in extenso* "On the other hand, this god's similarity to the *Dharma* of West Bengal is so striking that the probability cannot be overlooked inasmuch as the Bhumia adopted the concept and worship of *Thakurdeo* from the Dharma worshippers of West Bengal. The name *Thakur* certainly points to a Bengali origin of the god; in fact, *Dharma* also has the epithet *Thakur*. Like *Thakurdeo*, *Dharma Thakur* is also represented as a shapeless stone slab under a tree. The main worship of *Thakurdeo*, the *bidri* ceremony, is performed towards the end of the hot season. Dharma *Thakur* is also worshipped in the hot season. *Thakurdeo* of the Bhumia is a village god so is *Dharma*. An animal sacrifice is performed in honour of *Thakurdeo* as of *Dharma*. Thakur *Deo* has a special priest who alone can perform the sacrifice for the village; *Dharma*, too, has a special priest who worships the god in the name of the whole village. If the assumption of Russell that the Baiga are an offshoot of the important Bhuiya tribe in Bihar and Bengal holds water the probability that the Baiga have borrowed their *Thakurdeo* from the Dharma cult becomes very great, for the Bhueya call their high god *Dharam Deota* and worship him by rites which are very similar to those of the Dharma cult.

3. Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mandla District, 1904-1910; p. 133.

4. Ibid, page 156.

as his abode may be any tree, a *semur, mahua* or *saj* tree appears to be nearer truth as regards Amwar.

Khair Mata :

It is strange that Khair Mata does not find mention in the gods of the Baiga pantheon described by Elwin in his "Baiga". The strangeness is somewhat mitigated, in view of Elwin's almost opening remarks. "The Baiga pantheon is exceedingly varied and elastic. It differs from village to village. There is no exclusiveness about it. The Baiga naturally worships everything he can, in order to be on the safe side[5]". In Amwar village Khair mata occupies an important place in the religious life of the people, and she can be bracketed together with Thakoordeo and Baradeo, as the highgods of the village people. In the non-tribal Hindu villages of Jabalpur district, the worship of Khair mata is universal and, if we consider Elwin's omission to include Khair mai in the Baiga pantheon as evidence of the fact that Khair mata is not worshipped in all Baiga villages, we must attribute her worship in Amwar to non-tribal influence. Stephen Fuchs also is not very clear as regards the worship of Kher Mata in the "Gonds and Bhumias of Eastern Mandla". His confused notions about Khairmai are obvious from the following passages[6]: "Another field god is Kherwaradeo. The god is more popular among the Bhumia than among the Gond. He too is believed to be present on the platform of Thakurdeo, and is worshipped on the *bidri* feast by the sacrifice of a spotted cock (*chauka murga*) or a coconut. Sometimes the cock as well as coconut are offered. It is said that this god is identical with Khermai, Hardulal Baba, or Hanuman. At Bijora, however, there was a special post with a flag on the top for each of these gods, one for Khairmai, one for Hardulal, and a third one for Hanuman. "At Junawani, Khermai or Kherdeo was also called 'gon ka malak' (Lord of the village). He was represented in a stone slab. This god has a wife, she is called Chhitalamai. She too, is a village goddess". In fact our enquiry at Amwar showed that Khermai, Hanuman, Hardulal Bundela, are all separate deities—though worshipped on the same platform. Chhitalamai is again a separate goddess, and not the wife of Khermai who is a female goddess. Other gods supposed to have their seats on the platform of Khermai are 'Chharidar' and Chobdar'; these terms are in fact names of attendants on a king or queen; and the idea of the villagers is that Khermai is the high-god of the village and the minor deities Chharidar and Chobdar are her *'Chakars'* or attendants. It may be mentioned that Gonds, Dhoba and Ahirs pay greater reverence to the Khermai than to Thakurdeo, the principal deity of the Baigas and this again indicates that the worship of Khermai has been introduced in Baiga villages under Gond influence who have greater culture-contacts with the non-tribal Hindus.

The present Khermai was installed by a *baba* (mendicant) about five years ago. Prior to that there were only, three poles—two together representing Khermai, and the one apart representing Hanuman—and a swing. There was no platform. At present, there is a platform on which stand three poles representing Khermai and her divine attendants Ghamsan, Chharidar and Chobdar. The smaller pole in the centre represents Marahi Mai the goddess of Cholera. A pole at the back of the platform, in line with the poles of the magician's swing is the pole dedicated to Hanuman. At Amwar, Khermai is worshipped at Dasehra (at the *Bida* ceremony) and on the 5th day of *chait* (bright fortnight), and of course whenever people promise so to do to avert or cure illness. She is worshipped with a *hum* of *gur* and *ghi* and an offering of a coconut. Before the advent of the *baba* adverted to earlier, people used to propitiate Khermai by the sacrifice of a she goat—which was called *Khairi'* after the goddess. The *baba* who seems to have made considerable impression on the villagers stopped the sacrifice of a goat, saying that it was a sin—a sacrilege. According to Kukal and Bhursu, the *baba* was a strict vegetrian and slept on the floor. None was able to tell his caste, or the village from which he came or where he went after his eventful sojourn in Amwar.

Bhimsen :

More popularly known in Amwar as Balraja Bhim (God of strength) and having his seat under the same tree as Thakurdeo, this village god is said by some to be the latter's son while once or two identified him as one of the 'Panch-Pando' (i.e. five Pandawa brothers). None, however, in the village was able to name the other Pandav brothers. Be he either the son of the most important village deity Thakurdeo or the second of the five Pandava brothers of Mahabharat, the god is supposed to be a rain god. Thus, though the name of the god suggests its identity with Puranic Bhimsen, yet the power attributed to him has no relation to the Mahabharat hero and is purely tribal in origin. In

5. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 54

6. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 396

fact, Bhimsen has been accorded a place in the Baiga mythology as the discoverer of liquor[7] and as the servant of Bhagwan who gives water to the world.[8]

Ghamsan :

This godling of the village people who has his abode in a pole on the *Chabutra* or platform of Khermai is apt by many to be mistaken for the non-tribal Hindu God *Ghamshyam,* an epithet for Lord Krishna, so known because of his cloud black colour. It is spelt by Elwin as 'Gansam'; but the people of Amwar as well as of numerous other villages visited by me viz Motinala, Kikra, Neosa, Narhanganj, Bhebsa. etc. call the god *Ghamsan.* Crookes has referred to this god as the chief deity of the Gonds an observation which does not accord with facts at least in Amwar. Strangely enough Fuchs has only casually mentioned the god in connection with another godling *Bagesur pat* and the worship of Hanuman. Thus, according to Fuchs. "The God (Baghesur Pat[9]) is supposed to dwell on the platfarm of Thakurdeo with Ghamsan and the other attendants of the village god[10]". In another context Fuchs has regarded 'Ghamsan' as the son of Thakurdeo. As has been observed earlier, in Amwar Ghamsan resides in a pole on the platform of Khermata. Ghamsan doe's power in relation to the village well being have been forgotten though he is remembered at the time of the *karma* songs. The god's association with *karma* is indicated from the following quotation.

> "The Gond and Pardhan of Mandla say that Karma songs originated in Kodia Brakar (presumably Change Bhakra) at the same time as Ghanshyam was born in a Bharewa's house. Ghanshyam's umbilical cord was cut by itself without the help of a knife or midwife and his placenta (which was the Karma) ran away to Surguja State ..". According to Elwin and Hawale "Ghanshyam is sometimes supposed to be responsible for giving rain and when there is drought the people sing Karma in his honour.....

Ward has devoted somewhat greater space to a description of this god in his report. According to him[13] the god is considered to be the protector of the crops, an attribute which it has now shed, at least in village Amwar.

Hardulal :

In Jabalpur district, the godling is known as 'Hardaul' or 'Hardaul lala '; further east, it is interesting to note that the name has slightly got changed, though there is no difficulty in identifying it with the 'Hardaul' of the Jabalpur country. The cult of Hardulal, or Hardaul is very widespread. He was a Bundela prince of Orchha, who was poisoned to death by his brother on a suspicion of intimacy with his wife. The deification of the prince is thus described in the Jubbulpore District Gazetteer.

> "The murder created much sensation, and shrines were erected to propitiate his ghost at many places between the Jumna and the Nerbudda. Previous to 1817 his worship had been confined to a few people in Bundelkhand. But when the cholera appeared in Lord Hastings army during the Pindari war, the camp happened to be pitched at Chandpur Sonari on the Sindh, near a grove of trees, beneath whose shade lie the ashes of Hardaul lala under a small shrine. The ghost of the murdered prince is said to have been especially incensed by the slaughter of a cow for beef, and from that time the cholera spread all over India. Then temples were everywhere erected and offerings made to appease him".

People in Amwar however were ignorant of the story of their godling as well as of the steps leading to his deification. Of course, the Gonds vaguely knew that he was a 'Bundela'; but even they could not help me any further as regards this godling. The godling is represented in the village by a pole, on the platform of Khermata, and is supposed to be attending her alongwith such other minor deities as Ghamsan, Chobdar and Chharidar. The metamorphosis undergone by the god in name and its supposed supernatural function is interesting. In the Jabalpur country the deity has generally a separate abode outside every village, and he is supposed to guard the village from malignant spirits; particularly, people placate him by worship whenever there is an outbreak of cholera. Further cast, in the shadow of Maikal hills, not only Hardaul suffers a change in name, but the powers and functions attributed to him are forgotten and he is reduced to the status of a minor deity dancing attendence on the high-goddess Khermata. These facts show at the same time that Hardulal is a non-tribal deity, and its introduction into the tribal pantheon has cost him a reduction in status and prestige. It is however likely that with further intrusion of non-tribal influence, the godling may be restored to the status enjoyed by it in villages to the west and north.

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7. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 44
8. Ibid., p. 337
9. Words within brackets are of the author.
10. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 395.
11. Elwin, Verrier and Hiwale, Folk Songs of the Maikal Hills, 1944; p. 6
12. Ibid., p. 7
13. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by Captain H.C.E Ward, 1870, p. 134.
14. Nelson, A.E., Central Province-Distroit Gazeteers-Jubbulpor District, Vol. 1, 1909; p. 86.

Bhainsasur :

This godling is said to be dwelling in the pits which get filled with water in the rains and where the buffaloes wallow in the mud. It is not given any concrete or palpable representation in stone. According to Amoli and Mangal Gonds, the godling is worshipped only by those households who possess milch buffaloes, the prevailing belief being that omission to propitiate, the god will make the buffalo dry. The worship of this god again is very wide-spread, and references to its worship are to be found in Crookes, Russell and Hiralal, and Gazetteers of many districts of C.P. and U.P. It is however to be noted that in the Jabalpur country the goddling is considered a protector of village fields, when in crop. According to Russell and Hiralal, the Gonds; Kachhis regard Bhainsasur as their principal deity, and regard him as the keeper of the vegetable gardens. The change of function is thus again significant and supports the theory that whenever new gods are admitted into a pantheon of tribals the concepts of their forms and supposed powers and functions associated with them change.

The derivation of the name is from Hindi *Bhains* meaning a cow-buffalo which itself derives from the sanskrit '*Mahish*'. Mahishasur is the name of a Puranic demon who was slain by Goddess Durga or Kali. The admission of this demon into the pantheon of non-tribal Hindu and thence into the tribal pantheon of a lower cultural level show the curious medley of beliefs and superstitions that find place within the compass of what goes by the name of Hinduism. Fuchs in dealing with the myths relating to the origin of fire, relates a story which leads to the identification of Bhainsasur with the demon 'Bhasamsur'[15] (literally meaning ash-demon); comparable with the English Frankenstein). If this origin of the godling is admitted, then his power of drying (reducing to ashes) the milk of milch cow-buffaloes becomes plausible enough. Unfortunately no local corroborration of either of these myths was available.

We were told that in Amwar Bhainsasur is worshipped or propitiated by the sacrifice of a pig once in three years. So strong is the belief that omission to perform this sacrifice will make their buffaloes dry that even Chhote Khan, who is a Muslim and is accordingly not permitted directly to perform sacrifices, procures the sacrificial animal at his cost, and gives it to the *guniya* for sacrifice on his behalf.

Hanuman :

As has been adverted to earlier, Hanuman is given a pole on the platform of Khermata alongwith other deities. Leaving aside the fact that he is a monkey god (*longoor deota*) people of Amwar could not enlighten me on the identity of the godling. Apparently they do not worship the godling except when Khermai is worshipped, and then, too a only few pieces of cocoanut and a little '*hum*' is offered to him also, probably in his capacity as the attendent god of Khermai. In non-tribal villages the cult of Hanuman, more popularly called Mahavir or Bajrangbali, Mahavir means great knight and Bajrangbali means" a powerful person with body like *bajra* is universal; there the god is represented by a stone statue daubed with *sindur* and oil. Stephen Fuchs records that "Hanuman plays an important part in the ceremony which the *dewar* performs when he delivers a village of a disease caused by an evil spirit (*bhut*), or of the danger from a man-eating tiger or other wild animals. The *dewar* who performs this ceremony (which is called *gaon banana*, to restore the village) gets possessed first by Hanuman, then by Thakurdeo and finally by Thakurdeo's son, Ghamsan Hanuman is also worshipped by some Gond *Pandas* who erect poles to represent him in front of their houses. There is no such *Panda* in Amwar, but there is one in the neighbouring village Belgaon; and he has got the Hanuman pole in front of his house.

Dharti mata :

Dharti Mata is worshipped by all sections of the Hindu population of the village. She is propitiated at the time of the *bidri banana* ceremony, at the shrine of the Thakurdeo, whose wife she is believed to be in Amwar. The Baiga regard her as their mother; and their hesitation in taking to settled plough cultivation was attrubuted to their fear about lacerating the breast of mother earth. Before starting drinking, the Baiga drops a drop or two of liquor on the ground in honour of Dhartimata. It is said that the Bhumia do not build brick houses because they are forbidden to burn Dharti Mata in a kiln[16], though the real reason behind this myth is, as observed by Fuchs[17] that 'the Bhumai, and to some extent also the Gond, with their shifting cultivation had no use for permanent houses. "In this village, Dhartimata is identified with Annakuaridei, and also probably with the goddesses Kutikidai and Annadai.[18]

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15. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 418 to 42 .
16. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 390.
17. Ibid., p. 399.
18. Ibid., p. 397.

Marhidai :

She is the goddess whose wrath gives rise to cholera and she is accordingly propitiated when a person is attacked by cholera. At Amwar she has her seat on the platform of *Khermai.*

Muriha Pat:

To the west of Amwar, is a hill known as Muria Pat and on top of it is the shrine of some *Muria Baba.* Since it is too much of a bother for villagers to ascend to the top of the hill, another deity of Muriha Pat is installed at the foot of the hill, just on the footpath leading from Amwar to Mawai. The deity is represented by a stone supported against the trunk of a *saj tree* on a small earthen platform. A foot and a half above the stone slab, a curved nail is driven into the trunk, and from this nail is hung a small piece of cloth and *lurki*—(a circular ornament of small bead worn in the ear). The Murihapat Baba is worshipped by the villagers in fulfilment of a promise so to do on their recovering from some illness. As put in by Mangal—रोग पकर लइसे तो मुरिया पार बाबा को बदत The worship is performed by the person concerned by offering coconut, *gulur* fruits and tobacco and *ganja* leaves to the Baba and it always takes place on a Monday. The *pat* is visited by villagers from Mawai and Amwar on the occasion of *Holi* when they offer coconut, areca nut, and *ganja* to the deity and daub it with the *Holi* ashes. The villagers were, however, ignorant as to who this Baba was and why was he being worshipped. It is interesting that as early as the eighteen sixties, Ward had referred to the setting up by the Gond and Baiga of Mandla district of various 'Pats'—to propitiate spirits which are armed with the power to inflict harm[19]. Certain localities were generally considered to be more especially the homes of these spirits, and it was in these localities that *pats* were set up. Ward even observes that the peculiar ceremony of laying the spirit of a man killed by a tiger was in connection with the *Pats.* It thus appears that the Murihapat must have been set up on some such occasion and people of Amwar have lost traces of the tradition.

Household gods worshipped by all villagers.

Earlier, I have described gods revered by all villagers (though the extent of veneration varies from caste to caste and even individual to individual) and in whose worship all villagers participate. All these gods have their abodes fixed at one particular place in the village. In what follows, an attempt is made to describe such gods which dwell in every household in the village and are worshipped by every household individually. The gods mentioned earlier are generally worshipped by the village *gunia* Bhursu on certain occasions.

Narayandeo:

The most important of the household gods is Narayandeo. He resides on the threshold of every house in the village. Russell and Hiralal write[20] that Narayandeo "has a little platform inside the threshold of the house". This, however, does not accord with the facts at Amwar. By many writers, he is identified with the non-tribal sun god (*Suraj Narain*). Elwin also remarks that Narayandeo is the Sun god, though he observes that the Baiga "who in any case are never much interested in extra-mundane phenomena seem to have adopted him quite fortuitously without any special reference to the sun, in the same way they have now identified him with Bara Deo".[21] Fuchs, however, doubts if Narayandeo is the same as sun god. The grounds on which he doubts the identification of the sun god with Narayandeo are—(i) The sun god is never a household god. (ii) Sun god is always worshipped in the open (iii) in the ritual of the solemn pig sacrifice (*Laru kaj*) a sun-god called *Suraj deo* is worshipped by the Gond and Bhumia as a separate god. The facts brought out in this enquiry at Amwar seem to support Fuchs. It is reported that at the time of the *Laru kaj* two pigs, or a pig and a fowl are offered, the pig to Narayandeo, and the other pig or fowl to *Surajdeo.* The pig or fowl dedicated to *Surajdeo* is sacrifised first, and this sacrifice takes place outside even the courtyard of the house in the open as of course all sacrifices to the sun must. Even then the fact that Narayandeo and *Surajdeo* are worshipped together suggests some sort of affinity between the two gods, which unfortunately could not be brought out at this enquiry because of ignorance on the part of the informants. Sardu and Sunauram Gonds of Amwar disclosed that Narayandeo is god Narsimha—the half-man god of the Hindu mythology who had slain the demon Hiranyakashyap on the threshold—and they adduce this as a reason why Narayandeo is worshipped on the threshold. This is an entirely new view on the indentity of this god, and is, like the identification of the supreme Gond deity Burhadeo or Baradeo with Mahadeo of the Hindu trinity,

[19]. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District of the Central Provinces edited by Captain H.C.E. Ward 1870; pp. 133 and 157.

[20]. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II, page 85 and Vol. III, p. 101.

[21]. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 404.

apparently an attempt to narrow the gulf between the *puranic* and traditional Gond beliefs. Another attempt in the same direction is reported from neighbouring village Sunehra, where, according to the Gond patel of that village, four Gond families have stopped the *Larukaj* and instead started worshipping 'Satyanarain'. Satyanarain, according to him, is the same as Narayanedo.

According to the myth recorded by Fuchs[22], Narayandeo was the borther of the five Pandawas, was exiled by them from their company because he had eaten food prepared by a Dom and was asked to live on the threshold of every house. Elwin, however, has related a myth[23] which identifies Narayandeo with Baradeo, and states that it was Baradeo who had eaten the food of the Domraja, and who was consequently cursed to live "on the threshold of every house," to be kicked all day long by people when they come and go out. However, one thing is certain that the tribal god Narayandeo has no connection whatsoever with the *puranic* god of the same name.

One of the important functions of the god is to protect the family against sickness and misfortune, and to stand watch over their houses which probably explains its being seated at the entrance to the house. As observed by Fuchs, the God is to be propitiated every ninth or twelth year by a pig sacrifice going by the name of *laru-kaj*. In practice, however, at Amwar, people do not offer the sacrifice until they are victimised by the wrath of the god, manifested by protracted illness of member of the family. The local *gunia*, by means of his *supa-tuma*, divines the causes of the illness and if it is due to the wrath of Narayandeo the family promises to offer *laru-kaj* upon recovery of the sick person. At the time of this enquiry, three persons in the village had promised the *laru* to Narayandeo; two of these are Baigas—Tenda and Samaroo and one, an Agaria, Sukhlal. The sacrifice takes place on the expiry of three years from the day the *laru* is reared. Full details of the ceremony, as observed at Amwar will be given later. It is believed that during the three years of the pig's dedication, the family will not be troubled by Narayandeo, so that as observed by Elwin "The *Larukaj* is thus a prophylactic against desease, as well as a cure[24]".

Dulhadeo :

This is yet another example of a deified—real or mythical—human being, universally worshipped in villages covering an extensive area. He is said to have been a Gond bridegroom, who was killed by a tiger when on his way to the bride's village. This is even advanced by some Gonds as an explanation of their custom, according to which the marriage procession starts from the bride's village and the principal ceremonies of the marriage are celebrated at the bridegroom's village. This is in contradiction to the practice of चढ़बरात prevalent in other tribal or non-tribal Hindu castes. The godling is installed, with his consort Dalkhiria[25] in the kitchen room behind the hearth.[26] From accounts furnished at this enquiry, it seems that save on such occasions as marriages, the godling and his consort, are propitiated about once in *Tisal* or three years. At the time of engagement, the godling has to be offered liquor. The god is worshipped, as observed by Fuchs, not with the intention of obtaining some boon" but 'to avert due punishment for an omission of the sacrifice". In fact, the godling has to be promised a goat at the time of the marriage, and omission to keep up the promise, it is believed, results in the husband meeting with a disaster similar to the one to which the godling himself had fallen victim.

Ratmai :

Literally the name means 'night mother'. She is a goddess commanding universal reverence in the village. She resides in the house at the grain-bin and people remember her when they go out of their houses by night. People, however, in the village were ignorant about other details of the goddess.

Paniharin :

She is the goddess who lives at the place where the utensils filled with water are kept. Obviously, she, like the numerous other gods and godesses, whose jurisdiction is extremely circumscribed, protects the water pots from being poluted. According to some villagers, *paniharin* was identical with Ratmai.

Annakuari dei :

This goddess lives in every house in the village, inside the sleeping room, or in the kitchen. A small net-work of bamboo is made and kept at the place meant for the goddess. There were some in the village who identified her with Dhartimata, the consort of Thakurdeo. She is worshipped at the time of *bidri banana* along with Thakurdeo, Dhartimata and other gods, and also

22. Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla 1960; pp. 424, 425.

23. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; pp. 320, 321.

24. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939, ; p. 405.

25. Fuchs calls the consort of Dulhadeo as 'Dulhindeo' page 392 of "The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla".

26. According to District Gazetteer of Jabalpur (1909) Dulhadeo has a stone and a platform to the east of the village (p. 86. Thus in Jabalpur region the godling is not a household god.

when threshing of crops starts. She is generally offered a fowl and a cocoanut, but particularly a goat in about three years.

Bahirwasi:

As the name (bahir=outside, wasi=dweller) signifies, this godling lives outside the house at the compound gate and is propitiated by the sacrifice of a *karra* fowl (black and white) once every year. It is said that Bahirwasi is the same god as Surajdeo.

Gods worshipped by particular tribes:

The Gonds:

In addition to the gods which are common to the entire village, whether living in a definite single abode or in every household, there are certain gods peculiar to each tribe or caste in the village. Other tribes or castes though they may be having a deferential attitude towards such gods, do not actively participate in their worship. In the following paragraph, a description of some of the important gods of this category is being given.

Burha Deo:

Known elsewhere as Baradeo (*Bara* in Hindi mean big, while *Burha* means old), and often identified with the Puranic god Mahadeo, this is the supreme god of the Gonds and Ahirs of Amwar. He resides in a *saja* tree in the forest to the north-east of the village. In the village, all families except the Mohammadan family, have returned Burhadeo as their god. Greater enquiry however showed that though other castes in the village revered the god and occassionally paid homage to it, it remained the principal deity of the Gonds and Ahirs only.

On page 403 of his book "The Baiga" and also on page 60 *ibid,* Elwin states that the Baigas now identify Baradeo with Narayandeo. At another place (page 56), he has even said that Baradeo has in many villages sunk to the position of a mere household god, sharing Narayandeo's kicks on the threshold, or living with Dulhadeo behind the hearth'. An enquiry at Amwar did not confirm the belief regarding the identity of Baradeo with Narayandeo. Far from that, people in the village appeared to be very much afraid of Narayandeo, and there were three persons in the village who had dedicated the *laru* pig in honour of the god. In some parts of the Baiga chak i.e. in village Tantar, the Baigas say that Burhadeo is a Gond god, and the Baigas have nothing whatsoever to do with it. Amwar Baigas profess to revere the Baradeo. They, however, do not regard him as residing in the *saj* tree, but simply treat him as a deity living outside the house. In any case, the observation in the Mandla District Gazetteer[27] that "the principal deity of their (Baiga) pantheon is Baradeo" is no longer correct. The treatment by the Dhobas and Agarias of Baradeo as a deity is to be ascribed more to culture-contacts than to the fact that it is in fact included in their pantheon. They do not have any ceremony or ritual necessitating the worship of Burhadeo.

It is surprising that at the time of settlement, Ward could not find out that Baradeo was the principal deity of the Gonds. He brackets Baradeo with *Doola Deo* in the matter of popularity and just says that "they have a considerable amount of attention paid them". Russell and Hiralal[29] describe Baradeo "as the great god of the Gonds" who "often consists of number of brass or iron-balls suspended to a ring and hung on a *saj* tree". Further on, they state that "now-a days in Mandla Baradeo is found as an iron doll made by a neighbouring blacksmith instead of a chain". Observing that originally Baradeo was in the *saj* tree. Russell and Hiralal proceed to discuss the possible steps of the god's metamorphosis to an "anthropomorphic" form. It may be pointed that Baradeo is represented by an iron image was, and even today, is not correct. The correct position, as elicited during enquiry at Amwar and elsewhere is that generally Gonds regard Baradeo as residing in the *saj* tree, but they do not have any anthropomorphic representation for the god. It is only in case of certain villages where the *pujaris* of the Gonds reside that we find Baradeo being represented by iron images, which is covered with straw, tied in a cloth and hung on the *saj* tree.

Women are reportedly not admitted to the worship of Burhadeo.

Kunda ritual:

There is a ritual for mingling the soul of a dead person in Burhadeo. This is known as *kunda.* According to Sunauram and other informants, the *kunda* ritual is performed only in the case of persons who die a natural death. Persons dying of accidents etc., are not accepted by Burhadeo. The ritual is performed by *pujari*—who is fixed for each Gond household. The *pujari* of Sunauram lives in village Jugdei in Dindori tahsil, of

[27]. Rudman, F.R.R., Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. A, 1912; p. 54.

[28]. Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mandlah District of the Central Provinces, edited by Captain H.C.E. Wadr 1870.

[29]. Ibid.

Sardoo in village Bondar Saria in Dindori tahsil, of Amoli in village Parsatola in Mandla tahsil, etc.

The ritual of *kunda* can be performed any time after the death of Gond, but generally within three years.

The son or brother of the deceased goes to the village in which *pujari* lives, taking with him the materials and money needed for the ritual. The ground below the *saj* tree in which the Burhadeo dwells is cleared and smeared with cowdung. The *pujari* climbs the tree and brings the 'Potli' containing the image of Burhadeo to the ground. The image is bathed and daubed with turmeric powder and oil. Other iron instruments in the 'Potli' are also similarly treated. The images of the Burhadeo and other gods are worshipped, offered cocoanuts and incense is burnt by way of *hom-dhup*. The afflatus of Burhadeo then comes on the *pujari* or some other person who is given a twig of *saja* about 1½ feet in length, and a stalk of *chhir* grass to hold in his hand. *Hum*—is again offered to Burhadeo who is in this person. Thereafter the son or brother of the deceased takes the *kunda* of the deceased—which is a *potli* containing a paisa coin, a turmeric knot and a stalk of *chhirra* grass; he hides the *kunda* somewhere in the forest. The person whom Burhadeo has entered then searches out the *kunda* from the place where it is hidden. If the person concerned dies of an unnatural death, the person with the *saj* twig in his hand knows it. and declares that the *kunda* of the person is not acceptable to Burhadeo. It is reported that the divination of the cause of death by the haunted person is invariably correct.

Thereafter the *kunda* is united and bathed. At the same time, the sacrificial goat is given some grain to eat. As soon as the goat starts eating the grain, it is believed that the Burhadeo has agreed to accept the *kunda*. Thereafter the goat is sacrificed: no edged metal weapon is used for the purpose. Instead, the goat is killed by breaking its spinal cord with thick *saja* sticks. In fact the animal is pressed between two thick *saja* sticks till it dies.[30] Besides the goat, fowls are also sacrificed; but they are killed by *chhuri*. Liquor is also offered. The sacrificed animals are then roasted, and offered to Burhadeo and thereafter other invited persons eat. After the feasting is over, the image of Burhadeo and other gods are wrapped in *chhira* grass, tied in the *potli* and hung up in the *saj* tree.

The Gond of Amwar also believes that the soul of a person thus mingled in *Burhadeo* thereafter is passed on to the *Naglok or Patal-lok*. It does not then come back to the earth.

The ceremony of *kunda milana* is also prevalent in the Ahir of Amwar who say that there is no difference in the Gond and Ahir except in name. Their *pujari* lives in village Parasmahu.

In case of persons who die unnatural deaths and consequently whose *kunda* is not acceptable to Burhadeo, a chicken is fed and led free after the performance of some rites by the *pujari*. The chicken—which is said to represent the soul of the deceased—is invariably eaten up by some animal, and thereafter there does not remain any possibility of its coming back and pestering the members of the household of the deceased.

Ningodeo :

Ningodeo is the traditional or mythological ancestor of the Gond race. The Ningodeo of the people of *Dhurwa* got in the village (Mangal and Amoli Gond) lives in village Khajarwar—actually on a hill called Dhuti Dongar in the village. The *pujari* of the families also lives at Khajarwar and they go there for the ceremony of mixing the soul of deceased in the Baradeo. This same village has the *bhiri* of persons belonging to the *Dhurwa got*. Persons belonging to other *got* worship Ningodeo in other villages. Mangal Gond told us usually people go once in three or four years to worship Ningodeo.

Gods of Baiga :

Nanga-Baiga, Nanga-Baigin

These are the first ancestors not only of the Baiga tribe, but of the entire human race. They are regarded as children of Dhartimata and that is why the Baiga treat 'Dharti' or earth as mother. The pair is worshipped by the *gunia* or Dewar at the time of *birdi banana* and *gaon banana* rituals.

Muswasideo :

This is the Baiga god of hunt and is believed to reside in the place where the household weapons—bow and arrow, *sang, barchhi* etc.—are kept. Amwar Baiga regard Muswasideo as the son of Thakurdeo and worship him at the latter's shrine.The god is also reported to be invoked when the Baiga go for hunt.

Gods of Ahirs :

The god peculiar to Ahir caste are Maldeo, worshipped in a *saja* tree, Khila Mutha living in the threshing floor, Khirkutdeo living in the *khirka* or the place where cattle assemble. Krishnadeo is the favourite god of the Ahir, and they regard him as their traditional ancestor. Numerous *doha* and *summaran* sung by the Ahir relate to the exploits of this god in love and

30. The killing of the *lara* pig without using any weapon. If we accept Elwin's view (p. 403 of Baiga) that this practice refers to its antiquity before edged weapons were discovered.

bravery. Besides, the Ahir dance round the Dangdeo in the *madai festival.*

Agaria :

The most important god peculiar to the Agaria caste is Lohesur, supposed to reside in the pit from where the Agaria brings his ore, and also in the furnace. This god is worshipped once in three years by the sacrifice of a goat; but is remembered every time the Agaria smelts ore. Other important gods reverred by the Agaria are Koelasur, Agiasur, Kansasur etc. which are connected with the coal, the fire and *kansa,* respectively.

Gods worshipped by individual households

Holerai :

There are gods who do not command universal reverence in the village; nor from all the households in a particular caste, but from individual households. Of these, particular mention should be made of Holerai or Holeradeo. In village Jaitpuri,[31] in Jabalpur tahsil, the *godling* is worshipped by all Gond households in the village along with such other village gods as Khermata, Hardaul, etc. The position of the god thus appears to have undergone a complete change in status in Amwar: from the village level God of Jaitpuri it has sunk to the level of a household god at Amwar, and then too its worship is restricted to a few families only. In Amwar, the godling is worshipped by two Gond families and about ten Baiga families. The latter belong to the kingroup of Dukal and Tenda Baiga. Another change is that in Jaitpuri the godling is represented at a single place below a tree, but in Amwar the god is represented by a *khumri* (rain hood) hung in a wall of the cattleshed. Also, in this respect, i.e., visible representation, the facts at Amwar disclose a complete departure from the account given by Russell and Hiralal[32] that the god "is represented by a wooden bullock's bell" The nature of the godling with respect to the powers ascribed to it has, however, not undergone any change, and even today, it is regarded by the households revering it as a cattle-god.

Puranic god wrshipped or revered in the village :

Mere identity of names is not sufficient basis for assuming the tribal gods to be identical with Puranic gods of the same name. Thus the gods Bhimsen, Ghansam, Narayandeo, Nagdeo, etc. are all Puranic personages worshipped by the non-tribal Hindus, but the tribal gods of these names are almost entirely separate beings In fact, it is almost impossible to find a non-tribal Hindu god admitted into the tribal pantheon without suffering some changes in form and attribute. Examples of non-tribal gods that have retained some of their attributes are Sarseti Mai (or Saraswati Mai) and Sharda, who are regarded as goddess of learning and music; Narmada Mai or river Narmada; Ganesh, the elephant-god who is revered by observance of a fast on the *cherta* day.

The villagers, in general had no idea of the non-tribal gods Ram, Laxman, Brahma, Vishnu or Mahesh. Of course, Sunauram Gond, and to some extent Sardu Gond are exceptions.

Common superstitions :

Superstitions play an important role in the life of the people of Amwar. Their superstitions are numerous and cover almost all the facets of their life. In fact, as Dr. Radhakrishnan put it "The savage clings to his superstition obstinately and faithfully." For him his views are live force, though they may seem to us no more than childish fancies. Dr. Radhakrishnan even observes that "to shatter the superstitions of the savage is to destroy his morality, his social code and mental peace". However to meet a savage we need not go very far. He can be found even in the most civilised of societies. Amongst the votaries of Hinduism there are many who are victims of superstition. Some of the common superstitions, believed at Amwar, are described below:

Superstitions regarding child birth:

(1) The woman carrying a child is not permitted to cross the tether to which a horse is tied. The underlying superstition is that if she does the gestation will last for one year as in the case of a mare.

(2) The umbilical cord is disposed of very carefully in the place where delivery has taken place because it is believed that if a barren woman can procure the umbilical cord she can transfer the fertility of the mother to herself.

(3) The stump of the umbilical cord is thrown on a dung-heap under the belief that by so doing the child will grow as fast as the dung-heap.

(4) If children born to a woman have been dying, the last child born to such a woman is symbolically thrown on the dung-heap, and then brought back. The

[31]. Tiwari, G.N., Census of India 1961, Vol. VIII, Madhya Predesh, Part VI, Village Survey Monograph No. 6, Jaitpuri, 1965.

[32]. Russell, R.V. and Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, 1916.

belief is that since the child has already been discarded, death also will not claim it. An alternative rite is that child of such a mother is symbolically sold to another woman for a *supaful* (winnowing-fanful) of *dhan* or for a few paisa, the underlying belief being the same *viz.* that by so doing the child is "lost" to the mother.

(5) A child born with feet first is believed to possess some magical curative properties. It is supposed that a kick from such a child on the part of the body which is paining will relieve the pain.

(6) In order to judge whether the child will be born without giving much trouble to the mother, old women of the household allow oil to trickle down her breast from the neck; if the oil descends down through the part between the breasts in a straight course the delivery is predicted to be a smooth one.

(7) After child-birth the body of the new born is carefully scanned to search for some marks etc. in order to determine which deceased relative has been born.

Superstitions concerning names :

(i) As has been adverted to earlier, every person in the village has a second name. People generally do not call a person by his real name because they consider it to be inauspicious.

(ii) It is usual to give inauspicious names to a person, under the superstition that such a name protects the person from the injury or harm connoted by the name. Thus Tenda (a hunchback), Loola (without hands), Bhaira (deaf), Jhitu (thin) etc. are names of the type.

(iii) People are afraid of taking names of wild animals when walking through thick jungle by night or at night even in the village. The superstition is that the animal named might come to attack if its name is uttered.

Superstitions concerning animals and birds :

(i) Crossing of the road by a cat, when a man sets out on an errand, is regarded inauspicious.

(ii) Crying of an owl from house top is regarded an ill omen.

(iii) When a person is going on a journey, it is regarded ominous if his path is crossed by a jackal. Exactly what type of ill foreboding is indicated in case such an event occurs was not known to the villagers. The person whose path is thus crossed need not suspend his journey owing to the ill omen. The supposed calamity is considered to be averted, if the person concerned snaps a *chheola* or *thua* twig, keeps it in the middle of the road and tramples upon it.

(iv) Seeing a single crow bathing in a stream forebodes that you shall hear the news of the death of a dear one. This differs somewhat from the superstition prevalent in other areas of the State, which is exactly similar in its evil significance; but the event constituting the omen is the sight of mating crows. To waive off the ill consequence portended by the omen, the person who experiences it sends false news of his own death to his relatives.

Other Superstitions :

(i) The Baiga do not use water after defacation. It is believed that using water would result in the person concerned being eaten by a tiger.

(ii) When a man sets out to do a work, interruption by way of sneezing is regarded as an ill omen. However, if there are two sneezes in quick succession the evil of the first sneeze is cancelled by the second sneeze and the man can set about his work.

(iii) Throbbing of parts of the body is associated with the happening of some events. Thus twitching of the left eye indicates either the arrival of some stranger or impending bad news concerning the death of one's mother-in-law. Throbbing of the right eye is considered auspicious.

(iv) Itching of the palm of one's hands is associated with the hope that the person affected by the omen will get the delicious flesh of a *gutri* to eat.

(v) The superstition concerning 'evil eye' (नजर लगाना) is universal in the village. Particularly, they think the crops will fail if a person casts evil eye on them. In order to nullify this evil, they suspend the skull of a buffalo in the centre of the crops by means of a pole, so that it will be the first to catch the 'evil eye'.

(vi) If a series of calamities befall the inmates of a house - i.e. deaths of children

in the house, or even cattle, it is regarded as haunted by a spirit or a witch and is deserted forthwith. Thus Mangal Gond's son-in-law had left the village because he lost a number of cattle in quick succession and attributed the event to be haunting of the house.

(vii) A woman in menstruation is particularly considered susceptible to evil spirit or witch. Hence a woman in menstruation does not even comb her hair lest some hair may fall in the hand of a witch.

(viii) Similarly, bride and bridegroom, and the mother when in confinement, are believed to be very susceptible to witchcraft. For this reason, the bride and bridegroom always keep the areca-nut cutter in their hands, because iron is supposed to drive away evil spirits. The *chul mundri*—an iron ring exchanged between the bride and bridegroom—has a similar significance.

(ix) If a man setting out on some work stumbles across a stone, he suspends his work for that day.

(x) If a crow defecates on a person, the latter takes it as a foreboding of some calamity. In order to obviate the evil, he takes a bath, and distribute alms to his sister's son.

(xi) Seeing an empty vessel while setting about on a work is considered to be a harbinger of failure. The evil is averted by suspending the work for a while. Seeing a woman carrying a pitcher full of water is considered a good omen.

(xii) The *larukaj* is only started on a Saturday. Marriages are not solemnised in the month of *Pus*.

I have described above only some of the superstitions concerning the people of Amwar which I learnt from them by enquiry or personal observation. Their number, however, is numerous In fact, superstitions are mixed up with their religious practices. Thus the magico—religious rites like *bidri banana, bida, gaon banana,* or *mati uthana* all combine superstitious beliefs with magic. These are being described elsewhere in this chapter and hence are not included in this section.

Calender of Festivals

The festivals and feasts observed by the villagers are presented in the following statements:—

Serial No.	Name of festival	When observed	Significance
1	2	3	4
1	*Chherchhera*	*Pus* (January)	A children's festival.
2	*Ganesh Upas*	*Magh* (February)	Fast is observed.
3	*Holi*	*Fagun* (March)	Colom festival
4	*Jawara*	*Chait* or *Kartik*	Only Bakhti Agaria keeps jawara once in three years.
5	*Bidri banana*	*Asadh* (June or July)	Crop fertility inducement.
6	*Hareli*	*Sawan* (July—August)	Sprin : festival
7	*Nag Panchmi*	" "	Worship of Nagdeo.
8	*Pola*	*Amawasya* of *Bhadra*	Children stop playing on stilts.
9	*Nawakhana*	September-October	New food (new maize crop) is eaten.
10	*Dasschra*	" "	*Bida* rites
11	*Dewali*	October-November	Cattle festival for Ahirs.

Chherchhera :

This is the first festival according to the English calendar. It is, however, a children's feast and is also alternatively known as *khichrahi* because of the preparation of *khichri* that is eaten by the children on the day. The day on which this children's festival is observed is remembered in the village by the saying *Bhagri Pus lagti Magh* i.e. departing of *Pus* and beginning of *Magh*. The children beg in *Poos* but eat in *Magh*. When the children go in their masks a begging they sing *chherta chherta mai murgi marta, kothike dhan herta, noon noon deta, dar dar deta.* On the first day of *Magh* all the children go with the food collected by them on the bank of the Jalle-Jhori and prepare *khichri*. Before eating their well deserved grub, the children play a game, in which a boy acts as a crow and has in that role, to match away the food kept on a leaf-platter in the face of joint attack and beating by all the other children.

Holi :

The next important festival after the children's festival of *chherta* is Holi. This is the well-known festival of the Hindus, the day on which men, women and children enjoy themselves in gay abandon. Strangely enough, though the people of Amwar observe the festival in its external form, they are ignorant of the mythological background of the festival. They are apparently more interested in the merry-making and revelry part of it. The festival is observed on the last day of *Phagun*. Two or three days prior to this, boys roam about in groups and collect faggots etc. on the sly for the Holi campfire. They bury the *anda* in the ground near the shrine of the Khermai. A branch of the *semal* tree is fixed in the middle of the Holi fire along with the *anda* pole. On the day of the festival, the villagers assemble at the Holi fire. The fire is kindled by Tenda: the patel of the village, and it should be done before the sun rises.

The Holi fire is believed to possess magical powers and people throw their iron implements into it. When the fire has burnt down, the stumps of the *semal* and *anda* poles are dug out by Bhursu Baiga. He throws the stump of the *anda* pole into the fire but cuts the *semal* stump into bits; lights them and with their burning ends touches the bellies of all men present. It is believed that this protects the persons so touched from pain in the stomach.

Later in the day people sprinkle muddy and coloured water over one another and sing *phag*. The *phag* (Holi songs) are sung in Amwar for five or six days at the most; but it was reported that in the other villages in Amwar's neighbourhood the songs are sung for many days. The reason for Amwar people's singing *phag* only four or five days was said to be their poverty; embodied in the saying current in the village *sanjha khai bihanna rita,* i.e., eat in the evening and be empty the next morning. For singing Holi songs, people sit in a circle and sing to the accompaniment of the music of *mandar, dholak* and *timki*. The Holi songs are noted for their obscenity and do not have any poetical charm.

On the Holi day the women also give them up to happy abandon. They waylay any man who comes their way and beat him till he purchases his freedom by making suitable presents to his feminine torturers.

Jawara :

This festival of *jawara* so popular in the non-tribal villagers of the region has yet to establish itself in the village. It is reported that only Bakhti Agaria keeps *jawara* in the village. He does so once in *tisal* or three years. The *jawara* are kept either in the month of *Chait* or in the month of *Kartik*. Bakhti does so in the month of *Chait* immediately after Holi. The festival lasts for ten days. The essence of the festival is the sowing of *jawa*[33] (barley) seed in a number of pots in the name of Mata. For the purpose Bakhti has a room cleaned and washed with cow-dung. The sanctified earth for filling in the pots is brought as in marriage—*chilarmati*—and seven types of seed are sown. Bakhti has to tend the seeds, regularly watering them every day. Sacrifices are also offered to the presiding Mata, and devotional songs sung. On the tenth day the whole village assembles at Bakhti's house and the pots are taken in procession to the river. They are immersed. The participants are then treated to a feast of goat-meat and of liquor. It is probably owing to the expensive nature of the festival and the sustained labour required for ten days that the festival has not become so popular in the village. Other villages in the neighbourhood keep *jawara*. The Parda who is a Gond keeps *jawara* in his own house on behalf of all persons.

Bidri banana :

This ritual is observed any time after the *akti* and before the first showers of rain have fallen. The rituals performed have been described elsewhere. This is a magical rite intended to ensure good and timely rains and fertility of the crops. At this same occasion the *guniya* Bhursu performs what is known as *gaon bandhna*. This is also a magical rite and is described elsewhere.

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[33]. The festival possibly takes its name from this. This is also adduced by Fuchs as an evidence that the festival is not indigenous to Central India but is imported from outside because *jawa* is not grown as a crop in C.P.

Hareli :

Hareli is celebrated on the first day of the month of *Sawan* corresponding to July-August. The festival embodies the spirit of the season, the green hue which is the dominant colour in the village panorama at this time of the year. It also symbolises the hope that their fields which were dark till now should become green, with the sprouting of young plants of the crops. A significant feature of the festival is that all agricultural work is stopped. Men bathe in the morning, go to the forest and bring green twigs of *Bhilwa* and *bhanwarsal* plants. There are tied with a bundle—which is fixed in a corner of the fields. But before this is done, they burn incense to propitiate Annadai and Kutkidai, goddess of crops, praying that they give them crops as high as the twigs they have planted. Another bundle of the twigs is brought home and stuck over the entrance door of the house. As observed by Fuchs, the eating of new vegetables and fruits—except those that are found in the jungle—is tabooed before Hareli. In the afternoon cattle are worshipped and fed with salt mixed with *kanda or khambh.* Liquor is consumed by all members of the household.

On this day, the children start using their stilts or *geri,* but before they do so, worship is offered to the goddess 'gerimai'.

Nagpanchmi :

Closely followed by Hareli is the festival of Nagpanchmi, which takes place on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of *Sawan.* The festival is reportedly observed by all sections of the village population, and Stephen Fuchs' observation that "the Bhumia do not celebrate this feast but some Gond of Eastern Mandla do", goes counter to the facts in Amwar. The festival, as its name implies, is connected with the worship of 'Nagdeo' or serpent god. The image of the god is made by means of grains of *kondon* and *kulki* in every house; flower and milk are offered to it; incense is burnt and songs are sung in honour of the god. In the evening people assemble in the house of Kangli and sing songs in honour of the god. At the time the afflatus of Nagdeo is reported to possess Kangli Baiga.

Pola :

Elwin describes *pola* as a sequel to Hareli, because on this day children go to the village river and immerse their stilts in it. They also cook and eat together on the river bank. The festival is observed on the *marti* of the month of *Bhadon,* exactly one and a half months after the festival of Hareli. Clay toys—generally bulls etc. are purchased from the kumhars of Mawai and given to the children for playing. Another significant feature of the festival is the non-eating of *pej* or rice; people eat only *roties.* The significance of this was not known to the villagers.

Nawakhai :

Nawakhai literally means eating new food. and the festival is therefore associated with the eating of the food prepared out of the new rice crop. It is observed on the last day of the month of *Bhadon* or sometime towards the end of that month. Thus it closely follows the *Pola* festival. On this day villagers collect stalks of paddy from the fields; the stalks are offered to Thakurdeo, and thus sanctified are tied into bundles and stuck to the roof of the house. On this day also, as on other festival days, people do not take *pej* but rice. Since the new rice crop is still not harvested, the villagers symbolically mix a few grains (which are still not ripe) of the new rice crop. It is also reported that this rice should not be prepared by daughters of the house, because they do not belong to the house. On this day, the Gond go to the *saja* tree in the north-east which is the abode of the Baradeo and offer the stalks of rice to their supreme god. Before eating the cooked rice, some is offered to Narayandeo, Dulhadeo and Dulkhiria, Ratmai, Paniharin and other household gods.

It is believed that rice and other new grain crops (earlier variety of *kodon*) should not be eaten before the nawakhai, though maize is permitted. Pumpkins are also not eaten before the nawakhana. This festival is prevalent in the entire Chhattisgarh region (which is rice growing) and its observance in the forest fastnesses of Mikal hills is yet another link showing the plausibility of the Baiga having migrated via Chhattisgarh.

Dassera :

Dassera falls on the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *kuar* about 25 days after the nawakhai feast. It marks the conclusion of *Naoratra* in localities where higher caste Hindu influence in culture is predominant. In the non-tribal Hindus, the festival occupies a place of unique distinction, because it commemorates the victory of the popular god Ram over the demon Rawana. This particular significance of the festival is not known to the people of Amwar, for whom its importance arises chiefly from the 'Bida' rites which are performed on this day. The day has importance also because, from and after it, the tribal people start their *saila, rina, karma, birha,* and other dances. The Baiga men also dance what is known a *dassera,* which according to Elwin, is only a variant of *Saila.*

The *Bida* ceremony is being described elsewhere in this monograph.

Diwali :

Diwali—the wellknown Hindu festival dedicated to the goddess of wealth Laxmi—entirely

changes its character in the tribal surrounding of village Amwar. The sanskritised name *Dipawali*—which underwent the first transformation Diwali elsewhere—is further corrupted into *Diyari* in Amwar. But the name is misleading in the context of Amwar, because as the name suggests, there are no diya lighted there. In fact, the festival in Amwar is merely a festival of the Ahir families there. One Baiga informant deposed of a description of the festival most summarily in these words:—

> "We prepare *dar-bhat* and after feeding Laxmi (cattle), ourselves eat it. Those who can afford also put on new clothes on this day. We observe Diwali only for a day. It is the Ahir who remains dancing for three or four days."

The Ahirs, however, worship Krishna, Laxmi (cattle) and Maldeo at Dewari. This last mentioned deity is a peculiarly Ahir deity not revered by other castes in the village. The Ahir also 'make' up the cattle on the morning following Diwali. They dance and visit the houses of all their customers in the village, singing *doha* and *sumiran* songs. They are paid in cash or kind by the householders. Since it is the custom of the Ahir of Amwar not to cross the boundary of Amwar, the Ahir do not go to the neighbouring villages. The dancing of the Ahir continues for three or four days.

Fairs :

No fair is held in Amwar. They, however, go to the *madai* fair held in Mawai.

Magical practices; spirits; and witch-craft :

Like primitive people in many other areas, the people of Amwar also are great believers in supernatural forces—which act often to the deteriment of the village community. Every disaster befalling an individual, family or the village is interpreted in terms of the wrath of some supernatural phenomena; this universal belief in the extra-sensory powers, or supernatural, has made magic an everyday necessity in the life of the villagers. The institution of the village *dewar* or *guniya* is a result of this necessity of the villagers of a person, who knows the secrets of supernatural phenomena, and possesses in his magic the power to control them. It is the duty and business of the *guniya* to protect the village from evil spirits; to diagnose the causes of persistent illness and to prescribe suitable demonological cures for them; to control witches and to perform certain prophylactic rites to ensure good crops and health to the villagers. In fact, the *guniya* or village sorcerer covers every aspect of village life and villagers cannot think even of life without a *guniya*. In the paragraphs that follow are described certain practices which are demonological or magical in nature and whose universal prevalence in villages testifies to the sway magic, animism and belief in spirit exercise on the life of the people.

Bidri Banana :

The *bidri banana* rites are performed to ensure good crops. It is a 'magical fertility rite' and has as yet nothing religious or devotional in nature about it. It is performed in the month of *Jeth* every year, when "Mother Earth lies ready to be impregnated[34]". No particular day is fixed for the performance of the rites; that depends, among other things, on the weather conditions also. In Amwar, the rite was performed this year on the 9th June.

The ceremony was presided over by the village *gunia*, Bhursu. In the morning, all cultivators of the village gathered below the *mahua* tree, at the shrine of Thakurdeo. Each had taken all varieties of seeds—paddy, *kodon*, *maka* etc., in a small basket. The rites consist mostly in 'dramatizing' the agricultural operations. A small patch of ground was cleared and smeared with cowdung and on this was spread a sheet of cloth. The blade of *bakhar* and the *loha* of *hal* were kept on all sides of the sheet. In front of this, a square plot—(roughly a three-feet square) was chosen as the field. This patch was then prepared. In the meanwhile the villagers emptied the contents of their baskets on the sheet.

Bhursu then called the 'Panchparmeshwara' to come forward. Three sons of Loola (Loola is the Diwan of the Baigas; he himself is incapacitated owing to loss of hands by leprosy and hence his sons participated), Tenda and Bhursu himself constituted the five *panchas*. Thereafter Bhursu performed three rounds of Thakurdeo's tree; and then sat down for the rites, in front of the field plot. He offered *'hum'*—to the god by sprinkling *sarai rai* on the fire placed between the plot and the cloth-sheet. Some rice was then put on the ground in front of the field-plot. Now was the time for offering sacrifices to the gods—Thakurdeo, Dharti Mata, Nanga-Baiga and Nanga Baigin, and a few other Gods. A white cock was offered to Thakurdeo while chickens—known locally as *chiyas*—were offered to Dhartimata and the other deities. The manner of sacrifice was this: the chicken was taken in hand and induced to peck at the rice. When it started pecking at the rice, it was believed that the deity had accepted it, and then Bhursu killed it by twisting its neck. A few drops of blood of the bird were dropped on the seed, and in doing so all the five *panchas* participated. The cock was the last to be sacrificed—but the manner of killing it was different. After it has started pecking at the rice grains, Bhursu pressed its head on the ground till it died.

Thereafter, with the participation of the *Panchas*. Bhursu sprinkled locally-distilled liquor (liquor distilled at the distillary is not acceptable

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[34]. Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939, p. 354.

to the Gods) and milk on the earth and the seed. Thus blessed, the seed was now fit to be sown. A few boys in the meanwhile took water in a *lota* and sprinkled it on the field-plot, on the seed plot, and all persons present by means of a bunch of mango twigs; thus simulating the first showers of rains before the sowing. Thereafter, the field-plot was again ploughed by means of a लोहा of *hal*; and then Bhursu sowed the enchanted seed in it. The plot was then *bakhared* to cover the seed with the earth. In the meanwhile two persons picked up the 'plough-share' and the *fal* of *bakhar* and brought it to Bhursu's back over his head and then carried it back the same way and replaced it on the sheet. Thereafter, a man again sprinkled water on the field-plot and on all persons present and at the same time recited the names of the months in which rains were required. That was the last of the rites. Then Bhursu distributed small bits of seed to all cultivators and retained the bulk as his prequisite. The seed thus consecrated is mixed in other seeds when the villagers start sowing their fields.

The simulation of rain by sprinkling water is an example of what is called homeopathic or imitative magic and is a practice found in tribes of other countries also as would be clear from the following extract from "The Golden Bough". (Page 72) by J. G. Krazer.

> "Of the things which the public magician sets himself to do for the good of the tribe, one of the chief is to control the weather and especially to ensure an adequate fall of rain ..... Hence in savage communities the rain maker is a very important personage; and often a special class of magicians exists for the purpose of regulating heavenly water-supply. The methods by which they attempt to discharge the duties of their office are commonly, though not always, based on the principle of homoeopathic or imitative magic. If they wish to make rain they simulate it by sprinkling water or mimicking clouds. Such attempts are by no means confined, as the cultivated reader might imagine, to the naked inhabitants of these sultry lands like Central Australia and some parts of Eastern and Southern Africa ..... They are, or used to be, common enough among the outwardly civilised, folk in the moister climate of Europe..... Thus, for example, in a village near Dorpat, in Russia, when rain was much wanted, three men used to climb up the fir trees of an old sacred grove. One of them drummed with a hammer on a kettle or small cask to imitate thunder; the second knocked two fire-brands together and made the sparks fly, to imitate lightning; and the third, who was called the "rain-maker", had a bunch of twigs with which he sprinkled water from a vessel on all sides. To put an end to drought and bring down rain, women and girls of the village of Ploska are wont to go naked by night, to the boundaries of the village and there pour water on the ground. In Halmahera, or Gilolo, a large island to the west of New Guinea, a wizard makes rain by dipping a branch of a particular kind of tree in water and then scattering the moisture from the dripping bough over the ground....."

The author has given numerous other examples where savage tribes attempt to control rain by such imitative magical practices.

The 'bidri banana' ceremony is prevalent in the Jabalpur tahsil which has a large percentage of Gond population.

Bida ceremony[35] :

This is another magical rite, performed in order to prevent diseases. They celebrate it on the Dasahra day—i.e. 10th day of the bright fortnight of *Kuar*. As usual, the rites are performed by Bhursu, near whose house people gather early in the morning. A small cart is prepared from the bark of *mahua* tree; its wheels are also made of the same thing. In it are placed a few *trisuls* made of bamboo. Each person—one member atleast from every household attends the rite—brings with him a broken *jhadu* (broomstick), a leaf-cup full of *lai* of *maka*. The *guniya* takes two *roties*. parched *maka*, one cocoanut, and three chickens and after offering *ghi* and cocoanut to a *khappar* the party proceeds to the village boundry. The persons, while they thus accompany the *guniya*, swept the road with the broken broomsticks. The cart, *khappar* and all broomsticks and the leaf-cups with their contents are left outside the village boundary on the road to Patpara. One of the chickens is left alive, while the other two are killed, after *hum* and drop of liquor have been offered. The sacrificed chickens are roasted, and the meat is distributed as *prasad* to all.

On their way back, the party visit the shrine of Thakurdeo, and offer flowers and cocoanut to Dhartimata and Thakurdeo and sacrifice a chicken in honour of Dhartimata. The spirits etc. that visit the village and every household are thus supposed to have been taken out of the village in the leaf cups, and there bid farewell. It is on this account that the ceremony is known as *bida* or bidding farewell.

Larukaj:

Sukhlal Agaria of the village suddenly fell ill about four months ago, and the fever was accompanied by pain in the waist and the limbs. The pain and fever persisted, resisting the local treatment of herbs, etc. and Sukhlal called Bhursu *gunia* for diagnosing the cause of his illness. Bhursu used his *supa* and *tuma* for divination and diagnosed Sukhlal's illness as having been caused by the wrath of the Narayandeo. There

35. The *bida* ceremony of Amwar people resembles the *nikasi* [a word equivalent to *bida* in Hindi] ceremony prevalent in Jabalpur country. Page 85 of Jabalpur District Gazetteer.

was now no question of any treatment and Sukhlal at once promised to dedicate a *laru* to the displeased *deo* upon condition of his recovering from the illness. As it transpired, Sukhlal got well in about twelve days after the promise, and therefore, he dedicated the *laru* to the Narayandeo. This dedication was done on the first Monday after his recovery. The pig to be dedicated was made to stand on the threshold of the house, the residence of the god to be appeased, and a small square shaped portion of the floor in front was smeared with cow-dung, patterned with wheat flour and *kodon* was put upon the square. The pig started eating the *kodon* and it was held that it was acceptable to Narayandeo. At the same time Sukhlal had to dedicate another pig to Surajdeo. The first pig, dedicated to Narayandeo is known as *Laru* while the other dedicated to Surajdeo is called *Surja.* Sukhlal will now sacrifice the pigs after the expiry of three years from the day of dedication. The ceremonial of this sacrifice is known as *larukaj.*

Two other persons, Tenda and Somaru Baiga in the village have dedicated *laru* pigs to Narayandeo in fulfilment of their part of the bargain with the god. Both of them had suffered from protracted illness, from which they recovered on promising the sacrifice to Narayandeo. The *Surja* promised by both of them are, however, not pigs but fowls.

The dedicated *laru* pig is kept in a specially prepared *sty* or *guda* for three years and is taken particular care of. It is generally given good food. It should not be given the leavings from the meals of the household.

The ceremonial of *larukaj proper* takes place on a Saturday or Tuesday.[36] According to my informants (Chamra and Amoli Gonds), the rite starts in the morning. The place below the threshold, and a portion of the courtyard are purified by smearing cow-dung on them: and *hum* of *rar* is burnt over them. After this, the *Surja* is released, and caught again outside the courtyard. The reason for this was not known to the informants—but apparently it is because the Suraj or sun is not worshipped inside. The pig is sacrificed and cooked outside. *Dar bhat* (rice and pulse) and *bara* of *urd* are also prepared outside and the participants of the ceremony are feasted outside the house. Thereafter, they come inside the house to prepare for the *larukaj proper.*

The chief actors in the drama are the *Dewar,* the *Kamri,* and five *barua* and five *baruin.*

The *Kamri* and all the *barua* and *baruin* are necessarily persons belonging to the caste of the person whose sickness has occasioned the *larukaj;* the former should also be related to him as a *samdhi.* In front of the threshold, and in the courtyard, two pits are dug over the squares smeared with cow-dung. These pits are known as *narda.* The pit in the courtyard is bigger and deeper, and is covered with a *tatti* or bamboo wickerwork. The *narda* in front of the threshold is about a foot deep. The *laru* is now brought to the threshold; some sort of worship is offered to it by burning *hum* of *rar* incense. Some rice is then put before the *laru* who is induced to eat. As soon as it starts eating, it is lifted up and its front legs are tied tightly. It is then carried up by the five *barua* by means of its hind legs while its mouth is touching the ground in the pit which is partly filled with water—probably to hasten the end of the poor creature. The *barua* then hump the pig up and down in the *narda* and at the same time sing obscene *dadaria.* While they are thus killing the *laru,*[37] the five *baruin* throw mud and cowdung at them. When the unfortunate animal is dead, it is taken to the bigger *narda* in the courtyard, where it is cut up and the blood is allowed to drop in the *narda.* The head of the *laru* and its heart are taken by the *kamri* to the *phulera*—which has been previously prepared by the *kamri* in the room with *bel* leaves and *bharua,* and is a kind of swing which is tied to the roof.

The *Kamri* wraps the head and liver of the pig in *bel* leaves and puts them on the *phulera.* As observed earlier, the *laru* has already been cut up on the *tatti* over the *narda* in the courtyard and its meat is then taken inside for being cooked while the *barua* go out for bathing. After the food has been cooked, the *baruin* make a '*chouk*' of flour in the room in front of the '*phulera*' (the '*phulera*' touches the ground) and apply the cooked rice to the forehead of the pig and say *"Le Narayandeota tain pa"* (O. Narayandeota, take your share). Thereatfer, there is feasting and drinking. Persons from other castes may participate in the feast if invited upon and if they do not observe taboo on commensality as regards the family celebrating the *larukaj.* In the latter case, usually uncooked meat is given to the invited guests of other castes. The outer *narda* is then plastered with earth and cow-dung smeared.

Russell and Hiralal regard the *'laru kaj'* as a form of sun-worship. Elwin, however, observes

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[36] According to Elwin; the ceremonial should begin only on a Saturday. Baiga page 405.

[37] According to Elwin, [Baiga page 403] "the method of killing by crushing or bumping it to death suggests that it originated at a time when the tribe did not possess cutting instruments of iron" However, the possibility of its being connected with the doctrine of soul substance also exists. Pig sacrifice by trampling to death is referred to by Hutton in connection with the Mala of southern India and the Ahir at 'Gaidaur' festival. [Hutton, "Caste in India", page. 245].

that "The *larukaj* is thus not a form of sun-worship: it is a valuable prophylactic and cure of certain diseases. It belongs to the medical science of Baiga rather than to their theology". Some connection of the ceremony with sun would, however, appear from the fact that another animal—a pig or fowl—is sacrificed to the sun also. But the true significance of the sacrifice is not ascertainable. It is not even known to persons who perform it.

A significant development which threatens the very existence of the *laru kaj* in its conservative style is the equation by some persons of *larukaj* with "Satyanarain ki katha". Thus Sunauram and the Gond Patel of Sunehra are the persons who say that performing a "Satyanarain ki katha" has the same effect as *larukaj*. Already in the neighbouring village Sunehra, some four Gond families have introduced the *Katha* in their village and they say that it is not necessary to perform the costly sacrifice of *larukaj* now. They equate the 'Satyanarain' of the *katha* with the 'Narayandeo'. It may be mentioned that there is already some opposition to animal sacrifice in villages near Motinala, and that, with the supposed equation of 'Satyanarain' with Narayandeo does not augar very well for the future of *larukaj* in the village.

Belief in Spirits:

The belief in supernatural forces which is universal in village life has another dimension in the shape of spirits and ghosts. These are generally of the malignant type and lend themselves easily to the control of witches. Of the host of ghosts, known to the people of Amwar, the important ones are being described below:—

1. *Ban-bobo*—This is the ghost of a woman who dies while in her menstrual period. She is given to excessive laughing; if a man is caught by her, she teases him by pinching; but some times, she proves to be dangerous and pulls out the tongue of the victim.

2. *Raksa*—This is the ghost of a man or woman (in practice, it is always a man because woman do not remain unmarried) who dies unmarried; and who has consequently not experienced the pleasures of the coitus. It is described as having big teeth and its body emits vertical flames of a red colour. He is believed to live in *semur, bahera* or *bar tree*. The red flames emitted by the ghost are supposed to represent the fire of unsatiated desire. Elwin describes *raksa* as "a burning angry ghost, covered with black hair, lives frustrated and confined in a *semur* tree, always on the look-out for some unwary maiden and crop her virgin flower[38]; a very natural outlet for a man who had no experience of the fairer sex. Again to quote Elwin[39], "He comes and presses a girl while she is asleep; she can neither move, nor speak while he is covering her. He takes her like a husband and cries Ai ai ai, and goes away".

Sardoo Gond of the village stated that about five years ago, a *raksa* came in the night and broke the tiles which he was preparing for the house of his father-in-law. He consulted the *guniya* who told him that Sardoo was preparing tiles in the way of the *raksa*. Sardoo then shifted his work to another site and nothing happened.

3. *Bhut and the paretin*—These are ghosts of a man or a woman who die of accidents or who commit suicides, or who die as unnatural death. They live in trees, but usually they prefer to have their abodes in the *bahera* tree. They are malevolent spirits, who possess persons who sit beneath their abodes at night.

4. *Churelin*—This is the ghost of a woman who has died during pregnancy or child birth. She lives in any tree, and can fly like a bird. When she passes, usually the sound of flapping of wings is produced. She also comes in dreams, in the form of man or a woman or any form for that matter. She is supposed to have her feet turned backwards. Regarded as a mischievous spirit, people in the village prefer to keep her propitiated by offering *churi-pat* (bangles) to her in the tree where she lives.

5. *Ghughuwa*—This spirit is supposed to rise if some wood remains unburnt in a funeral pyre. The chief trait of this spirit is that it imitates a sick person, cries and coughs like him. It is, however, possible to drive him away by putting a piece of 'tile' in the fire-place, and by rebuking the spirit in these woods—*"Ja re Ghughwa tor hath —pair jal labe"*—(i.e. depart O *Ghughuwa* otherwise your hands and feet shall get burnt).

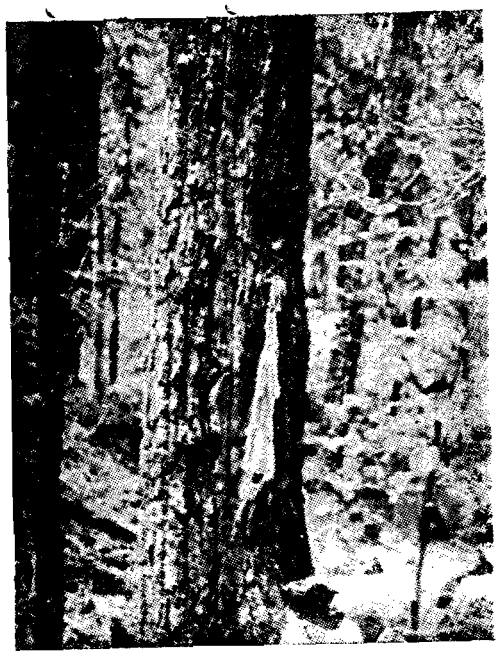
If a person pelts a stone at this ghost, the latter picks it up and then repeatedly dips in and takes it out of water in a pit. It is believed that thereafter the person who had pelted the stone wears away and ultimately dies.

It may be remarked here that elsewhere *ghughuwa* is the word for owl, and precisely the same belief is held by the people in respect of it. It therefore appears that at Amwar the owl is not regarded as a bird but as a ghost.

[38] Elwin, Verrier, The Baiga, 1939; p. 295.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

Plate LII



Murihapat



Seat of Khermai & other village Gods

Plate LIII



Murihapat



Seat of Thakur Deo

CHAPTER VII

RECREATION

Denied the sophisticated avenues of costly recreation like cinema, radio or drama available to urban society, the poor people of Amwar and the region in which it is situated have improvised their own channels of recreation and amusement. In fact their recreations have become institutionalised in their lives. They do not involve any recurring expenses. No body can say that the non-availability of the artificialised recreations makes Amwar people any the poorer spiritually or culturally, because they have a vast and rich fund of folk-art, folk music and folk-dance—handed down from generation to generation by tradition. The recent attempts of some agencies notwithstanding, folk dance and folk song have died out in the urban society, and are dying out in the bigger, more or less urbanised, villages. The culture-contacts with the so-called high caste Hindus—an inevitable and inescapable consequence of present day social forces—, who look down upon folkdance and folksong as uncivilized, even immoral, behaviour is also progressively causing decay of the tribal folk art. Thanks to the difficulty of communications, and the situation in a remote, out-of-the way corner of the district, and also their forest fastnesses, in Amwar and the region surrounding it, the pernicious effects of the way of thinking of the town and the high caste Hindus have not been able to make appreciable inroad. This has enabled the people to preserve their folk arts almost in their pristine vigour and freshness. Folkdances and folksongs are the *sine qua non* of tribal life; they bring colour and sunshine in their lives. It is difficult to think of tribal life in these areas without the rich variety of their folk-arts. They shower charm and happiness in the poverty and drudgery of their life.

Folk songs at Amwar :

Amwar shares the richness in folk poetry of the 'Maikal hills'. This poetry is as yet not much influenced by outside contact and has retained much of its original freshness and beauty. As Elwin and Hivale observed, these songs reflect the beauty of the countryside, the charm of the climate and the friendliness of the people. The aboriginal poetry is often charming both in content and form. In the present survey, limitations of time and resources (staff) came in the way of making a fairly representative survey of the folk poetry of Amwar, and the present collection is only a small cross-section of their life. Again reasons of time did not permit us to observe any of the folk-dances of the village except the *Karma*, and the descriptions here given are based on oral accounts given by the people and the available literature on the subject.

The people of Amwar sing the following types of songs :—

(1) Karma
(2) Rina and Sua
(3) Doha and Sumran
(4) Dadaria
(5) Birha

The *Karma* is also the name of the folkdance—and it appears that the songs have taken their name from the dance. This also appears to be the case with *rina* and *sua* songs. There is however no restriction on singing of the *karma* without dancing. People generally sing *karma* in informal gatherings, often in cutting jokes : at such times they compose the song *impromptu*. The *doha* and *sumran* songs are associated with the Ahirs: these are particularly sung at Diwali, and when the Ahir goes out to graze the cattle herd. *Dadaria*, however, is the song for all occasions: though generally it is sung when people go on long journeys.

Karma Songs and Dance :

These appear to be the most popular tribal songs, not only in Amwar but in the entire region. The songs do not have any particular tribal affiliation because they are sung by many non-tribal castes like the Panikas etc. According to Dalton the *karma* dance is universal[1] in Chhota Nagpur and Orissa, the dance is associated with a festival that resembles the *Jawara* and *Bhojli* ceremonies of Mandla. There it is danced round a branch of the *karma* tree, which is the same as the *kadamb* of mythological importance (Elwin and Hivale. page 3). In Amwar, however, the dance is not reportedly connected with any ceremony or magical or religious rites. It is difficult to say when this tribal dance originated or which particular tribe imitated it. According to Elwin and Hivale, Roy considered that *karma* festival had been borrowed by the Uraon from their Hindu neighbours and combined with their own *Kadlota* festival performed for the purification of the village and the fertility of the crops. It is however certain that the dance is of considerable antiquity, whichever tribe started it.

[1] Dalton, E.T., Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.

In Amwar, all tribes and castes dance the *karma*. It is danced after the end of the monsoons, till now monsoon breakup; that is for most part of the year. As already observed no ceremony or magical rite is associated with the dance and the people take it purely from the point of view of recreation. In this dance witnessed by me at village Nunsarai, groups of men and women danced opposite each other. Nunsarai is a Gond and Agaria village and the participants were Gond and Agaria youths; but three or four Baiga youths from Amwar had also joined in the dance. These had accompanied me to the village. The men and women face each other, armlinked in rows, with two persons carrying the *mandar* (the *mandar* hangs in front from a sling round the neck of the drummer) standing in between. The dance is accompanied by the singing of *karma*. The singing is antiphonic: One group of persons—usually the males begin it: the leader (in the case he was the Agaria youth) sets the tune of the song, and also sings the first line, and after this his party repeat it. The group which sings bends forward and moves forward towards the opposite group, and recedes before actually reaching it. The drummers always face the group which is singing and rhythmically bending and swaying forwards and backwards with the song. While one group is thus dancing and singing the other party straighten themselves up, only slightly swaying their bodies to and fro. The dancers in the dance were arranged somewhat as follow:

ϙϙϙϙϙ Line of men
ϙϙ Drummers
ooooo Line of women

while dancing and singing the group also rotates roughly round their own axis.

The Songs:

The *karma* songs which are sung at the time of *karma* dance, and also otherwise cover almost the whole range of tribal life. The theme is not necessarily *lascivious* but relate to all things that are important in their life. In the *karma* witnessed by me, the first song was in the form of invocation of the goddess of music *Sareeti mai* and *Sarda* and other gods. The other song had a romantic theme. The leader who initiated the song was an Agaria youth of Nunsarai. The first song is rendered in *Roman characters* below; and its translation in English is given immediately after.

Karma Song I

(O, ho hai) Pahili Panwar tola gayo
Devi Sharad, Pahili Panwar hai re.
Kekhar gayo main to kekhar bajayo o ho hai

Khero ke gayo main to Thakara bajayo o ho hai
Pahili Panwar hai re.

Jaria ke jari-buti chhindi-chitawar.
O ho hai

Kharmake Bairo-Betal Devi ke Sarad pahili Panwar hai re.

Kela to hum dethen kela to dhup, O ho hai

Kherola hum dethen Thakarala dhoop O ho hai, pahili Panwar heir re.

Meaning:

O Goddess Sharda, I bow before you first, For whom I sing, and for whom I *drum-beat*? I sing for Khermai, drumbeat I for Thakurdeo. To whom is offered *hoom*, and to whom *dhup*. The *hoom* is offered to Kher, and the *dhup* to Thakur.

The portion O ho hai is called *rag*. The leader who initiates the song gives the tone with these words. It is, to be noted that the song contains stereo-typed phrases (these are underlined in the song) which may be used any time, and though they do not have any relevance to the theme of the song, serve the practical purpose of making the song fit for dance and singing. This *karma* song was called by the villager *"vandana karma"* meaning "Devotional Karma".

Karma dadhi II

O ho hai, Bandar bada begia hai
Dar dar ma nache, bandav banda begia re.

Boys

Nadi ke tir ma thade, pani kandla hoi,
Tum gori ham sanole fir milna kaise hoi,

Girls

Ya karma la gale bhanwar gola ai.
Ya karma la gale manukh chola hai.

Meaning:

O ho hai. The monkey is very inconstant. It dances from branch to branch.

Boys

On river's bank are we standing, the water is unclean.

You are fair-coloured, we are dark, how can we meet?

Girls

Sing this *karma*, this is like the ring of whirpool. Sing this *karma* this has a soul like man.

The song has a romantic theme. The first two lines referring to the fickleness of monkeys in jumping from branch to branch suggest the fickleness of persons in love. The next two lines pose the question as to how a dark-skinned boy can make love to a fair coloured girl. The

Plate LIV

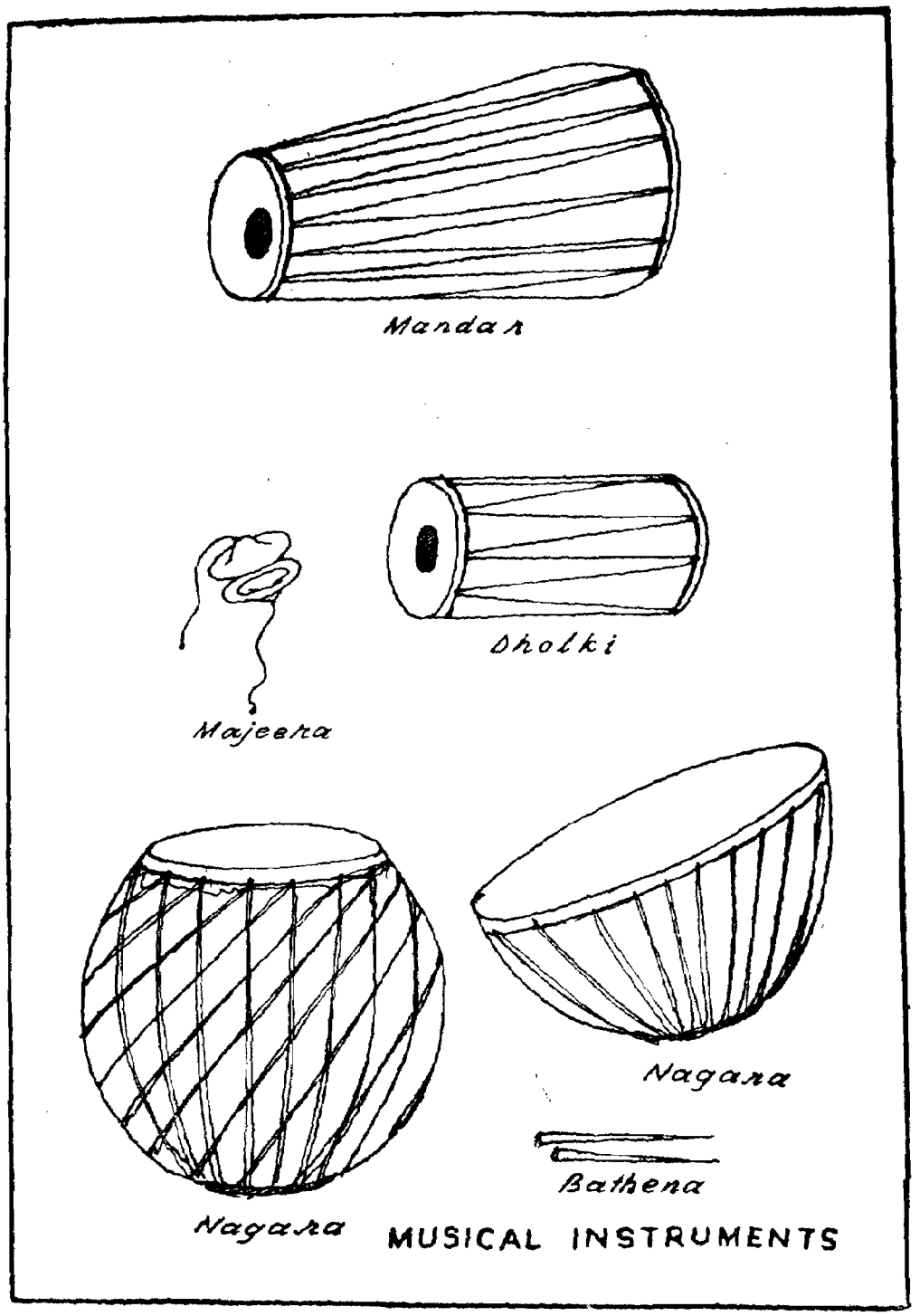


Baiga in dancing costume



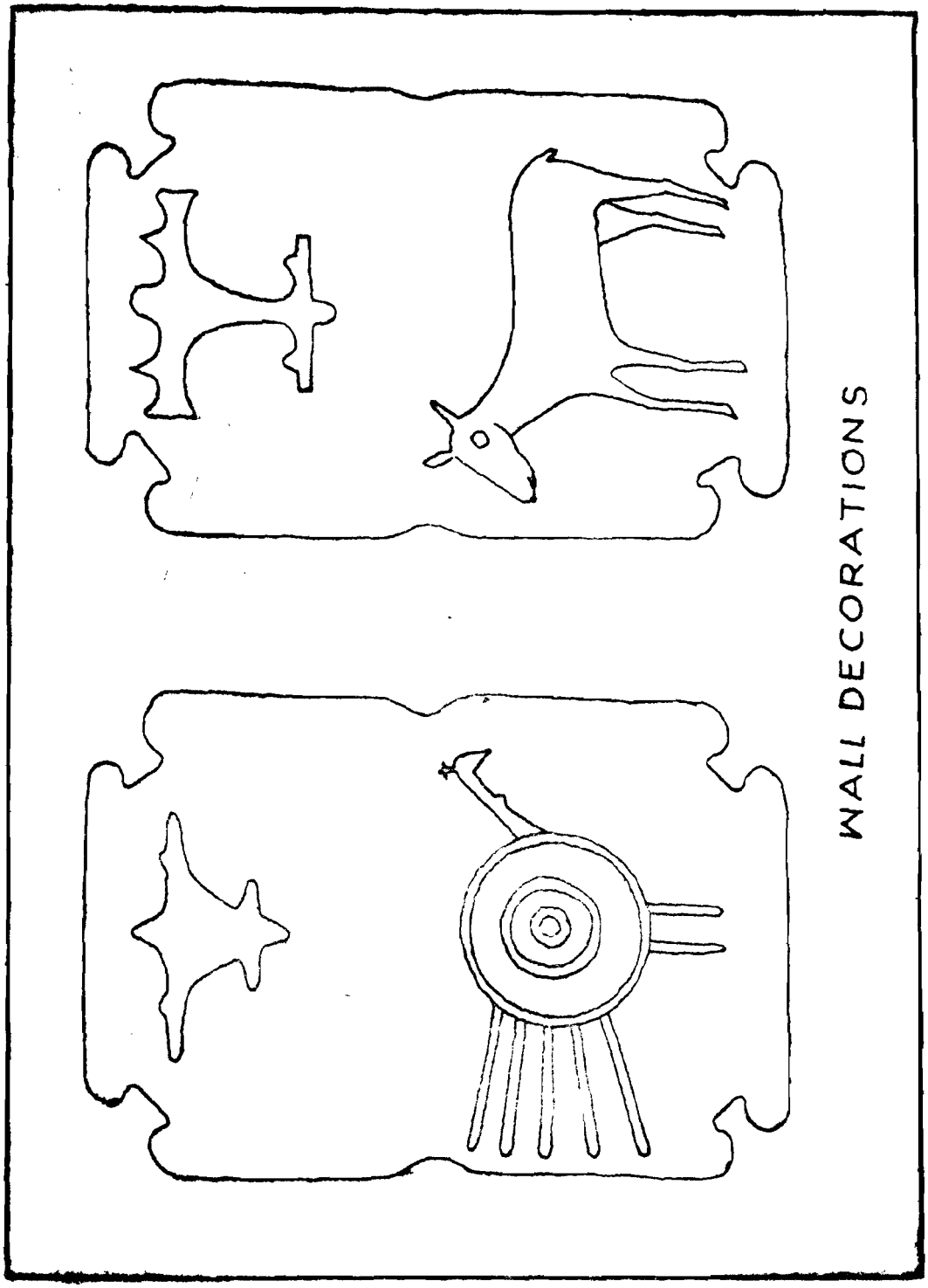
Baiga woman going to Mawai Market

Plate LV



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Plate LVI



answer is simply an advice to sing the *karma* song, which is like a *whirpool,* and once the girl falls in its trap she can never emerge.

Husband

III. **Karma Jhulania :**

O ho hai, agi la bare dhamak
gaise dhag ho, churi gaise
munga ke sage.

Randhela randhe munga ke sag ho,
nimak la kahe nai dare.

Randhe la randhe munga ka sag ho, parsat
dekhon Khenda sage.

Aise gussa lage bahut, gussa lage ho marton
paynari dui chare.

Wife

Marela mare paynari dui char ho, chhammak
daiton maike hamare.

Husband

Bhagela bhagbe maike tumhar ho, karich
lai to dusar bihao ho.

Wife

Karei la Karbe dusar behao ho, hamare
chalan nahin pabe.

The song centres round the petty domestic quarrels that off and on sweeten life. The husband gets angry with his wife and threatens to beat her. The latter in her turn says that if the husband illtreats her she will run away to her mother's house; thereupon the husband returns threat with another threat and says that in that case he will marry again. Even at this, the wife refuses to admit defeat and says that the other wife could not match her in character and conduct.

Meaning: You lit the fires—the flames leapt up and vegetable of *munga* was roasted. You roasted vegetable of *munga,* but why did you forget to put salt in it. You roasted *munga* vegetable, but I saw you serving *kenda* vegetable to me. I was so much enraged that I felt like giving you two or three blows with stick.

Wife: If you had beaten me with stick, I would have slipped to my mother's house.

Husband : Had you run away to your mother's house, I would have married again.

Wife : Even if you had married again, the other woman could not have matched me in character and conduct.

IV. **Karma-Jhulania.**

O ho hai Bandho ke machharia bandhrobe
ho, rookhe ke bandar rukh robe,
Rukhe ke bandar rookh robe, kaise ke
jaton pahile par.
Kahin dharke jahan mai maikwa, ka laike
jahun sasurare.
Hathi dharke jahun mai maikba, ghoda
dharke jahun sasurare.
Jai pahunche mai maikwa, jai pahunche
sasuarare.
Jai dekhon guon gaothia, jai dekhon, sas
sasurare.

This song also centres round the simple domestic scene. The first two lines, though having sense, do not appear to be relevant to the context of the song.

Meaning : Fishes cry in stagnant water, the monkey cries on the tree.

How am I to reach the other side of the river? On what should I go to my mother's house, and what should I take to my father-in-law's; I travel on elephant to my mother's house, and on a horse to the house of my father-in-law. I reach my mother's house; I have reached my father-in-law's house. At my mother's village I meet the *gaonthia,* At my father-in-law's I see my mother-in-law.

V. **Rag Aho oho ray :**

Patpar men dhoti dhole jal me nahale mai
Jal ke na thal ke kare kare mola re
Na mola khana jabai na mola pena,
jori kha ghok paraye kuchh na suhaway ga,
Ye he hai main to jatab Jagarnath, Kasiji
jaike nirmal hotao re.

Man:

Kon tola gari dewai tola balai ho
kon tola gharale mikalaya, (kasiji jaike
nirmal hotao re.)

Wife:

Sas mola gari debay, sasur mola bali ho,
Ghar dhani mola gharale nikalai;

Man:

Main to jatao jagarnath, kasiji jaike nirmal
hotao re.

Meaning : Washed the dhoti in patpar and bathed in water.

You have left me fit neither for water nor for land.

Neither am I able to eat, nor to drink when I remember my *mate* nothing pleases me. I am going to *jagarnath* and to kasiji where I shall become *nirmal* (without house and wife).

Man: Who abused you and who said anything to you; who is turning you out of the house.

Wife: *Sas* abused me, and *sasur* spoke rudely to me; The lord of the house has turned me out

of the house; Now I am going to Jagarnath and Kasiji and will become *nirmal*—(without impurity).

This beautiful song tells us of the plight of a man whose wife has left him because of maltreatment at the hands of her inlaws. The man apparently has lost all interest in life and is in a mood to become a *mendicant* after visiting Kasi and Jagannath.

VI

Hai ga lataki rahe latakdar latkani ma lataki rahe.

Kekhar Supaiha yerange phirange kekhar Supaiha chanadar-Latkani ma . . . .

Raja ke supaiha yerange phirange rani ke supaiha chanadar, latkani ma . . . .

Meaning: The first line does not have any sense which is relevant to the context.

"Whose winnowing fan is full of colours, whose winnowing fan contains *gram* pulse.

The king's winnowing fan is full of colours, and the rani's winnowing fan is full of gram pulse.

The theme of the song is very simple. It should be remembered that the lover and his beloved are referred to as Raja and Rani, respectively.

VII

Nahin away re hai bhaiya nahi away
Bina bole bataye re hansa mind nahin away.

Dhar lebe dangni, tor lebe bel
Gujri gujri bal hoge kon lagawe tel,
Bina bole bata ye re . . . .

Kapti manter jhan karbe bhitar paith budh ley

Uthli me laj ke aur gahiri main dhokha dei

Jhalar jhalar gohun nunwai kalath ke bandhay puri

Jaat naat la chhod ke laigayo dholin toori
Sarai katai saja katay suruj dhanrai ga suruj dhanrai

Ye karma ma hohi bhaiya more bhananwarj
Bina bole bataye re . .

VIII. **Karma Jhumar:**

Kon mahin bolai re papi re pihure kon mahin jhengar jhanobe

Jeth mahina bolai papire pihure, Asadhe jhingar jhan-abe Asadh ma,

Ka chadhi bolai papi re pihure kachadhi jhingar jhanawai

Ramenagar ke wo jhan paniharin, sunile haire jhingon jake bolila sunile.

Dekhe ma jhingura ghine ghinawan boliya me bada suhawan

Aisun jhingar main bhala pateon wo rakhi lateon
Ai more bhaiya hirde lage rakhile teon.

Meaning: In which month sings the sinner *Pihu.* In which month sings the grasshopper. In the month of *jeth* sings the sinner *Pihu.* In Asadh sings the grasshopper.

About the bird *pihu* many, tender and romantic legends have gathered.[2] It is referred to as the bird of sin, because the female once put ashes instead of flowers on her husband's head as he was setting out on a journey[3]. There are other versions of the story also.

It is said that the *male pihu* comes to the female bird only in *Asadh,* and can only drink rain water. For the rest of the year the female bird laments and sings her song in tears. With the coming of the rains comes the male bird and their happiness is fulfilled.

IX

Nachat away Thakurdeo bhuiya lorekesh.
Nachat away Ghansam bhuiya lore kesh.
Nachat away Chadidar bhuiya lore kesh
Kahin lagay Khamha kain lagay dor ho
Sonai lagay khamha rupon lagai dor ho
Tarijhulai rani upar jhulae raja ho Tarijhulay
Tootgaye khamha lahas lagay dor ho
Toot gaya khamha
Kanse ke pairi tor gaye chhari paye
Tari pare rani upar raja Ram ho Tari pare . .

The first three lines though, making sense have utility only from point of view of musical technique. The *karma* really begins after the third line. The English rendering is as follows: "Of what is the pole made of what the rope; the pole is golden, the rope of silver. The queen (rani) swings below, the king swings above. The pole gives way, the rope is snapped. The anklet of kansa also broke. The queen fell down below and the king over her." This song bears close comparison with the song whose english rendering is given on page 146 of Elwin and Hivale's "Folk Songs of the Maikal Hills". The song clearly brings out the sexual character of swinging. Raja and rani are words of endearment in the lovers in the region of which Amwar forms a part.

[2] Elwin, Verrier and Hiwale, Folk Songs of the Maikal Hills, 1944, p. 84.

[3] *Ibid,* p. 84.

Saila, Rina, and Sua songs and Dance.

Besides being a valuable and inexpensive source of recreation, the folk dances and folk-songs of the aboriginals bring about inter-village contacts. This is so in case of the *soila, rina* and *sua* songs, and dances. The *saila,* said to derive from 'Selse' meaning late[4], is a dance of men and may, according to Elwin and Hilvale have 'originated as a patriotic demonstration before the Raja or as a ceremonial performance before the youths went out to hunt or fish". None in Amwar know how the dance originated and not many knew why it was called *saila.* The *saila* is danced usually in the winter season, though its occasional practice otherwise is not tobooed. Generally it is danced in a spirit of competition between youths of two villages. Party of *saila* dancers, known as *sailhars* go to another village without prior notice, and challenge their opposite numbers of the village to dance. The challenge is of course accepted. The *sailhars* of the host village return the visit sooner or later.

The *saila* dance has various forms. It was, however, not possible for us to witness any of the forms of the *saila,* and our attempts to get some sort of description of the dances from the villagers were equally of no avail.

Rina and *sua* are dances of women. Like the *sailo,* the *rina* also is often danced competitively against the women of another village. It is danced at the time of Diwali and the *sua* in the winter. The *sua* is said to be a Baiga version of the *rina* which is said to be the Gond type. It was learnt that the youths of Amwar exchange the *saila* and *rina* dances with the neighbouring villages. The Baiga do so generally with the neighbouring villages of Bandhan. No case-study, however, could be made of such exchange of visits for want of information.

The Songs:

Saila I

Taro nako nana mor O taro har nana
Mor anchra mor anchra jhan chhibe hansa.
Janmana lethai mor raaj Amansai beta sarisai nati Hirdaisai, hansa mor anchra, mor anchra jhan chhibe
Masi bhaigay raja Amansai beta sarasai nati Hirdai, hamsa more anchra
Nachela holthai raja Amansai beta ke
Sarasai nati Hirdaison, hansa mor Anchra jhan chhibe.
Khudal Khudal rengai mor raja Amansai beta saraswi nati Hirdesai
Hansa mor anchra phan chhibe house more anchra.

Saila II.

Tainak na mor nana nana joy.
Annadeo Dhanadeo Thakurdeo chal Budhadeo Basunakanna Ambarbel janamina lethai mor Badldeo Anadeo Dhanadeo Thakurdeo chal Budhadeo Basunkanna Amarbel.

This song simply involves the various gods named therein to take birth in the body of the *Saila* dancer. Of particular note is the expression *Janamina Lethai* which occurred in the first *saila* song also. This expression occurs generally in *saila* songs, and literally means "is taking birth". In order, however, to fully appreciate the implication of this expression, it is worthwhile to know the legendry background of the *saila,* current in the region in which Amwar is situated. I, therefore, do not need an apology to quote here, *in extenso* the portion from "Folk-Songs of Maikal Hill" which gives the legend:

> "When the world was made all gods and godesses went to look at it. As they travelled from west to east they came to Bena Bathi Bengala,..... These Bengalis used to turn all who sang or danced into goats and sacrifice them to the gods. When the gods and goddesses came to that country the Bengalis refused to give them anywhere for their camp. It was raining hard so that the party sheltered under a suina tree and talked for long while how they were to see Bara Bathi Bengala. Sharada and Sarseti were there and they taught them how to deceive the Bengalis. 'Decorate yourselves' they said 'with peacock's feathers and go dancing to that country. The girls of every village will be so excited about you that they will ask you to remain for four days'. The gods did this and were allowed to stay in that country for a time. Thence they came to Amarkantak.....
>
> "In the same jungle under Dhuti Hill the twelve Gond brothers were hunting. Their turbans had fallen off and they had put peacock's feathers in their hair instead. When Sharda and Sarseti saw the Gond brothers they thought that they were the other gods disguised as dancers and they taught them every kind of dance. Even so the Gond brothers were not able to dance properly but they went *matak matak,* jogging their bodies, to their home. Their old father said, "You have come very late (Selse)'.
>
> 'After this the real divine dancers used to come often to place and possess the bodies of the Gond dancers so that they danced in divine fashion. The dance itself was called *saila* because it had made the brothers late for their work as it does even today. The expression 'Janamina Lethai' refers to the birth of the gods in the bodies of the dancers and suggests what every witness of the dance will have noticed, that the performers are really inspired just as if they were magicians celebrating a mystery.

[4] Regarding the derivation of this word, please *see* page 66 of "Folksongs of Maikal Hill' by Elwin and Havale.

Rina Song. III :

Ri rina rihalla rina he na re sua ho
Kone Chiraia chit kabri he na re sua na re mor
Kone Chairaia ujarpankh
Bharhi Chiraiya Chitkabri he na re sua he na re mor
Bakala Chiraia ujarpankh.

Meaning :

Ri rina rihalla rina he na re sua ho
which bird is spotted?
which bird is white feathered?
Bharhi bird has spotted wings;
Crane has white feathers.

Dadria:

These are very popular songs; in fact these vie with the *karma songs* in the matter of popularity. They score a point over the *karma* in that whereas the latter is generally a dance song, the *dadaria* is a song of a variety of occasions. People sing *dadaria* when they work in the field, or go to the market, or by the *ghursi* fire of a winter evening. They can be heard at the bonfires of travellers; at weddings, in rendezevous of lovers, in fact almost any and everywhere. More often *dadaria* are composed on the spur of the moment, because the only ability required of the composer is selection of properly rhyming words. In doing so, such *improptu* composers draw freely on the folk sayings and folklore.

As observed by Elwin and Hiwale, there are two main types of *dadaria,* the jorphi and the *thadi.* The difference between the two types is said to be that while in the *jorphi* type, the first line has little real connexion with the second, the Thadi *dadaria* is a complete short poem. The former type is usually sung antiphonally, frequently when there are parties of boys and girls going to work or to the market.

Dadria 1 (Juri) :

Katela chheola nai pabe tura ke jivla
Katela re kapot chhila peeke bayar ma kar debe hain rapot.

Tore to jaripan nai sune tore o deri kan
Donger to jabe mere to khusar, tor petai ke re gawaiya kaile re sarial.
Donger to jabe mere to khusar, tor petai ke darad la batathe doosar.

Meaning :—

Doha and Sumaran :

These are songs associated with the Ahir. However, *doha* it may be pointed out is a recognised poetrical form in old Hindi literature. It consists of only two lines which rhyme with one another. In Amwar the Ahir sings *doha* at the time of Diwali to 'awaken' as they say, the cows. *Sumiran* also serve a similar purpose. They are also sung on other occasions, particularly by Ahir boys when these go to the forest with the village herd. The *doha* also covers the entire range of life in the village but the few I was successful in collecting for the purpose of this monograph have a religious theme. The *dohas* are also sung on the flute.

Doha:

1. *Chitrakot ke ghat men babu bhai santan ki bhir Tulsidas chandan ghasai tilak dait Raghubir.*

This well-known *doha* is very popular among non-tribal Hindus. Its author is Tulsidar. On the bank of Chitrakot, assembled a crowd of saints. Tulsidas was rubbing sandalwood, while Ram was marking the *tilak* on his forehead.

2. *Kalapani Samund ke baba dekh lachhman darai Dhan Chhati Hanuman ke chhin jabe chhin ai.*

On seeing the black waters of the sea, Lachhman was terrified. Praise however must go to the courage of Hanuman, who was jumping back and forth over in moments.

3. *A ho shyam kab aoge kahid re pachtay. Fir pichhe pachhitaoge more jia pachhtay.*

O Shyam, tell me when will you come? You have to repent, if you break my heart.

Sumiran

Gharse nikile chitiya mitiya, dagar se nikle gai, Ghar se nikle Ahur bathona, bhujjang chaur bandhai.

Other recreational songs :

Besides the songs and dances described above, the tribal communities of Amwar have a few other recreational songs and dances. Thus the Baiga dance *dussera* at the time of *Dasahara;* there is the warlike Bhilma dances when the bridegroom's party reaches the bride's village and there are *birha* songs. The Holi songs are notable for the obscene references that they contain. There were songs for other occasions and festivals too. As observed by me earlier, songs and dances are an essential element of life in the village, and but for the occasional relaxation made possible by them, life in the village would be a continuous, monotonous drab.

Other recreations :

Folk-songs and folk-dances, though playing an important role in the life of the villagers, and helping in keeping them relaxed particularly from the tensions created by their penurious circumstances do not constitute the day to day recreational activities of the villagers. It must be admitted that in their everyday life the villagers do not

have any commonly recognisable modes of recreation. No games are played by the adult population of the village nor do they have any youth clubs-traditional or other. In the crop seasons, they do not have much time to call their own, but whenever they do have that is devoted to the family circle generally in chitchatting or doing some odd job. Visits between caste-fellows, and in the caste, in the kingroups, are frequent. In the evenings, it is usual for the neighbours to sit around a bonafire in the *angan* of one of them, and engage in gossips. In the matter of gossipping women have their own circle; they do not sit and chitchat with the men.

This is not because their socie y insists on segregation as is to be found in the non-tribals, but because of the natural segregation resulting from the different activities and interests of men and women. There is no distinction of caste etc., in the evening gatherings; only proximity counts, and of course personal relations, jokes are frequently bandied about in these informal gatherings. I have already given an idea of the types of jokes that are cut. Persons who have ri.ual friendship frequently have sittings over liquor. Liquor is again a *sine qua non* for these people; it is one of their chief inspirations for work. It is possible to hold the people on for any length of time for a few sips of the liquor. Whatever may be said against the baneful effects of liquor from the longer point of view, from the narrower angle of happiness of the villagers, it must be confessed that the excise regulations have acted harshly on the people. They do not have money enough to purchase liquor from the contractor and the result is that either people go without or with very little of it, or they distil it clandestinely. It is a wellknown fact that the Baiga resent offering contractor's liquor to their gods at the annual ceremonials of crop-fertility. It is rather unfortunate that a people who accord to liquor such an important place in their social and ritual life have to go without it because of penury, or are compelled to break the law.

The weekly market at Amwar again is a sort of recreation to the people. Most of the people go to the market. and not many of these have any business there. Women relish a visit to the market more than men. Many of them leave their homes in ordinary *sari* but change it for a brighter looking one when they are near Mawai.

Games of Children:

Though the adults do not have any day to day recreative activity, the children like children elsewhere, have a variety of games and sports. The common ones among these are described below:

(1) *Danda Parchanda*: Children playing this game are divided into two groups. A boy from one of the groups climbs a tree and from there throws a stick. Boys of the other party run to it on one leg. A person who keeps both his feet on the ground without reaching the stick gets *dand*—i.e., he is regarded as untouchable as long as the game lasts. The game continues till all boys from one party have thrown the stick in turn. Then the boys from the other party do so.

(2) *Ghar-Gunda*—This game was being played by Baiga boys and girls in the shelter of the thick cluster of trees on the river.—which is about half-a-mile from the settled portion of the village. I was attracted to the place by the sound of *tinki* being played. So hidden was the place that it took me quite some time to spot it. There were about three or four girls and an equal number of boys. They were playing the game of marriage. An improvised marriage booth was constructed and preparations for the marriage were afoot. On my arrival the boys and girls were shooed away except one, rather bold boy. Bhadelaha, about ten or eleven years of age. Elwin describes this as 'The most famous game of all'; and according to him it has no rules at all.

(3) *Luka-Puka*—This is the wellknown hide and seek game played by children all over the world. Another game which school-going children were seen playing consisted merely in a boy or girl chasing others in attempt to touch them. If the chaser boy or girl suceeds in touching some one, this later has to become the chaser. This also is a common game played everywhere.

It was not possible for me, to collect information about other children's game. In playing, children normally do not observe distinctions of caste; I have often found one Baiga child of about six years of age always moving about and playing with the children of Sunaooram. Other cases of such selective friendships between children were also noticed. There are festivals like *cherta*—which are occasions for children to meet and play together, *Geri* or stilt provides another common source of amusement to children during two months in the rainy-season.

No games are reportedly played by adults. The common modes of amusement of young persons have already been described.

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

Caste—Its role in Village Social Structure:

Whatever may be said against the age-old institution of the Indian caste by enlightened public opinion in the country, there can be no gainsaying its importance in Indian policy. It is not an easy affair to define the complex phenomenon of Indian caste in any rigid terms; the best that can be thought of is to focus attention on some of the easily observable and important characteristics that go with a caste. This exactly is what has been done in the past by previous writers on the subject like M. Senart, J. Hutton, Russell and Hiralal, Crooke, N. K. Datta and others. Caste is at once a divisive and a uniting force. Its divisive character consists in separating a group of people commonly described by a generic name-called the caste-from other such groups. The bases on which such division is made are admission by birth, marriage, commensality, acceptance of water, subordination to the group authority expressed through its traditional Panchayat, etc. Its unifying role is in relation to the individuals comprising the group, and the social forces that accentuate this union are the same as divide persons belonging to different caste-groups. Even then, the group known as caste never was, and is, not a viable unit in the economic or even in the social sense. Economically, a particular calling was enjoined upon members of a caste, which generally pertained to the production of tangible goods or services. This resulted in the creation of intercaste relations and dependence which were recognised and regulated by custom. These customs were enforced by wider intercaste councils.

The dependence referred to above was both economic and social; and the relationships regulating exchange of goods and services were generally on the basis of *jajmani* or clientale. The caste based economies of the past thus had the least amount of currency in circulation because demands which were not satisfied on the basis of *jajmani* or clientale were generally met on the basis of barter or exchange of goods produced by persons belonging to different castes. Such were the salient features of the society dominated by caste, and though in urban areas the twin forces of urbanisation and industrialisation have greatly undermined its solidarity, it continues to be a force of paramount importance in remote rural areas, as yet untouched, or very lightly touched by urban and industrial forces.

The communities resident at Amwar use the word *Jat*, Hindi equivalent of caste, to denote the groups to which they belong. In speaking, however, of the tribal and non-tribal groups of Amwar as 'castes; one must not lose sight of the fact that the appellations Baiga, Gond, Agaria, and Ahir by which they denote themselves are not caste names. Caste-characteristics are, truly speaking, exhibited by smaller sub-groups of these wider tribal groups: the Bharotia or Bhumia of Baiga, Nagbansi Gond of Gond, Kaonra Ahir of Ahir and Patharia Agaria of Agaria. The question naturally arises whether we should apply the name caste to the wider group—which encompasses the whole tribe or ethnic group, or to the smaller sub-groups members of which are found in the village.

Considerable difference of opinion prevails among authorities as regards the nomenclature caste and sub-caste. [1]Mayer has referred to two approaches: one is—as called by him—the relativist approach, under which the words 'Caste' and 'sub-caste' are not absolute but comparative in signification. The larger group, according to this signification will be called caste while the smaller group will be called sub-caste; and thus 'a group is a caste or a sub-caste in comparison with smaller or larger'. The other approach is of those who hold that "the terms 'caste' and 'sub-caste' should be used for different kinds of group". At the local level Amwar, however, it is quite possible to bypass this controversy regarding the terms caste and subcaste, though it must be observed that the larger group consisting of all the people purporting to have the same ethnic origin does not share most of the characteristics belonging to caste. Thus the wider group consisting of the Baiga tribe does not possess the traits of endogamy, commercially, etc. which are possessed by its smaller sub-groups Bharotia, Bhumia, Binjhwar, Muria etc. The same is true of the groups Agaria, Ahir, Gond etc. It would, therefore, appear that the terms caste should more properly be applied to the smaller groups Bharotia, Patharia, Kaonra etc. and the larger groups may simply be referred to as 'tribe'. In this report, however, I have not cared to maintain any distinction between the wider groups and their smaller sub-groups and have indifferently referred to the sub-groups by the name of their wider-groups.

Hierarchial Gradation—Commensal:

As Mayer put it, "The commensal hierarchy is based on the theory that each caste has a certain

1. Mayer, Adrian. C., Caste and Kinship in Central India, 1960; p. 6.

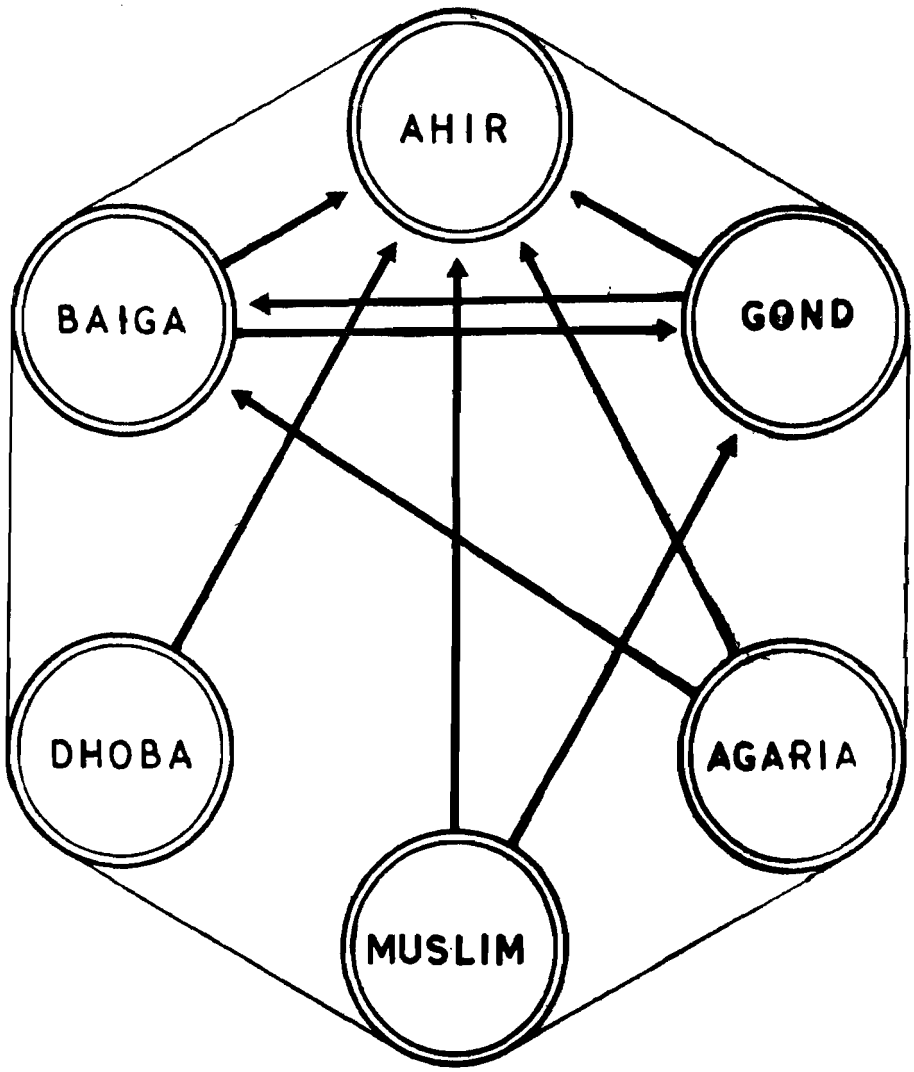
quality of ritual purity which is lessened or polluted by certain commensal contacts with castes having an inferior quality[2]". "This", observe Mayer, "is an application of what Stevenson (1954) has called the Hindu Pollution Concept, which lies at the root of ritual status". Castes in Amwar can be arranged hierarchically according to commensality by the following sociogram, in which the direction of the arrow indicates that the caste from which the arrow s arts can eat food prepared in the kitchen of the caste to which it points.

It would appear from the sociogram that the Ahir stands at the top of commensal hierarchy in the village. All castes in the village may eat food prepared in a Ahir kitchen. The significant points not covered by the sociogram are:

(i) The Gond, Baiga and Dhoba are more strict about their females who are not permitted to eat food even from an Ahir kitchen. In fact, the women of these castes are not allowed to eat from kitchens of other sub-castes of the same tribe. The superstitious belief underlying this differential is that woman is an earthen *handi*, which is completely defiled by alien contact; while man is not so easily defiled.

(ii) The Mohamadan, male only, will partake of food prepared by an Ahir, male or female, but will eat food prepared by a Gond male only.

SOCIOGRAM



[1] Mayer, Adrian. C. Caste and Kinship in Central India, 1960; p. 33.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33

(iii) The Gond and Baiga (males only) interdine with one another. As observed heretofore females are strictly forbidden such commensality.

(iv) The Ahir does not eat food prepared by any other caste.

(v) The Agaria can also accept food prepared in Gond or Baiga kitchen though no such compliment is extended by him to the Dhoba.

(vi) The Dhoba fully reciprocates the social behaviour of the Gond, Baiga and Agaria by refusing to dine with them, or to eat food prepared by them.

(vii) No caste in the village can accept food prepared in a Muslim kitchen.

Ritual Status:

The ritual status enjoyed by a caste on the test of commensal hierarchy is determined on the principle that eating of food cooked by another caste denotes equality or inferiority with that caste. Equality is indicated if eating is on a reciprocal basis; otherwise the caste eating is lower in hierarchy. Similarly two castes refusing to eat food prepared by one another are *prima-facie* equal; but if a recognisably superior caste eats food from the kitchen of one of them, such caste is considered hierarchically higher than caste whose food is not eaten by an admittedly higher caste. The ritual status in Amwar, as determined by the test of commensality is as follows:

Division 1	Ahir	Highest.
Division 2	Gond, Baiga	Coordinate status mutually but lower than Ahir
Division 3	Dhoba Agaria	Both lower than the castes mentioned in Division 2. Amongst themselves, each claims superiority over the other. Opinion in the village regards the Agaria as lower.
Division 4	Muslim	He is regarded as lower by all Hindu castes. The treatment is reciprocated except in case of Ahir and Gond.

Fuchs observes that "a Bhumia may accept food from a Gond and a Gowal Ahir (Shepherd)", but, on the other hand, no Gond, Ahir, 'or Dhimar may eat food prepared by a Bhumia[1]". In so far as it relates to the refusal of the Gond to eat food from a Baiga kitchen, this observation goes counter to the facts at Amwar. But even Fuchs took care to qualify his observation by remarking that 'in out-of-the way villages, the Gond still continue to dine with Bhumia'; but where non-tribal influence prevails, a Gond would be made an out-caste if found eating with a Bhumia'.

Taboos on Acceptance of Food:

The taboos on acceptance of food do not apply to children—of both sexes. As previously stated, girls are considered to be old enough when they start taking the *kandhela* in the Baiga, Agaria and Ahir and may not take food from any member not belonging to the caste. Again, the commensal restrictions do not extend to dried food, sweets etc., or generally food going by the name of *pacca*—This later includes all foods which are fried in an oily medium, and excludes rice, pulse, *chapati*, vegetables etc., which are prepared with the help of water.

As regards castes not resident in the village, the rule generally was not to accept *kachcha* food and water from caste considered to be lower in status. Such, for example, are the Panika, Mehra, Kol, Chamar, etc. No caste resident in the village expressed objection to acceptance of food of either description and water from the hands of a brahmin. There was no other caste—not even the Thakurs and Bania, from whose hands the Gond and the Baiga, the Ahir and Dhoba of Amwar would reportedly accept food without reservations.

Taboos on Acceptance of Water:

Taboos on acceptance of water are almost the same as are observed in case of food, with the only significant difference that while the Ahir accepts food from none in the village, he may accept water from a Dhoba. This evidence indicates the need of some rethinking on the ritual status that we have given to the Dhoba earlier; and if we remember the rule of commensality stated earlier, we must elevate the Dhoba to a status atleast coordinate with that of the Gond and Baiga, if not higher. The fact, however, remains that the admittedly lowest caste in the village, the Agaria, frown upon according the Dhoba a status higher than their own; and therefore, at least in the particular context of Amwar, the relative rankings on the basis of ritual purity call for no disturbance.

Smoking:

There is evidence of liberality in the village as regards smoking. The claypipe or *chilam* is freely exchanged with all communities in the village; but the *chongi* or leaf-pipe is exchanged between Gond and Baiga only. When a man is excommunicated from the caste for commission of a social offence; he is denied food, water and smoking commensality in toto.

Untouchability:

Untouchability is not practised with respect to any caste resident in the village. The Panika, who are regarded as a low caste, also are not regarded as untouchables. When asked whether they

[1] Fuchs, Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960; p. 197.

practised untouchability with castes like Chamar, Basor, etc., the answer was 'no', except in the case of the Ahir and the Dhoba. The talk of untouchability seems to be irrelevant in the case of the communities living in Amwar. The Agaria do the despised work of skinning dead animals, but even they are treated in the village on terms of near-equality. How can then they think of despising a Chamar simply because he flays the skin of dead animals, or for that matter, how could they despise a Basor, when the Baiga, a relatively superior caste in the village pursue the (much despised) calling of making bamboo articles, and of drumming at their own or other's marriages. Thus, the tribal and non-tribal communities of Amwar seem to be free from the anathema of untouchability, which in areas where non-tribal Hindu influence prevails is still eating deeply into the vitals of the Hindu social organisation. There is reportedly no restriction in the village on drawing water simultaneously from the same well with any other community living in the village. Thus though people of Amwar were not aware of existence of the reform-oriented pieces of legislation on untouchability, the latter has no place in their day-to-day social life. The question is, whether they will continue to be rid of this canker for long. As Amwar and the surrounding villages open out more and more to the world outside, there is every possibility that they will succumb to the non-tribal Hindu influence and discard some of the finer tribal attitudes.

Social status :

The social status in the village is, however, no identical with ritual status, as determined on the principle of commensality. Considerations of past history of a caste, their economic condition in general, numerical strength etc. enter in determining social status. The Ahir who stand at the top of ritual hierarchy, are relegated to the third position—below Gond and Baiga as regards their status in village society generally. This statement is apparent because his ritual status notwithstanding, the Ahir does not have any representation on such village or inter-village councils as the village panchayat or the school committee. On the other hand, the Ahir is traditionally required to act as a druge and to wait on official camps in the village, and even though this may be in recognition of a higher ritual status, his position of a village servant does bring him considerably lower in social ladder.

It thus seems that status differentiation in Amwar is chiefly a function of economic and numerical considerations. The generally better economic position of the Gond reflected in their relatively better material culture, and their overwhelming majority, if not in the village, in the region, enable them to capture the highest rung of the social ladder. Their past history also is a powerful factor helping them in establishing social supremacy amongst the backward tribal people. It is wellknown that the Gondwana region—of which Malwa formed a part—was being ruled by kings of the Gond line; the Gond are still substantial land-holders in the village. Ownership of land is a status symbol in the village, and it is this factor which has somewhat boosted up the position of the Agaria in the village inspite of their ritually being the lowest. The Baiga on the other hand, claim higher social status on the basis of their superiority in numbers, and to some extent from the tradition which considers them to be the oldest inhabitants of the region. The comparatively lower social prestige enjoyed by the Agaria inspite of their owning the maximum landed wealth is to be traced to the supposed inferiority of their calling.

Caste and Village Organisations :

A person living in Amwar is subject to two main types of organisational stresses. One is a centrifugal stress, imposed by his membership of a particular caste, which makes him externally-oriented, looking to other villages where his caste-fellows live. These forces give rise to the tribal or caste organisation which claims a person's loyalty towards itself. The other is a centripetal stress exercised by the village community, through his membership of the village. The caste-organisation thus cuts across village boundary and local loyalty; while the village organisation functions within the confines of the village boundaries, with a view to make it stabler and promote its solidarity, generally with a spirit of competition as regards other village communities. The one thus divides a particular group of villagers from other such groups, while the other exhorts to make them united and strong. Besides these two forces or loyalties, a person in village is subject to other forces emanating from his membership of a clan, a kingroup, and the family. In the pages that follow. I shall describe in the particular context of village Amwar, the role played by these different types of forces. I will first deal with village organisation.

Village Organisation—Traditional Village Services :

The village organisation appears to be directed firstly to secure to all its residents maximum benefits of a communal living i.e. services of the traditional village servants, and secondly to the promotion of harmonious living in the village by evolving a machinery for the resolution of certain categories of village disputes. The caste-based traditional organisation with its castewise occupational differentials makes it necessary that a village should have a certain minimum number of castes so that its basic needs of certain essential services and goods may be fulfilled locally. We thus find a village having at its apex cultivating castes—Gond. Dhoba, Baiga, Lodhi, Kurmi, etc., and certain functional castes like Brahmin, Agaria (smith), Ahir (Grazier, Shepherd), Barhai (Carpenter), Panika or Mehra (Weaver), Kumhar (Potter), Kasera or Tamera (Brass-smith), Chamar (Shoe-maker), Bhangi (Sweeper), Nai (Barber), Dhobi (Washerman). With these, and an effective

traditional machinery for resolving personal and property disputes, and a little forest situated at a convenient distance, a village community conformed very nearly to 'little universes' or 'autonomous village republics' of sociological literature. In practice, however, such a village is never to be met with; and Amwar in any case, is not such a broad-based village. The cultivator castes living in it are the Gonds, and the Dhoba; Baiga are not traditionally a cultivating caste, but they are *bewar*-cutters and hunters and their dependence on traditional services was less than it was in the case of the cultivating castes like Gond—the latter only one family. About half the Baiga families of Amwar are now cultivators. Of the traditional service castes, Amwar has but two—the Ahir and the Agaria. The services of other castes are either performed by the villagers themselves, or are not required; or, are met with from the market at Mawai. Thus for their requirements of cloth, earthen utensils, shoes (majority of the villagers however prefer to go unshod), the people of Amwar depend on village Mawai. The services of a *barhai* or carpenter, a barber, a sweeper and a *dhobi* are not required in the village because they are performed by the villagers themselves. They have no use for the services rendered by the *bhangi* or sweeper caste because there are no pucca latrines in the village. We thus see that the village organisation of Amwar has only two of the traditional serving castes at its disposal, the Ahir and the Agaria. It must be observed that these are essential services and are invariably found in most of the villages; or at worst are to be found at least in the neighbouring village. The services rendered by an Ahir are especially prized because thereby the villagers are able to save for field-labour hands that would otherwise be required for grazing the village herd. Normally, if the Ahir of a village runs away, the villagers are on the look out for another. The present Ahir Baisakhu of Amwar had come to the village thus at the request of the villagers. The work assigned to the Ahir family in the village organisation consists of taking the village herd for grazing, and for milking the cows. The mode of payment for these services has been described earlier. Besides, the Ahir, who is known as the 'Patel' in village parlance, looks after the camps of touring officials in the village.

The Agaria, as already pointed out meets the requirements of iron-implements and repairs to the old implements of the villagers. The mode of payment to Sohan Agaria in the village has already been described.

Another functionary of the village organisation is the Baiga or dewar or gunia. In Amwar this office is held by Bhursu Baiga. He is in charge of the worship of village gods. Thakurdeo, Khermata, etc. particularly on communal ceremonies like *bidri banana, bida, mati uthana.* Besides in his role of *gunia,* he is required to diagnose the ailments of the villagers and to advise them regarding what should be done about them. He officiates at the worship or sacrificial rites undertaken by afflicted individuals on his advice. Besides the liquor, and other perquisites to which he has a right on occasions of worship or sacrifices, he is paid one rupee and ten seers of grain by every family once in three years. The present incumbent of the office also holds land in the village. His clientele does not extend to any other village.

Village Officials:

Apart from the traditional-caste-based organisation which is intended to meet the economic and social service requirements of the community, Amwar has contact with certain officials of the Government. It is an administrative unit for land records, land revenue and sundry other purposes. It has 'gudi' or 'village rest house' for visiting officials. Higher officials of the Government, however, are not reported to grace this far-off village by their visits; at the most they call the villagers at the bus-head Mawai. Amwar's contact with the administration is usually through the village officials, namely, the patel, the patwari, the kotwar and the forest guard. The patel's position in the village is a dual one: on the one hand, he is a spokesman of the village to the administrative authorities, and on the other, he is a guardian of Government interests in the village. In this later capacity, he is charged with certain revenue and police functions. His statutorily laid down duties include collection of land revenue, reporting of commission of cognisable offences to the police, giving information of epidemics etc. in the village to the police and the tahsil authorities. In practice, however, his duty of revenue collection dominates all other, though equally important duties. The Patel is appointed by the Collector on the basis of election by the villagers, under provisions of the M.P. Land Revenue Code and he can be removed from his office by the Collector on grounds of inefficiency corruption etc. For collecting land-revenue the Patel is remunerated on commission basis, with the stipulation that the annual remuneration shall not be less than Rs. 36.00. Amwar being a poor village, the Patel there is getting the minimum remuneration. The Land Revenue Code of 1959 has given him wide powers, and he ranks higher than the Patwari in administrative hierarchy. In practice, however, and certainly in case of Amwar, the Patel being usually ignorant and unlettered seldom plays the responsible role expected of him by the Statute. Except revenue collection, the village Patel has hardly any idea of his duties. A lack of knowledge of his official duties hardly detracts from the influence and power which he enjoyed over the villagers in Amwar by virtue of his office. Most of them being encroachers on Government land, are under his authority. He also matters a great deal in the matter of admitting new settlers in the village.

The other and perhaps the most consequential in the village not belonging to it is the Patwari or the village revenue accountant. He is perhaps the only official with whom the villagers come into contact most frequently. Land is a prized commodity in the village, is verily a status symbol, and because of the vital role he plays in matters regarding land, the patwari commands obedience of the villagers. An unscrupulous patwari's power over the villagers can be very great because of the latter's ignorance. The patwari resides at village Mawai, though he is not incharge of the latter village. Nunsarai, Belgaon, Sunehra are other villages in charge of the Patwari. Besides being the keeper of land records, revenue and livestock statistics of the village, the patwari is the primary collecting agency for almost all sorts of official information concerning the village. In the past, (when the office of patwari was hereditary) the patwari used to be almost a mine of information concerning the villages in his charge; it would not even be incorrect to say that he was an institution in the village. These days, with the abolition of the hereditary nature of the office and consequent frequency of transfers, the patwari has ceased to play that institutional role in village affairs and he is also not as well informed in village matters as his brothers-in-office of the past. The present patwari of the village did not seem to be aware of the fact that *bewar* cultivation was being practised by Baiga of the village, till we discovered it for ourselves. The land records of the village also did not appear to be uptodate. I have already adverted to the fact that about 49 acres of land in the village continue to be shown in the name of one Mohammed Beg—who is reported to have left the village years ago, and whose present whereabouts are not known. The land is of course being cultivated by the villagers. There are a couple of other such ghost tenure holders of village lands. The Revenue Law requires such lands to be dealt with in a particular way.

Kotwar or the village watchman—is also an important official in the village. The present holder of the post is a Panika of Mawai, and has that village also in his charge besides Amwar. He is expected to be the keeper of the birth and death records of villages in his charge, and for reporting them once in every week to the police station Officer Mawai. Like Patel, the Kotwar also is charged with the duty of keeping a watch over the villages in his jurisdiction with a view to report commission of cognisable offences, outbreak of epidemics, or movement of bad characters of strangers in the village. For these, he is required to maintain a few other registers. Most Kotwars, however, are innocent of reading and writing; the Kotwar of Amwar is very much so. He is, therefore, naturally unable to discharge his duties satisfactorily and that naturally tells upon the quality of the records kept by him. The Kotwar is also required to aid touring officials in the village.

The forest guard of the village resides in another village about three miles from Amwar. Forest—which is indispensable to the villagers—being in his keep, he also exercises considerable influence over the villagers. Besides the above Government officials, two other officials residing in the village as Sunaooram and Haribhakta Singh. The former has already been dealt with in this report; he is gradually steadying his position in the village. He can definitely play an increasingly useful role in the village affairs firstly by educating them on the multifarious development programmes initiated by the Government; and by providing them with the right leadership which they very much need. Being a member of one of the major tribes resident in the village, he enjoys the confidence of the village community and he is eminently suited for exploiting that confidence for the general good of the villagers. Haribhakta Singh is the teacher of the village school.

Village Panchayat:

Another important institution in a village organisation, vital to its peaceful and secure existence, is the Gram Panchayat, more often known without the prefix 'Gram'. If it is permissible to compare a village community to a 'village republic', then the Panchayat can be likened to its judicial-*cum*-executive wings. Amwar is of course far from the ideal of a village republic, and this is reflected in its village Panchayat which is not very effectively organised. It is seldom that the village Panchayat is called upon to play any decisive role in village affairs; most affairs are resolved by the extra-village tribal councils. Nonetheless, Amwar has a Panchayat, purporting to reflect the opinion of the village as a whole and not that of a community alone. Its head or *surpanch* is Tenda, leader of the biggest kinship group in the majority community of the village; but otherwise its composition is not definite. Its members are invariably chosen from the leaders of the caste-groups in the village; that is Mangal and Amoli from Gonds; Loola and Bhagwan from Baiga, Bakhti from Agaria, Baisakhu from Ahir and Chhotekhan. The Village Panchayat assembles on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with a particular situation, grave enough to call for an expression of opinion from the village as a whole. It meets in the courtyard of one of the leaders. Only one case, in which the collective will of the village community had to be expressed, came to my notice. That is the case of Bhobha Ahir. This latter had a number of buffaloes and he was living just on the road, in the Baiga quarter of the village. This was against the common practice in the village, which is to keep buffaloes and cattle in a separate room, not giving on to the road. The villagers objected to it,

as it created unhygienic conditions in the village. Bhobha was, however, not prepared to shift the cattle to a place away from the road. A panchayat consisting of Kangli Baiga (representative of Loola who is incapacitated), Amoli and Mangal Gonds, Bakhti Agaria and Chhote Khan presided over by Tenda was convened in the courtyard of Baisakhu Ahir. Of course besides these leaders of village opinion, many others were present. Bhobha was called, and requested to accede to the decision of the village panchayat and remove his cattle and buffaloes to another site away from road, or in the alternative leave the village. Bhobha preferred the second alternative, and left the village, along with Samrath Gond, whose buffaloes he was grazing.

Thus, in this case, we have a glimpse into the effectiveness of village opinion expressed through the most effective forum the village Panchayat. But as observed earlier, in Amwar, it is seldom that the village Panchayat is required to assert and wield the authority the community have reposed in it. The sanctity attached to this collective opinion is so great that it is considered that at the time of adjudicating upon village disputes, the panchas speak on behalf of parmeshwar or god. This maxim meets the dual purpose of securing impartiality and fair play on the part of the panchas and the compliance of their verdict from the parties. This is of course, the moral side of it. The more effective deterrent is the fear of public opinion, against which it is difficult to live in a village, not much affected by urban and industrial influences and where the arms of law can reach only with the proverbial tradiness of a snail.

Caste organisation:

As has been pointed out earlier, that Amwar is a multi-caste village representing Baiga, Gond, Agaria, Ahir, Dhoba and Muslim.* Some aspects of caste-organisation of each group *viz.* endogamous and exogamous divisions, totemism, etc. have already been discussed. In the sections that follow, I shall mainly be dealing with rules of social intercourse, the laws of property, breaches of caste-rules and the social machinery designed to deal therewith.

Rules of social intercourse:

Rules relating to acceptance of food and water have been dealt with. I may point out here that restrictions on eating and drinking apply even to sub-castes belonging to the same tribe. Thus, women of Gond and Baiga are strictly forbidden to eat food even from a kitchen of another Baiga or Gond sub-caste. No doubt the rules are somewhat more liberal in case of men in that a Baiga of Amwar is permitted to eat from the hands of a Binjhwar Baiga, who are regarded as superior in status to other Baiga castes, but even a Baiga male may not accept cooked food from any other Baiga sub-caste. It was also reported that the Ahirs of Khaloti or Chhattisgarh did not accept food at the hands of the Ahir families of Amwar, on the ground that the latter beat drums—regarded as an inferior act—to the Madai fair at Mawai. In general people would not accept food from a stranger for fear that he might belong to a caste whose food was tabooed. Persons going on long journeys would therefore carry their food with them.

Inter caste unions:

The rule of endogamy prohibits marital unions between persons belonging to different castes. Local enquiry in Amwar, however, brought out interesting departures from this general rule. One such case was available in Amwar itself. This is as pointed out earlier, the case of Amri Baiga, a Binjhwar sub-caste youth, marrying the daughter of Tenda—a Bharotia or Bhumia Baiga. Binjhwar is recognised to be the highest sub-caste of the Baiga and the union referred to above may be described as a hypergamous union. It is, however, important to state that the Binjhwar sub-caste do not favour marrying their girls to youths belonging to another Baiga sub-caste. Since Amri is the only Baiga of Binjhwar sub-caste in the village, he had to be taken into the fold of the Bhumia/Bharotia sub-caste resident in Amwar by the simple ceremonial of extending caste feasts. It was also reported—though not substantiated by citation of a case—that the Baiga would similarly regularise unions of their girls with Ahir and Gond youth; and would accept without reservations, girls from the Gond and Ahir castes in their fold as wives of Baiga youths. It is, however, reported that the Gond and the Ahir do not accept Baiga brides for their youths; and it is this scornful attitude (attributed by some writers to the greater non-tribal influence on these castes) which probably prompts the Baiga to include them in their fold. The Ahir would not condescend to have anything to do with girls from other castes. and a youth found breaking this caste norm is dealt with by expulsion from the caste for all time. A similar fate is meted out to relatives of such youth if they are suspected of abetting the breach

* I have advisedly included the Muslim group along with the Hindu castes in discussing the social organisation in the village because even—though Islam is a religion, Islam does not recognise caste or social differences based on ritual purity, the Khoja Muslim household of Amwar has more or less adapted itself to the setting and atmosphere in which it is living.

but they can be admitted back to the caste fold on submitting to the traditional caste penalties. The seriousness with which the Ahirs view cases of union of their youth with other castes will be clear from the case-histories to be given later in this Chapter. In case of unions between an Ahir girl and a youth of the Brahmin caste, the rules are not as rigorous, though the girl is permanently put out of caste. Similarly an Ahir youth marrying a girl from the Brahmin caste would formally be put out of caste; but the children of such a union can be admitted to the Ahir caste.

The Agaria also follow similar rules, viewing with greater rigour and severity unions between persons of their caste, and those belonging to lower castes. Unions with Baiga and Gond are, however, treated with leniency and the persons either retain their Agaria caste, or are admitted to it. It thus seems to be possible to state the attitude of the people of Amwar and the region in which it is situated in these words: "Unions with higher castes are treated with generosity, but unions with lower castes meet with stern disapproval and severe penalties".

Attitude to premarital sexual unions:

When questioned as to how they treated cases of extra-marital sex unions, the general answer was that they did not approve of such unions. Here again if the unions took place within the caste no cognisance is normally taken by the panchayat unless the girl becomes pregnant. In the latter case, the girl is married to the boy with whom she has been carrying on. If, however, it is not possible to find out the father of the child, the girl is put out of caste—for fear that it may be the offspring of a lower caste. A similarly indulgent attitude is extended towards adulterous unions also if it is confined to persons in the caste only.

Caste councils:

The responsibility and duty of preserving caste norms rests on tribal or caste opinion reflected through more or less organised caste or tribal councils. The composition of these councils generally transcends village boundaries. Amwar—and for that matter any other village having a composite caste structure—is a minimal unit as regards caste. With the exception of Baiga and Dhoba, other caste-groups residing in Amwar are themselves members of wider groups, known in the village as *Chhakka*—or 'the Six'. As the name suggests this wider group comprises caste members from six villages; and each such groups is in charge of a caste leader known as *kurha*. The office of the *kurha* is generally hereditary, but on extinction of the line, or on any particular incumbent of the office proving unequal to the role expected of him, caste leaders may elect another person, related to him. In the scheme below are given the names of villages comprising the *'Chhakka'* for the Gond, Ahir and Agaria castes in the village, the names of the *kurha* and the village in which they reside, and names and designations of other office-bearers:

Caste	Villages in the Chhakka	Name of Kurha and village in which residing	Name etc. of the office-bearers
1	2	3	4
Gond	Sunehra (2 miles) Ramtala Belgaon (3 miles) Nunsarai (1½ miles) Patpara (2 miles) Amwar	Behari of village Nunsarai	..
Agaria . . .	Koilari Sunehra (2 miles) Pandri pani Kurki Mohania Amwar	Badua of village Pandri pani	..
Ahir . . .	Masna Banjra Ranjara Murta Fatari Pandri pani Amwar.	Munsi of village Pandri pani	(*i*) Baisakhu of Amwar is the Patel. (*ii*) Jhipan of Bajra is the Sar. panch.

It would appear from the above scheme that the number of villages in the '*chhakka*' need not necessarily be six. It is not so in case of the *chhakka* council of the Ahir caste which has seven villages in the *chhakka*. In the case of the Ahir caste, besides the *kurha*, there is a *sarpanch*, and a *Patel*. The exact distribution of functions between these three office-bearers of the Ahir caste could not be ascertained at this enquiry.

The Baiga and the Dhoba do not have traditional councils of six villages headed by a *kurha*. In their case, breaches of caste or tribal norms are dealt with by tribal opinion of a number of villages. Even in Agaria, Gond and Ahir castes which have the institution of *chhakka*, important breaches of caste-norms are decided by caste councils wider than the *chhakka* in extent—in fact the entire endogamous group which invariably reside within reasonably accessible distance. This seems to be necessary because when a person is put out of caste for commission of a caste offence, the denial of commensality to him is by the entire caste. Though it could not be ascertained during this enquiry, there is reason to believe that the news of putting a person out of caste is given publicity in the entire caste group. I will describe below case—histories of a few breaches of caste norms:—

Cases involving breach of the rule of endogomy:

Case I (*Ahir caste*)—An Ahir girl of village Motinala was kept by a Brahmin of village Bichhia. The girl was made an outcaste by the caste council of six villages. A girl was born to the Ahir woman from her Brahmin husband. This girl has now been kept—(there could be no regular marriage) by an Ahir youth of Motinala. This youth also has been expelled from the caste. Our informant said that if the Ahir youth leaves the girl, he may be readmitted to the caste on his paying the *dand* imposed on him by the caste-council. The children born to the Ahir youth and half-Ahir woman would, however, be treated as Ahir after the death of their parents.

Case II (*Informant Ramhai Dhoba*)—A Dhoba youth from Ghantabahara married a girl of the Pathari caste. This involved in the first instance breach of the marriage rule which confines the choice of a mate to the endogamous caste, and secondly breach of the commensality norms. The gravity of both these offences was heightened by the fact that the girl belonged to a lower caste—almost at the bottom rung of the social ladder. The Dhoba community of Ghantabahara at once expelled the boy from the caste.

Later, Dhobas from about sixty villages (representing perhaps the entire endogamous caste) met at the boy's village. The parents of the delinquent boy prayed to the caste council to admit their son back into the caste fold but the request was turned down. However, his children were to be given admission to the caste provided the boy paid the penalty imposed by the caste. It is said that the penalty required the Dhoba to spend about Rs. 1,000 in cash, *gur* worth Rs. 120, eight goats, three *canisters* of *ghee*, a *khandi* of flour, six *khandis* of rice and two *khandis* of *dal*. The severe punishment is indicative of the sternness with which the Dhoba community regard breach of the marriage and commensalities.

It may, however, be noted that in case it is permissible to marry women from certain other castes, then breaches of commensality and marriage rules involving such women are treated lightly. Thus, a Baiga man may get the union with a Ahir or Gond girl regularised by the caste Panchayat with a light penalty of a feast extended to the caste in the village. A Gond can marry an Ahir girl or a Baiga girl on paying a light penalty to the Gond Panchayat.

Breach of commensal norms:

An example of the seriousness with which the commensal norms are viewed is afforded from the fact that all castes in the village excommunicate a man who has served a jail sentence until he pays the penalty imposed by the caste on them. The reason is not that there is any stigma attaching to the jail sentence as such but because in the jail he must have eaten food prepared by persons of various other castes.

Case III—This case is from village Motinala. Wife of Phitruram Ahir of village Panari (a forest village near Motinala) was seen eating at the house of a Kalar of Motinala. The Ahir regard the Kalar lower than them in the caste hierarchy, and this was a serious breach of the commensed norm, particularly so because it involved a woman. Phitruram and his wife were excommunicated. Later Phitruram approached the *kurha* residing in Motinala for taking him back in the caste fold. The *kurha* assembled caste leaders from six villages. The matter to be settled was the amount of punishment that would meet the ends of the case. The elders decided that Phitruram should extend to the caste members residing in six villages feasts for two successive days, and a goat should be killed at each feast. Liquor was also demanded. Phitruram agreed, on the appointed day, caste members from six villages assembled at Phitruram's house. Some liquor was then poured in a *thali*, this was lifted up by the *kurha* and offered to Phitruram's wife. She gulped a part of the liquor and gave Rs. 5.00 to the *kurha* by way of fine. Then the *kurha* took some wine from the same *thali* and other members of the caste followed suit. A goat was then killed and roasted, and included in the *pucca* food that was served to the Panchas. Next day, *kuchcha* food, including another goat was served to

the *panchas*. The *kurha* was presented with the goat's head and legs and he invited Phitruram and his wife to his house. He smeared his house with cowdung, and sprinkled oil and tumeric water all over the house to purify it. Thereafter the head of the goat and the legs were roasted and served to the caste members present including Phitruram and his wife. The matter ended there and Phitruram was then treated as a member of the caste along with his wife.

Getting vermin in a wound:

Curiously enough the getting of vermin in a wound is regarded as a very serious breach of norm. The underlying belief is probably that this is a divine punishment for some heinous wrong committed by the person who gets maggots in his wound. We have a case of this type from Amwar itself.

Case IV—Tenda's mother got vermin in a wound in her eye. She was put out of caste as soon as this became known and the wider caste council consisting of elders from numerous villages demanded the penalty feast from Tenda. The latter complied with the caste mandate.

In Ahir, Agaria, Dhoba and some other castes, there is a sept known as *Sunwani* which is regarded as the highest sept from the standpoint of ritual purity. Our Ahir informant disclosed that in their caste, there were two sub-divisions of *Sunwani* sept—The one known as *chhutaha Sonwani* is specially meant for performing the rituals necessary for admitting into caste persons who had developed maggots in a wound. They also perform the rite of purifying the house at the time of death in an Ahir house. For admitting a person who had developed vermin, the *Sonwani* asks him to cross the river, and while returning, makes him stand in the middle of the river. There he sprinkles what is known as '*Sonaponi*' or gold water on the body of the outcaste. On coming back to the house of the outcaste, the floor of the house is purified by smearing with cowdung. All *handiyas* or earthen vessels in the house are broken and the ladle is thrown away. The *Sonwani* then sprinkles 'gold water' in all parts of the house. Food is then cooked by the person who had developed maggots, and is served by him first to the *Sonwari* and to other members of the caste. The *Sonwani* is usually presented with a cow for the services performed by him.

Getting beaten by a shoe by a person belonging to another caste:

If a person gets beaten by a person belonging to another caste, it is taken to be a serious disgrace and the unfortunate person is at once put out of caste. For getting admission to the castefold again, he has to extend the penalty feast to the caste in his *chhakka*. No specific case of this breach were related to us from Amwar.

Killing a cow:

Killing of a cow is regarded as a serious offence according to the penal code of the castes in Amwar. Tenda, the Baiga Patel of Amwar had killed a cow, though as he said, he had no intention of killing it. Still the people have put him out of caste and have imposed on him the penalty of going to *Amarkantak*, the sacred place of pilgrimage from where river Narmada rises. The Mukaddam has so far not complied with the request though he says he would soon do so. He continues to be out of caste.

Menstrual taboos:

Breaches of the menstrual taboo also attract the serious view of the caste—particularly in the Dhoba. According to Ramhai, if a woman does not wash her head after menstruation in five days, but takes a longer time, her husband has to extend the feast of *bhat* to persons of the caste from the *chhakka* three times.

Less serious cases settled by the Panchayats:

In this category come cases of intra-caste adultery and seduction of married or unmarried women. As has been noticed earlier in the report divorce and subsequent remarriage are freely permitted in the tribal societies which live in Amwar, the only question to be settled in these cases is the question of compensation to be paid to the former husband if the woman is married, and to the father if she is unmarried. The compensation paid is variously termed as *dawa* or *boondi* or *dawa-bundi* in other villages the term *byahut* is also in vogue for the compensation paid to the former husband. On being asked as to how frequently could the *dawa* be claimed by the husband of a woman who was in the habit of changing husbands rather quickly, we were told that no number was fixed but the compensation went on decreasing till after about fourth or fifth change no compensation is fixed. To quote, a village Baiga a woman who has changed husband four or five times become like "thrashed paddy". A few cases of persons from the village are described below which will show how disputes involving initially irregular unions within the caste are settled.

Case I—(Informant Sardu Gond): Sardu Gond a widower formerly lived at Harratola. He developed intimacy with the wife of Ghunsu Gond of village Ranjra. The woman consequently left her husband and started living with her father Amoli Gond of Amwar. Sardu wanted the consent of Amoli to marry his daughter but was refused. He then took his chance and meeting his sweetheart at Mawai market seduced her to his village Harratola and started living with her. Later, Ghunsu, accompanied by four or five elders of the village came to Harratola and approached the village council of Harratola for

settling the *dawa*. The composite caste Panchayat consisting of Panchas from villages Harratola and Ranjra heard the matter, helped in fixing the compensation at a sum that was mutually acceptable. The aggrieved husband at first demanded the rather big sum of Rs. 1,000 as compensation. Thereupon the Panchas asked his wife the reasons for her choosing to leave her husband's roof for that of her paramour. She is said to have told the Panchayat that her husband and father-in-law tortured her and the latter did not even eat food cooked by her. Obviously satisfied by this probably unchallenged assertion of the lady, the Panchayat rejected the tall claim of Ghunsu and settled the compensation at Rs. 12.00 in cash and a bullock. Sardu paid the compensation to his rival.

Case II—In the case presently to be narrated an unmarried girl was involved. Bhukan Baiga's unmarried daughter, in her middle teens, gave the slip to her family and entered as a *Paithu* in the house of a boy of her caste at village Patpara. The suspicions of the unwary father having been aroused by the long absence of his daughter (for all I know he might not have been wholly ignorant of the affair that may have been going on between his daughter and the boy from Patpara), a search began and the girl was traced at Patpara. Thereupon, Bhukan along with his relatives from Amwar went to Patpara only to find that the girl's marriage with the boy was afoot, the *neg* of *tel* was already over and preparations for *bhawar* were under way. Immediately Panchayat consisting of elders from both the villages, Amwar and Patpara assembled. Bhukan demanded a sum of Rs. 100 as bride price but the boy's party were willing to pay only Rs. 40 to Rs. 50. Being convinced about Bhukan's claim who would have got more than Rs. 100 were he to marry his daughter in the regular way, the Panchas fixed the compensation at Rs. 100. The sum was paid to Bhukan. The girl's party then participated in the subsequent ceremonies of the marriage.

An analysis of the case-studies would lead to the following observations:

The flexible nature of the caste council—Its size, and the number of villages panchas from which attend it, depends entirely on the facts of each case. Usually, in minor matters like marriage compensations, or other disputes relating to marriage, panchas from the interested villages only compose the Panchayat. (ii) The decisions of the panchas are invariably obeyed by the parties concerned. (iii) The penalty inflicted is either in cash or in kind, or both. The penalty in kind takes the form of a penal feast extended by the guilty person to caste members from the village or interested villages.

The power which enables the caste council to ensure compliance of their mandates is the power of social ostracisation which is a very real and effective deterrent in rural societies. This itself, however, flows from the instinct at self-preservation of the castes concerned—for ignoring the breach of caste norms would ultimately result in the extinction of the caste as a solid, unified group, and at the present stage of their economic, social and cultural development the people of Amwar and of course of elsewhere in village India, people are not able even to think in terms of a casteless social order. The guilty person fears ostracisation because that affects not only himself but his children who would not be acceptable to any caste.

Also, the effective and successful functioning of the flexible and indeterminate institution of the caste Panchayat—which has no statutory sanction behind it but only the desire of the group to maintain its solidarity—shows the necessity of some sort of a flexible approach in the matter of social reforms also. The only factor that would hinder the implementation of such reforms is the fact that the loyalty commanded by the group known as caste from the individual's composing it cannot be claimed by the larger, heterogeneous group known as the village. Still, some use can be made by social reformers of these useful social institutions.

Laws relating to inheritance of property:

The tribal and non-tribal castes of Amwar have more or less similar customs with respect to inheritance of property. Only the Dhoba rules diverge to some extent from the rules governing the other non-tribal Hindu castes. As is natural to expect in a patriarchal order, inheritance is restricted to the male line only. Wives, daughters and sisters cannot, in general, inherit property left over by their husbands, father and brothers; though tribal law makes adequate provision for the maintenance of these female relatives. In case of disputes to succession, the question of inheritance is decided by tribal opinion through Panchayats.

On the death of a man, his property passes on to his sons and to his wife—and if they so desire, it can be distributed between them. Unmarried girls are not entitled to a share, though in the Dhobas, custom requires a little greater share of property to be given to the eldest brother, who has to perform the marriages of his unmarried sisters. The Gond, Baiga, Ahir and Agaria do not require such a provision to be made, and the responsibility of marriage of sisters devolves usually on the eldest brother. If the deceased had two wives, children born to both inherit equally; but this does not apply to

*Lamet** sons in the case of Gond, Baiga, Ahir and Agaria. In the Dhobas, even the *Lamet* son is entitled to a share if he is minor though his share is less than the share of the natural sons.

If a man dies without leaving any male heirs, the widow retains possession of the property of her husband if she chooses to remain unmarried. Her interest is only for her life-time and passe on after her death to nearest male heirs of her deceased husband. If, however, she marries, she has to forego the property which then passes on to her deceased husband's nearest male relatives. In the Dhoba, there is a difference: a widow who remarries is permitted to retain possession of her husband's property if her new husband lives with her in her house. Otherwise, in the Dhoba too, she becomes disentitled to the possession of her deceased husband's property which passes on to nearest male heirs of her late husband.

A woman who runs away from her husband which according to tribal custom is equated with divorce provided her paramour has given the requisite tribal penal feasts and paid the compensation to the woman's first husband—has to return ornaments given to her by her husband. She is, however, not required to return ornaments given to her by her parents at the time of her marriage.

The tribal law on inheritance of property has not undergone any change since the passing of the Hindu Succession Act. The people of Amwar are as yet ignorant of the provisions of the aforementioned Act, and of the fundamental way in the matter of property inheritance. It is not likely that they would become aware of the statute in the years to come because they have hardly any property worth being disputed about and referred to a law court. There was no evidence that any section of the people in Amwar was dissatisfied with the present customary law. When comments and suggestions were specifically invited whether it would not be proper to give daughters a share in the paternal property, the consensus of opinion in the village was that such a move was not necessary. They opined that their present customs were just all right and suited them well, and no changes were considered necessary.

Family Structure—Trends of Change :

Families in Amwar are of the patrilineal (i.e. in which lineage is reckoned from ancestors in the male line) type. They are also generally patrilocal—i.e. those in which the wife goes to and lives in husband's village. There are however seven families of the matrilocal type. Two of these are *Lamsena* families, both Baiga. Of the seven matrilocal families, two are Gond, one Agaria and Four Baiga.

The family structure according to caste and size of family is shown in table below. The table distinguishes three types of family structure; the simple, intermediate and joint. Families that do not admit of classification into these have been classed as 'others'. A simple family is one consisting of a married couple and their unmarried children. At the other extreme are joint families consisting of married couples and their married sons or daughters, unmarried children and unmarried brothers. Between these two extremes lie the 'intermediate' families consisting of a married couple, unmarried brothers and sisters and one of the parents.

There is evidence in the village of a distinct preference for the simple family unit. These account for 51% of all the families in the village. The intermediate and joint types are both equally frequent, each accounting for about 16% of all the families in the village. About the same percentage escaped classification, and

Size and Composition of Households

Total Number of Households	Size of Household														
	Single Member			2—3 Members			4—6 Members			7—9 Members			10 Members and over		
	House-hold	Male	Fe-males	House-hold	Males	Fe-males	House-hold	Males	Fe-males	House-hold	Males	Fe-males	House-hol l	Males	Fe-males
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Baiga 22	1	..	1	12	19	14	8	21	20	1	3	4	..	..	..
Gond 7	..	..	..	1	2	1	5	15	11	1	5	2	..	..	..
Others 8	..	..	..	2	3	1	4	10	10	2	6	8	..	..	..
Total : 37	1	..	1	15	24	16	17	46	41	4	14	14	..	..	..

*Sons born to a woman from her previous husband.

have consequently been treated as 'others'. In Baiga, the simple family is very popular. It accounts for 68% of all Baiga families. The domination of the village by the simple family structure is principally due to the preference shown for it by the Baiga. There is only one joint family in the Baiga. It is that of Bhagwan Baiga. In view of the fact that the intermediate type of family (its percentage in the Baiga is 14) leans heavily towards the simple type, we may even state that the simple family is the rule in the Baigas of Amwar. They do not prefer bigger family units, particularly of the joint type. Grown up sons set up their independent homes after marriage. The genealogical tree of Tenda and allied families shows that from the single family of Janjad, Tenda's father, seven families have sprung up. These are all simple. The families of Dukal and Bhuka Baiga have also descended from the same tree. Within Dukal's life time his son Sukhlal separated from him and set up his independent household. Other examples include the families of Lula and Kangli; the latter separated from his father after marriage and is now the head of a simple family. Lula himself is the head of a family consisting of himself and his unmarried son which, though classed as 'others' is nearer to the simple type, and would certainly have come in that category had Lula remarried. As regards Baiga, thus, it is abundantly clear that they like smaller family units of the simple type. The families classed as 'others' and 'intermediate' in the Baiga represent and transition of the joint to the simple family structure.

In the Agaria also the simple family structure appears to be the most favoured one. Three of the four Agaria families are simple while the remaining is joint. There is no clear cut evidence, in the Gond, of preference for this or that type of family. No doubt 43% of their families also are simple in structure, but an equal percentage belongs to the intermediate type. There is only one joint family in the Gond, that of Amoli. But the intermediate families in Gond seem to be inclined more towards the joint type. Thus, though in the Gond also the joint family appears to be disintegrating, there is no definite evidence of the family structure gravitating towards the simple type.

In Ahir there seems to be a clear partiality for the joint family structure, because both the Ahir families resident in Amwar are joint. Similarly the solitary Muslim family of the village is joint. The Dhoba household consisting only of the son and father belongs to the 'Others' type.

Size of Family:

With a perceptible preference for a smaller, simple type of family, the social structure of Amwar is hardly suited for large-sized households. Most of the households come in the 2-3 and 4—6 size classes. These two are the sizes into which fall all the unitary or simple families of the village; and a large proportion of the simple and intermediate type. In fact, families with a size of 2 to 6 members account for approximately 87% of all the families in the village. Comparatively bigger households are only 4 in the village, answering for about a fifth of the population of the village. There is no household in the village with ten or more members; while there is only one single-member household. The last mentioned, and one in the 2-3 class are households of grown-up Baiga widows.

The table inset below shows the average size of a family by caste groups:—

Average Size of family

Community	Average size
All communities	4·22
Baiga	3·68
Gond	5·29
Agaria	4·75
Ahir	6·50
Muslim	4·00
Dhoba	2·00

The smaller average size of a Baiga family as compared to the average size of a family in the village deserves notice. It agrees with their observed preference for a unitary structure of family. 59% of the Baiga families are less than three in size. It is the small size of an average Baiga family that has pulled down the average size of a family in the village-size of the Gond, Ahir and Agaria families. The Ahir, having both their families joint in structure, top in the average size of a family. Gonds who have still not significantly broken away from the joint family, occupy the second place in regard to average family size.

Intra-family organisation:

The organisation of an Amwar family is patriarchal. The head of the family is thus always the eldest male member of the house. It is rarely that this distinction is conferred upon a woman of the house. Such is usually the case when the male members of the family, owing to their minority, are not able to shoulder the responsibilities of the head of the household. The head of the household governs the family and the responsibility of proper management devolves upon him. All incomes earned by individual members of the family (though in practice these are not much) go to the common pool commanded by the head. The head of the household also commands the respect of all other members of the family, and they also obey him.

Husband-wife relations in the village:

The housewife occupies a place second only to the head of the household in the family organi-

sation. She not only concerns herself with the household chores but also helps her husband in the field and in the forest. They also work at the household utensils and goes to the river for usually it is the females of the house who go and collect the forest produce of the season, and sells them at the weekly market. She gets up early in the morning and grinds the *maka*. She cleans the household utensils and goes to the river or well to bringing water. Unless she is in *chhua* (i.e. in her menstrual cycle) she would cook the food and take it to her husband in the field. She also helps the husband in watching the fields by the night. Either partner regards the other as '*jori*' (i.e. mate in a pair); so that the woman is almost an equal partner with her husband in the household business or activity; and besides she looks after the family in which her husband seldom lends a helping hand. This is because of the fact the chores of household like grinding, sweeping, washing the utensils, cooking, bringing water from river, etc. are considered peculiarly feminine activities; and the males would normally not attend to them. On the other hand, the list of job outside the house which only a man can attend to is small. These are felling trees in the forest, ploughing the field and a few other agricultural operations. These facts of social life have given the female partner a degree of independence, of which she is quite conscious and the husband usually cannot and in practice seldom does, illtreat her. The maltreatment of a wife by the husband is also ruled out, because of the fear of her running away to her parent's house, or to seek some paramour. because to get a wife, is of no means, an easy thing in Amwar. Hence, we find, in Amwar usually happy conjugal relations and instances of harsh treatment or beating are almost unheard of in day-to-day life.

All the communities in Amwar permit polygamy. There are, however, only two such examples in the village, both in the Gond. One of these is Lula who has kept his brother's wife according to the prevalent custom of *junior levirate* in addition to his own wife. This, however, is not an effective polygamous union because his *sat-bhawar* wife has deserted him. The other is Dhansingh who has both his wives living with him. In case of polygamous unions, the elder wife is referred to in all the communities as *badki* and the younger one as *chhutki*. The domestic life of Dhansingh was reported to be happy.

Father-in-law daughter-in-law relationship :

The daughter-in-law does not observe *purdah* in the presence of the father-in-law; though she is not very free either in his presence. She cannot be very talkative in his presence, and generally avoids his company. The latter is forbidden to call her by name; and to touch her. The daughter-in-law is also forbidden to eat the leavings of the father-in-law.

Parent-children relationship :

When the children are small, the father is not seen openly fonding them; tending the children is supposed to be a peculiarly feminine speciality. Generally when a child is very small, and there are no grown up children in the house to look after it, the mother ties him against her back or breast by means of her *lugda*, and back or breast by means of her *lugda*, and attends to her duties with child thus tied to her. The parents do not interfere in the activities of the children, who are free to play in any manner they like. Apparently, there are no toboos on the children and no attempt on the part of the parents to train them up in a particular manner. Grown up sons are seen freely exchanging smoke with their father, an act which would be regarded as highly improper in sophisticated Hindu society. There is no taboo on their speech either. Generally the parents have the responsibility of choosing spouses for their children and for marrying them; but if a grown up son or daughter decides to take matters into his or her own hands, they would quietly acquiesce when a *fait accompli* is presented to them. Such an out-of-the way act on the part of a son does not disentitle him from a share in the paternal property, if any: provided of course, that caste norms have not been broken. All this does not mean that sons are not deferential, or are openly menacing in their behaviour towards the parents. Far from that they are quite submissive, and even obedient; all that is meant is that they do not suffer from the inhibitions of prudery, and on occasions, when the father oversteps the limits of decent behaviour can also chastise him. This would be apparent from the case of Baisakhu. Tenda's eldst son who got enraged when his father used filthy abuses in referring to the guests who had come to attend the penal feast given by Tenda, pleaded with the latter to be reasonable; and when Tenda failed to see reason by any other means, beat him. He, however, had subsequently to leave his father's house and the village and peternal supremacy was thus vindicated. Another instance when a son had to intervene when his father behaved in a piggish way is that of Mahajan. The latter's father was invited by Tenda at the latter's own residence for a sip of liquor; Tenda began to use invectives against Mahajan's father. The latter did not retaliate either because he was no match for the younger and stronger Tenda or because he felt servile before Tenda who was the Patel of the village and who had served him a drink. Mahajan, however, took offence at the abuses uttered by Tenda, and mildly rebuking his father for behaving in an improper manner, he returned Tenda in his own coin. These two examples serve to illustrate the

point that whereas normally a grown-up son latter connot himself be improper in his be- would occasionally let the father know that the latter cannot himself be improper in his be- haviour

Daughter-in-law—mother-in-law relationship :

There are not many families in the village which are joint, and where therefore the question of the proverbially hostile mother-in-law daughter-in-law relationship would arise. I may, however, remark that the rural society of Amwar is fortunately free of the bitter animosity which is anathema to many a Hindu family elsewhere. This is not because human nature is in any way different in the tribal folks of Amwar. It is much the same. The reason for the apparently cordial relations is the absence of situations in the society at Amwar that make up for tense relations in the in-laws. The social organisation is such that all adult persons have to work of necessity both in and out of home; so that it could never be the case that the daughter-in-law is getting crushed under her load of work while the mother-in-law chats leisurely with her counterpart of the neighbourhood. It is also not the other way round. In Amwar both have to work, though, if the mother-in-law is too old to work on the fields, she helps by way of tending her grand children.

Avoidance and joking relationships :

The avoidance in case of the father-in-law by the daughter-in-law has already been noted. A stricter avoidance, however, obtains in case of a woman from her *jeth* or elder brother of her husband. She must observe *purdah* in his presence; and should not talk to him nor be in the same room alone with him. This avoidance is probably due to the taboo on the marriage of the *senior levirate* type viz. between a man and his younger brother's wife.

Another rule of avoidance which appears to be common to other Hindus as well relates to a man's avoiding talking with his wife in the presence of his father or father-in-law. Similarly, there is an avoidance relationship between a man and his wife's elder sister. This female relation is called in the village terminology *dedh-sas*, though in other sections of the Hindu society she is referred to as *bad sas*. The avoidance in this case extends to their not remaining together alone, and talking. This may again be considered in conjunction with the taboo on the marriage between man and his wife's elder sister—i.e., the taboo on senior *sorrorate* type of marriage.

Joking relationship :

The joking relationships are between persons (in case they belong to opposite sexes) who may marry. Thus joking relationship subsist between a man and his elder brother's wife, a man and his wife's younger sister, and a man and persons standing in the classificatory relationships of a grand daughter to him. Joking relationships also exist between brothers-in-law. There is also joking relationship between a person and his *mahina bahini* and *mahina-bhai* i.e. his father's sister's or mother's brother's daughter and his father's sister's or mother's brother's son. It is, however, found that outside these relationships, even cousins are found cutting jokes which are often sexual in nature in the presence of our investigator. Outside the pale of joking relationships which have become part of their social ethos, jokes serve to enliven life whenever villagers meet. Jokes do not recognise caste barriers but are freely bandied about whenever people get together to spend their leisure. This would be clear from the following participant observation of our investigator. On one occasion when villagers had assembled in the courtyard of Mangal Gond, the latter jokingly remarked that Dukal Baiga was very much after a wife but no woman would go near him as he was weak—(suggestions of impotency). Dukal took the joke unsportingly and retorted that he could show to Mangal Gond that he was strong and virile if the latter so desired. Dukal, however, only made a bigger fool of himself because the present company only laughed at his remark. Mangal said that Tenda (Dukal's kin-cousin) had a daughter and why should Dukal not apply to immediately liked the joke, and sang a *karma Fufa* and *sasur* respectively. The difference in father-in-law, mother-in-law is similarly *Mami*, but father's sister is also referred to as *Fua*. The son-in-law is called *bhancha* or *bhanej* and the daughter-in-law *bhanchi;* terms used also for a sister's son or daughter. Grand father-in-law is addressed as *akko* and the grand mother-in-law as *kako*.

At another occasion, Dukal and Bhukan Baigas were sitting in Mangal Gond's courtyard. Mangal Gond, and his son and daughter-in-law were also sitting. Dukal then said that he would marry the first daughter born to Mangal's son and daughter-in-law. (They have no children so far, though at the moment this joke was cracked, she was carrying and this may have been the occasion for such a joke). Instead of taking ill, Mangal immediately liked the joke, and sang a *karma* couplet, exhorting his son and daughter-in-law to bring forth a girl child soon so that Dukal might marry her. Apparently the joke was very much liked and sent all present to laughter.

Apart from showing the nature of jokes that are cut by the villagers when in leisure, these jokes also prove the harmonious relations subsisting between different castes. In fact, cheap recreations like these occupy the spare moments of the villagers, and make possible the paradox of happiness in poverty.

Kinchip Terms :

The kinship terms used by the people of Amwar differ somewhat from those in vogue among non-tribal Hindus elsewhere. These differences arise from the differences in social customs, particularly those relating to marriage. Most notable is the use of the single term 'म.मा' for the mother's brother, father's sister's husband and father-in-law. In other sections of Hindus, only the first of these relatives will be referred to as a *Mama*, the other two are called *Fufa* and *Sasur* respectively. The difference in Amwar arises from the prevalence of cross-cousin marriages; because the mother's brother or father's sister's husband is also usually the father-in-law. Mother-in-law is similarly *Mami*, but father's sister is also referred to as *Fua*. The son-in-law is called *Bhancha* or *bhanej* and the daughter-in-law *bhanchi;* terms used also for a sister's son or daughter. Grand father-in-law is addressed as *Akko* and the grand mother-in-law as *kako.*

Wife is usually referred to as *dauki* or *ghar warins*, but also, and more often in songs, as *jori.* A husband, however, would not call his wife by her name. He would often use some such improvised epithet as 'लरिकन की दाई' or 'mother of such-in-such'. The husband also usually calls her by a second name, like *bahi* or Sardu's wife. The wife also is tabooed from taking the name of her husband, but she can also take his second name. The table below gives the terms to denote the various types of relationships found in the village; the terms of address are also given:—

Relationship (1)	Kinship term (2)	Word of address (3)
1. Father	Dada (ददा)	Baba
2. Father's father	Dadi	Dadi
3. Father's mother	Aji	Aji
4. Mother	Dai	Dai
5. Mother's father	Budha	Burhe
6. Mother's mother	Budhi	Budhi
7. Father's younger brother	Kaka	Kaka
8. Father's elder brother	Barababa	Barababa
9. Father's younger brother's wife	Kaki	Kaki
10. Father's elder brother's wife	Baridai	Baridai
11. Father's sister	Fua or Mami	Mami
12. Father's sister's husband	Mama	Mama
13. Mother's brother	Mama	Mama
14. Mother's brother's wife	Mami	Mami
15. Mother's sister	Mausi	Mausi
16. Mother's Sister's husband	Mausa	Mausa
17. Father's brother's or mother's sister's son.	Bhai	Dada, if elder, or Dau if younger
18. Father's brother's or Mother's sister's daughter	Bahin	Bai if elder, Noni if younger
19. Father's sister's son, or mother's brother's son	Mahina bhai	Mahina bhai
20. Father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter	Mahina bahin	Mahina bahin
21. Elder brother	Dada	Dada
22. Younger brother	Bhai	Dau
23. Wife's elder sister	Ded sas	Bai
24. Wife's younger sister	Sari	Noni
25. Husband's elder brother	Jeth	Jeth
26. Husband's younger brother	Dewar	Dau
27. Wife's brother	Sara	Sara
28. Elder brother's wife	Bhauji	Bhauji
29. Wife	Dauki, Gharwari (when referred to by third persons)	By second name or by adding the name 'dai' to the name of a son or daughter.
30. Husband	Dauka	By adding the name of a son or daughter.
31. Son	Beta	Dau
32. Daughter	Beti	Noni
33. Brother's son	Bhatij	Dau for a man
34. Sister's daughter (for brother)	Bhanchi,	Bhanejin or Bhanchi
35. Brother's daughter	Bhatuji	Noni
36. Sister's son	Bhancha or Bhanej	
37. Father-in-law	Mama	Mama
38 Mother-in-law	Mami, Fua	Mami, Fua

Inter family relationships :

Inter-family relations have two dimensions: one within the caste-group or inter-caste manifested by the greater coming together of families belonging to the same kinship-group and the

other inter-caste, manifested by the formation of ritual friendships. As has been observed earlier, generally cordial relations subsist between persons belonging to different families and castes. In particular, families which are from the same kinship-group have closer contacts in day-to-day life. The seven families which have sprung up from Tenda, the families of his married sons and daughters living separately from him, have naturally very close day-to-day association with Tenda's family. Similar close relations obtain in the families of Lula and his son Kangli, Dukal and his son Nandlal. The families of Dukal, Patanga, Jheethu and Burni and Bhukau belong again to the Tenda group of families and have relatively closer associations with them. Bhursu Baiga's family is also related to Tenda—Dukal, Bhukan group of families as Bhursu is the brother-in-law of Tenda. The spatial grouping of the families also is in conformity with their closeness in relation.

The seven Gond families by themselves form a closely knit group. They centre round two kinship groups. Amoli-Ghasiram-Sardu-Dhansingh on the one hand and Mangal-Samrath on the other. The family of Sonauram is, however, not directly connected with the other Gond families in the village. Being, however, the only educated man in the village, Sonauram's house is frequently visited by men of his own caste as well as other castes in the village. Similarly closer bonds subsisted between the four Agaria families and the two Ahir families. In the former, the families of Sukhlal and Sohan Agaria being related (each is the brother-in-law of the other) have particularly closer relations. The only families in the village that do not have any allied kin family are those of the Mohammedan and the Dhoba.

Ritual friendships:

Inter-family relations do not limit themselves to caste-barriers, but usually transgress them; close bonds of friendships are established between persons belonging to different castes. Such friendships or kin friendship in sociological literature. At the village level, they are known by different names, depending probably on the occasion and terms of the particular friendship. In passing it may be mentioned that such friendships are a common social trait in many other parts of the State, particularly the Chhattisgarh region: and its prevalence in Amwar is yet another piece in the chain of evidence that the Baiga and other people of Amwar have come from the Chhattisgarh region.

The ritual friendships most commonly found in Amwar are *Juara, Bhaiphool* and *Sakhi.* The former, we were informed by the villagers, is usually contracted between persons belonging to different castes and the relationship created is of the type subsisting between brothers-in-law. Friends entering into this type of friendship therefore have the licence of cutting jokes like brothers-in-law. Two cases of this type of friendship came to our notice in Amwar also. Tenda Baiga and Dhansingh Gond are *jawaras* to one another. They entered into this friendship about twelve years ago when Dhansingh first settled in Amwar. The friendship was solemnised before Panchas of village and gifts were exchanged. Dhansingh had presented a young buffalo to Tenda, while the latter had sealed the bond by giving Dhansingh a calf in return. The Panchas of course were feted with liquor. Another example of *jawara* friendship is furnished by the pair—Sardu Gond of Amwar and a Lamhana (Banjara) of Harratola. It should be recalled that Sardoo formerly lived in Harratola and this friendship was contracted by him before migrating to Amwar. The bond of friendship, however, has outlived the odds, and the two continue to be *jawara* to each other inspite of their physical separation. This case, *inter alia,* indicates that ritual friendships do not necessarily recognise village barriers.

The *Bhaiphul* friendship is said to establish a relationship of brothers between the contracting parties. Examples of *bhaiphul* friends are Kangli and Sukhlal Baiga. The *bhaiphul* ceremony does not necessitate exchange of costly gifts as in the case of *jawara, but* is solemnised by a simple ritual before panchas. The third type of friendship of which cases exist in Amwar is *sakhi.* This type of friendship subsists between Dukal, a Baiga and Bakhti Agaria. Our attempts to get from the villagers as to the nature of *sakhi* friendship were of no avail.

Inter village contacts:

Amwar's contact with other villages arises in many ways: some of these are described below:—

(1) *Caste affiliations*—Caste loyalties, as already observed, cut across village boundaries. All families in the village have relationships in other villages and these necessitate exchange of visits. The Baiga families have most of their relationship in the adjoining 'Bandhan, area of the Kawardha tahsil. The contacts come into prominence on the occasions of the major crises i.e. birth, death or marriage, when relatives from these villages visit their kith and kin at Amwar. Caste affiliations also arise whenever there is a breach of some caste norm serious enough to be considered by castemen from other villages. The *chhakka* or the group of six villages have already been described;

As has been brought out earlier, the population of Amwar is subject to a good deal of migration, and this also gives rise to inter village contact. The migrants invariably leave their relatives in the old village and sometimes even go back to the old village.

(2) *Social, religious and cultural affiliations*: Amwar being a small village does not have all the village servants whose services are frequently required, and has to depend on other villages for them. Thus its inhabitants call the *suin* or *dai* from Mawai or Sunehra. In religious matters also the Amwar people used to call the *dawar* from village Kewad Titrahi for the *bidri bunana* rites till two or three years back. The same *dawar* was also called by them for fixing the protective nails whenever a person was killed by a tiger. The Gonds of Amwar go for the *kunda* rites to villages where their *panda* or *pujeri* lives. The *Fakir* of the Muslim family lives at village Pandatarai in Bilaspur tahsil. Again people from Amwar go to attend the *madai* fair at Mawai. As regards cultural dependence, it is brought about by the exchange of visits of Sailhars between Amwar and its neighbouring villages. Thus, social cultural and religious needs bring people of Amwar in contact with other villages.

(3) *Economic affiliations*: Contacts between people of Amwar and other villages also arise from economic reasons. People from other villages, especially Sunehra own land at Amwar, which are given on sublease to the people of Amwar, thus creating holder-tenant relationships between the inhabitants of the two villages. For satisfaction of most of their daily requirements like salt, cloth, kerosene etc. people of Amwar depend on other villages. These needs are mostly met from village Mawai. This latter village also fulfills their demand for earthen and other utensils. It also serves as a market for the surplus produce of the Amwar people.

(4) *Nistar affiliations*: Amwar village is grouped with a number of other villages for grazing and other nistar from the forests of Amwar. Such a group of villages is termed as 'Nistar Katibandha' (i.e. a nistar zone) and normally people from the same zone should come in contact. Similarly, for meeting its demand of bamboo and other wood, people of Amwar are required to go to other villages.

(5) *Administrative contacts*: The patwari and Kotwar of Amwar live in village Mawai. Revenue Officers, whenever they have work relating to Amwar, call the concerned persons to Mawai. Besides Mawai has the police-station and the hospital that are also meant for the people of Amwar. The forest-guard for Amwar lives in Dhangaon and people of Amwar are frequently called by the former to that village. For local-self administration, Amwar is clubbed with village Murta and this brings the two villages nearer in the administrative sense.

Leadership pattern in the village:

The institutions and positions of power in the village that should give rise to conflict and consequent emergence of local leadership are:— (1) office of the Patel, (2) office of the school committee, (3) office of the statutory village panchayat, (4) caste panchayats, (5) traditional village panchayat. Party-based power politics, has not yet affected the village; and the leadership in the village is not therefore governed by affiliations to this or that party. The main factor governing local leadership are— (i) caste; (ii) size of kinship-group; (iii) family-size; (iv) economic status.

By far, the most important seat of power in the village is the office of Patel. It is a statutory office, and is held by a person in accordance with rules framed under the provisions of the Land Revenue Code. The appointment to the office is made by the Collector of the district on the basis of an election by the people at the village level. The Patel enjoys certain statutory obligations and powers, most notable among which, and probably the only one known to the villagers, is the collection of land-revenue. More important than the statutory powers, however of which the villagers are all but unware, are the unofficial "powers" that flow from official authority attaching to the office of the Patel. Land being a status 'symbol' and a highly cherished possession in the village, any person who exercises some authority in relation to land naturally has a lot of influence. In the constantly changing population of Amwar, land, particularly for the new settlers, is always in demand. One of the facts of village life in Amwar, a fact which does not have any legal sanction behind it, is that a new settler can get land in the village only with the blessings of the Patel. The latter, almost, allots abandoned holdings to new settlers. Families desirous of settling in Amwar invariably contact the Patel and

ascertain whether he would allow them a place in the village. If the Patel views the request with favour, he shows the intending settler the place where he may construct his hut; and also shows him land for cultivation. Two Gond families in the village have thus settled during the later part of this enquiry (no schedules were canvassed for these families). It is somewhat significant that these families have built their houses in the Baiga quarter of the village and not the Gond quarter. Cases of Mangal and Dhansingh Gonds are already on record to show that they had also contacted the Patel when settling in the village as to the availability of land in the village. It thus appears that the Patel is the natural leader of the village. No monetary considerations seem to be involved in these deals. Probably the Patel counts more upon the goodwill and loyalty towards him of the new settlers; the confidence that they would back him up if any occasion necessitating a show of power arose though it may as well be placed on record that such an occasion has not thus far arisen. The Patel of the village is reported to have told our investigator that "Amwar is primarily a Baiga and Gond village, and a person of any other caste would not normally be allowed to settle here". The fact that the Patel could make such statement with confidence shows that he has a lot of popular backing in the village. The Patel is infact also the traditionally acknowledged leader of the village. On ritual occasions, such as Holi, it is the Patel (formerly the Mukaddam) who has the honour of lighting the Holi bonfire. On the occasion of *bidri banana* rites, the Patel is the chief person performing the rites. He infact is accorded first place in any social meet. In mixed sittings he is the first person to be served liquor, or tobacco, or a helping of smoke. Any official visiting the village contacts the Patel first; all holders of Land in the village obey the Petel's orders. It is the Patel who arranges for persons to take the kit of touring officials from the village.

In Amwar, the office of Patel is held by Tenda Baiga, ever since the abolition of proprietary rights. Prior to that he was the agent (Mokaddam) of the land lord in the village, and in that capacity acted under the latter's Munim at Mawai The changed circumstances thus failed to bring about any change in the leadership of the village: where the word of Tenda still reigns supreme in many matters. And this inspite of the fact that Tenda has the evil reputation of being a heavy drinker, and in that state is said to have misbehaved on many occasions. His caste-fellow Kangli, even his own son, have given him a beating on two such occasions. But these solitary incidents have not so far perceptibly detracted from Tenda's hold over the village. What is the secret of this authority which Tenda enjoys? The foremost is, of course, the fact that he belongs to the majority caste group in the village; which dominates the village scene. No one should be surprised at this domination by the majority caste-group in an economically and educationally backward society like Amwar. At present, this domination has nothing of casteism in it; though in times to come it may even assume that form. Secondly, even in his caste-group, Tenda enjoys the enviable position of being the head of a kinship-group of thirteen families. Thus even in his caste-group, Tenda enjoys the majority support. He is also, therefore, according to conventions of the caste, the leader of the caste in the village. He holds land to the extent of about 9 acres, which though not comparable with the holding of the Agaria or Dhoba families, is still big enough as compared to those of other families in the village. In any case his holding serves the purpose of conferring solvency on him, a precondition for appointment to the office of the Patel. His being the representative of one of the oldest families in the village also contributes to his acceptance by the society as its leader. But above all these considerations must come his reputation as a courageous and a shrewd man. He is the strong man of his community in the village, and also, of all other communities. At present, there does not appear to be any challenge to his leadership or authority in village affairs. This fact is testified to by his continued leadership of the village for the past fifteen or sixteen years.

The influence exercised by Tenda in his caste-group and in the village is also evident from the fact that he is the Sarpanch of the caste Panchayat in the village as also of the composite traditional village Panchayat. There is thus considerable concentration of power in Tenda's hands both in caste matters and in village matters. As has been observed above, apart from his intrinsic qualities of boldness and shrewdness, the most important factor helping his emergence as the undisputed leaders of the village is his command of a solid group of Baiga families.

Other leaders in the village from amongst the the Baigas are Dukal and Lula. The former is Tenda's cousin, and naturally has the support of the latter as regards secondary leadership. Moreover besides being of a respectable age (about 50 years), Dukal is known for the amiability of his nature and his somewhat progressive views. Thus Dukal's is the one family which sends all children of the school-going age to the school. His progressive thinking is also reflected in his opposition to *bewar*, the traditional cultivation technique of the Baiga. In recognition, perhaps of his liberal views, he has been unanimously chosen as the Sarpanch of the school committee, a non official body constituted by Shri Sunaooram for managing the affairs of the school. This is an inter village committee consisting of members from villages Sunehra, Nunsarai, Belgaon, Patpara etc. It should however be observed that with the small premium

attached to education in the village, the school committee is not a real seat of power in the village and this enquiry shows that it has not so far played any useful role in improving the attendance in the school. Dukal is also one of the elders who attends caste meets. Loola Baiga is the *diwan* of Baiga caste in the village and but for his incapacity owing to leprosy would have played an important part in caste matters. Of late, his elder son Kangli has been recognised as the *diwan* of the caste in his place. We could not succeed in our attempt to find out the functions attaching to and the authority enjoyed by the office of *diwan* which seemed to be hereditary. It is however clearly shown that this is an important office in the caste organisation of the Baiga in Amwar, and at the *bidri banana* ceremony, the *diwan* with the Patel, is the master of ceremonies—Baiga refer to the office of the *diwan* with deference, and though details did not become available in this enquiry, there was ample reason for believing that it was an important caste office.

Leadership in the Gonds rests with the families of Amoli and Mangal. These two are the eldest amongst the Gonds in the village; and the former is also known to be the most prosperous man in the village. In the village council, these two persons represent their caste. In addition, Amoli also holds the office of the *up*-sarpanch of the school committe. Being more learned than any other man in the village, Sunaooram is respected by all the villagers. But he has still to assume an effective role in village leadership.

Statutory panchayat:

In the matter of village panchayat constituted under the Panchayat Act, Amwar is linked with Masna and other villages. To this body, the village sends one representative. Tenda speaks for his village in the statutory Village Panchayat. People in general, however, appeared to be unconcerned about this Panchayat. and many did not even know that it was meant for their village also. Holding office in that body is thus not associated with authority and power in the village. It was not possible at this enquiry to study working of this Panchayat at Masna, though local accounts at Amwar were adequate to show that it functioned in name only.

Attitude and levels of awareness:

In order to study that levels of awareness and attitude of the people towards local institutions as well as about things which an ordinary citizen of the country should know, ten heads of households were interviewed on questionnaire designed for the purpose. The persons interviewed were:

Baiga

(1) Tenda (2) Dukal (3) Sukhlal (4) Netu, and (5) Nangu.

Gond

(1) Mangal (2) Amoli (3) Sardu, and (4) Chamra.

Mohammadan

(1) Chhote Khan.

The result of the interview are described hereafter.

1 *Land reforms*—All the ten persons interviewed were aware of the abolition of malguzari; and with two exceptions all declared that they were now happier. They were now free from *begar* or forced labour which the malguzar extracted from them, and also the excesses which were perpetrated on them by the *mukhtiar* or agent of the malguzar. None knew the name of the Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code, but all of them appeared to be vaguely aware of some of its important provisions. Thus, they said that they had heard that now land would pass on to the person who cultivated it for three years; that land of one *nangar* could not be attached or snatched from them under any circumstances. On the question of land which would be sufficient to support a family, all answered that 10 acres of good land, or 15 acres of poor land would be enough for maintaining a family well.

2. *About the school*—Seven persons answered that they did not know whether the school had been recognised by the Government; one (Tenda) said that it had received *manjuri* from the Government while two argued that since the school was running it must have given recognition by the Government. None seemed to know whether the Government had sanctioned any money for the construction of a school building, and from where the teachers were paid. Five persons professed complete ignorance as to who or which body was running the school. One (Mangal Gond) said that probably the school was run by the 'Sarkar', but in the village they knew simply that Sunaooram was running the school. Three others said that it was Sunaooram who was running the school, and he had kept the second teacher in his *Aibaji*—(i.e. as a substitute). Only Tenda seemed to know a little more. He said that the school was being run by Sunaooram and "Maharajpur wale Sahab" (the reference is to the Banwasi Sewa Mandal which has its headquarters in Maharajpur, Mandla). It is, however, surprising that not one of the ten respondents knew that the school was being run by the Banwasi Sewa Mandal. More surprising is the fact that only two viz. Chote Khan and Tenda knew that there was an organisation of the name Banwasi Sewa Mandal which had its headquarters at Maharajpur in Mandla.

Seven persons said there was no school committee in the village, while two said that they did not know whether there was a school committee in the village. Only one said that there was a committee which met on occasions. This was Dukal who is reported to be the Sarpanch of the school committee. Five persons did not know in what capacity Sunauram was connected with the school, though they said he was formerly teaching the boys. Others of course knew that Sunauram was supervising the school. Out of those examined, four persons had children of school going age in their houses. Of these one i.e. Dukal Baiga was sending all three of his children (including two girls) to the school; Netu Baiga had two children, but he was sending only one to the school while he utilised the other for domestic work; the third, Sukhlal Baiga had one child of school going age who was reading in the school. Only Tenda Baiga who had one son of school going age did not send him to the school. He said that previously he was sending this child to school, but since nothing was being taught there he withdrew him from the school. All were, however, agreed that school was an useful institution and it should be continued in their village.

About statutory gram panchayat :

All said that there was no Gram Panchayat in their village, and with the exception of one, said that it was in Murta village. Only one said that it was in Masna village: (The headquarter of the Gram Panchayat is at Murta and not Masna, the latter is only a village which like Amwar is in the jurisdiction of the Panchayat).

Only four persons of Amwar knew the name of the Sarpanch of the Panchayat, while only one knew the name of the *up*-sarpanch. Regarding the functions of the Gram Panchayat a variety of answers were returned, but generally people thought that it was a body for resolving village disputes. Thus Bhursu Baiga opined "The Gram Panchayat does not do any work. We do not have any benefit from it. If we have any quarrel we go and make a report at the Mawai police station; we do not go to Murta". Dukal was of the view that Gram Panchayat was concerned with 'adult education'. Chhote Khan said that their village was not sending any disputes to the Gram Panchayat. Tenda was, however, of the opinion that the Gram Panchayat was not doing any thing for their village. Six persons said they had no idea of the functions or duties of the Gram Panchayat. Regarding the utility or usefulness of the Gram Panchayat the consensus of opinion was that it was of no use to their village as it was not situated in their village.

Service cooperative society :

Regarding this also the respondents betrayed a singular lack of knowledge. In this connection, it has been stated earlier that the society has been registered in the name of Amwar village, and its office, godown etc. are to be constructed in the village. Still eight of the ten respondents said that there was no cooperative in their village; one said that he had heard the name of the society, and the other said that it was to be started. (This information was given in June 1963, when the society had already started functioning as per records of the District Organiser, Mandla, and the manager was working from village Mawai. All said that the cooperative society was situated in Mawai and that its Manager was 'Bandar' (The reference was to the Multipurpose Cooperative Society at Mawai of which the Manager is one Banarjee). On being specifically asked whether the manager of the Amwar service cooperative had ever come to Amwar, the answer generally returned was that he had not.

General Information :

While none knew who the Collector was and where he lived, all knew that the tahsildar had headquarters at Mandla. Some of them knew about the S.D.O. (Civil) also. They were ignorant of the existence of the other district officers. They were, however, aware that the forest Ranger stayed at Motinala (the official staying in Motinala is only a Deputy Ranger). They were aware of the lower officials of the police and the forest departments.

Geography :

With the exception of Chhote Khan and Sardoo, no one in the village knew the name of the country. These two persons named the country as 'Hindustan'. Again only these two persons knew the name of the State and that its headquarters were at Bhopal. The comparatively better knowledgeability of these two persons is to be ascribed to their having travelled more than the other villagers. All of course knew the name of the district and the tahsil and the names of the rivers Narbada and Burhner. They, however, did not know the names of other big rivers in the country.

Very few persons in the village have travelled by the railway, and not many have even seen the headquarters town. Only one man—Chhote-Khan has seen a motion picture. The radio of course is not much of a stranger as many had listened to the radio in one or other of the big-

ger villages like Bajag, Dindori, Motinala etc. No newspaper ever finds its way into the village because with the exception of Sonauram, none in the village can read a newspaper. The villagers usually gather information about the world at large from Mawai market; but then again, the frontiers of their world cease for most matters at the district headquarters. An average man in the village is interested only in the village. Strangely enough politics—local or of the district—does not appear to have reached the village, and there was no evidence of any political affiliations in village. They were not interested in the Government, or the party which captured the Government as long as their fields gave them enough return. Naturally there can be no question of their being interested in national or international politics.

CONCLUSION

We are now at the end of our socio-economic study of Amwar, a small multi-tribal village, unobtrusively situated in the forest fastnesses of the Maikal hills in Mandla tahsil of Mandla district. The country in which Amwar is situated was rather late in being opened up to western civilization (in the limited sense of accessibility and extension of administration) and till lately inhabitants of the more accessible and developed parts of the State were wont to refer to it as the *ultima thule* of civilization, the dreaded home of the tiger, the Gond and the devil[1]". The forest and hilly habitats of the Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla even to this day have only a nodding acquaintance with civilization and the material amenities and comforts provided by it. In fact, as so aptly put by Stephen Fuchs,[2] the aboriginals inhabiting Eastern Mandla have seen it (civilization) passing in the form of buses (and occasionally now-a-day flying in the shape of an aeroplane); it also made itself felt in the guise of British rule, by the tightening of Government control and particularly by the restriction of *bewar* cultivation.

Culturally Amwar is part of a wider region consisting of portions of Mandla, Shahdol, Bilaspur and Durg districts surrounding the Maikal hill system, and inhabited by the cultivating tribes Gond, Baiga and Dhoba, their artisans like the Agaria and Kumhar and the village servants like Ahir and Panika etc. The rural community of Amwar is still at a very low level of material culture. Worldly possessions are the barest few including mainly the common household earthen and wooden utensils, bamboo artifacts, the weapons of hunt like the bow and the arrow and sparingly one or two musical instruments. Dressing habits show the last sophistication, the tradition having mythological sanction of the majority community being to wear as little as possible. Some amount of sophistication in dress is being inducted by the Gond inhabitants of the village who are comparatively more widely travelled and also economically better of. Houses are mostly single-roomed structures of wood and bamboo, with plinthless mud-plastered walls and simple two-face, thatch-covered roofs.

Amwar is inhabited by a multi-tribal rural community, consisting of households of Bhumia or Bharotia Baiga, Nagbansee Gond, Mukhi (Patharia) Agaria, Kaonra Ahir, Dhoba and Khoja Mohammadan. The Baiga are numerically predominant, followed by the Gond, Agaria, Ahir, Muslim and the Dhoba. The larger endogamous groups referred to as Baiga (Bharotia), (Nagbansee) Gond, Kaonra Ahir, Dhoba and the Patharia Agaria are segmented into smaller exogamous clans, mostly partrilineal (called *'got'*) and territorial (called *'garh'*).

In case of the Gond, each clan has an animal or plant as totem. The Gonds are also segmented into exogamous groups based on the number of gods worshipped. These groups were wider than the clan-groups known as *gotra.*

An interesting feature of social structure of the Amwar rural community is the grouping of a number of villages (village is the smallest territorial unit of the groups) for adjudication of breaches of caste norms. This socio-political grouping of villages is known as *chhakka* or the 'six' though the number of villages in a *chhakka* is not necessarily six. At the head of a *chhakka* is a *kurha* who is assisted by other tribal office-bearers. The offices of *kurha* and others are hereditary.

Social organisation in the village retains its tribal roots as regards external forms and observances, but the folklore content behind many of these are either forgotten or are but vaguely remembered. Many persons in the village did not know the names of their *got* or *garh* or their totem animal or the number of gods worshipped. It is quite likely—if we can take this as trend of the social change—that coming generations will be still less conversant with their tribal legends and folklore and this in its turn will further undermine the old social institutions and mores.

There is not much of social stratification; there being little rigidity about caste or tribal rules as to commensality and marriage. Untouchability is more or less unheard of, and even the Agaria who is considered ritually of a lower stratum, is not looked down upon. Harmonious relations subsist between the different social groups living in the village and particularly gratifying is the way in which the muslim household has identified itself with the other communities in the village. Not only there is nothing like communal animosity but the Muslim household has adopted many social customs of the majority communities even though these are perhaps not justified by the Muslim scriptures. Caste or religion thus does not obstruct social intercourse in the village.

1. Rudman, F.R.R., Central Provinces—District Gazetteers—Mandla District, Vol. A, 1912 ; p. 2.
2. Fuchs Stephen, The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla, 1960, p. 568.

Religion in Amwar consists of a bundle of beliefs and superstitions and practices based thereon. The pantheon is big, consisting of regional, household, tribal and family gods. New gods are being inducted into the pantheon, mainly as a result of intrusion of non-tribal Hindu influence; while some of the old practices, like that of the *larukaj* are beginning to be questioned by some sections of the community. Already in the neighbouring Sunehra, the *larukaj* is beginning to be identified with and supplanted by the non-tribal *'Satyanarain ki katha'*.

An interesting thing about many village gods is that though many of them bear *puranic* names, still the powers and functions attributed to them, and the legendary origins ascribed to them have no relation with the *puranic* versions. It thus seems that though tribal pantheon has borrowed from the pantheon of the non-tribals, in the process of intregation in the tribal religious tabric, the gods stand completely metamorphosed in functions. Many gods are conceived of as malevolent or easily annoyed supernatural beings and for their propitiation, the village *guniya* (who is also the witch doctor) is responsible. Among the functions assigned to the latter, an important one is to diagnose by his magic powers the causes of illness of an individual and to arrange for the propitiation of the angered god. He also performs certain magico-religious rites annually like the *bida* and *bidri-banana,* the one for driving away evil spirits and gods and the other for propitiating the gods with a view to induce crop-fertility. Belief in ghosts is also deeply rooted. Brahmins have as yet no place in the village religion, though with the induction of religious observances like the *'Satyanarain ki katha'*, their intrusion in the village now seems only a matter of time.

Winds of change are blowing in the village as regards education also. Though barring a couple of Gonds, literacy is simply non-existent in the village community, there was happily not much evidence of resistance to the movement for educating the children. In fact, all communities were sending children to the village school started hardly year before this enquiry started. Some families do so out of a conviction as to the usefulness of education, while many do so, at present, more under pressure from these families and even send children by rotation. Economic reasons prevent parents from sending all children in the school-going ages to the school. No doubt quite a few families still cling to their old hostile attitude towards educating their children, but if the present trends are any indication, it will not be long before even these diehards give in.

Economically, the village presents a dismal picture. Its is a stagnant, more or less subsistence economy, the motive of production being mainly domestic consumption or barter. Wants being the barest minimum, cash is not much in need except for paying the small land-revenue and for purchasing cloth, earthen utensils, kerosene oil, some sugar, *gur* and salt. Some of the traditional services like those of the Agariya and the Ahir are paid in kind, while some other like those of carpenter. Basor are performed by the villagers themselves. In other needs, the village is more or less self-sufficient.

Village economy hinges round agriculture and collection of forest produce. Amwar is interesting from the economic standpoint because it still shows a co-existence of the hoe and the plough cultures. Quite a few Baiga families still pursue their traditional *bewar*—a form of shifting cultivation where a forest is cut and burnt *in situ* and crops sown in the ash-bed. Some of the households practise only *bewar,* others practise it with modicum of settled plough cultivation, while yet others do only settled cultivation. Baiga in the village still generally retain their traditional attitudes towards *bewar.* The arguments advanced for persisting in *bewar* are mainly economic. It is said that poverty prevents them from taking to the costly plough cultivation, which requires bulls, ploughs, even manures. On the other hand, *bewar* requires nothing but manual labour which they can do in plenty, and besides it was said that crops were reasonably assured in *bewar.* In settled plough cultivation, there is no evidence of an attempt at improvement of land, manuring, irrigating or taking to improved agricultural practices. The sturdier millets are preferred as these yield greater returns and are perhaps less liable to be damaged. Though not very enthusiastic, people in the village did not seem entirely unresponsive to introduction of improvements in the techniques of cultivation. The forest labourers co-operative society recently set up by the Tribal Welfare Department and the agriculture section of Mawai Block may do some useful work in this direction.

Functional specialisation is seen to a limited extent. The Agarias only are permitted to smelt iron and forge it while only the Ahir is permitted to tend the village herd. Some other occupations like making of earthen pottery, weaving of cloth, basketry and bamboo work etc., are permitted only to certain castes; but even all these castes may and do take to agriculture in addition to the function in which the caste specialises. Loosening of hold of tradition of functional specialisation is also seen in the case of one Gond who has taken to the business of selling *biri* and kerosene in the village. Baiga in the village seem to be the most change-resisting community in the village.

Amwar is typical of the scores of villages of eastern Mandla situated far beyond the influences of urban and industrial settings. Lack of com-

munications, very low levels of political consciousness, prevalence more or less of total illiteracy, and pre-occupation of the villagers in the tasks of bread-winning cloud the world-view of the inhabitants of the village and the social and economic borders of their world do not generally extend much further beyond the narrow circumscribed areas inhabited by other members of the sub-tribes or castes to which they belong. Psychologically likewise the grip of the hoe culture conditions the thinking of the inhabitants of the majority community on almost everything and makes the pace of social and economic change very slow. No doubt even in this secluded setting, urban influences do seep in mainly through the culturally and economically more advanced Gond community and in that direction lies the hope in the future.

The school started by the Banwasi Sewa Mandal and the forest labourers co-operative society started through their initiative if suitably directed can stimulate and quicken the pace of social and economic change, reduce the very, wide gulf that separates the village from thinking associated with modern civilization and wean the majority community away from clutches of shifting cultivation.

APPENDIX A

Distribution of Scheduled Baigas in the State

Total Baiga population in the State: 144,005

Name of district	Total population	Total Baiga population	Percentage of Baiga to total district population	Percentage of district Baiga population to State's Baiga population
1	2	3	4	5
Shahdol	829,649	71,061	8·6	49·3
Mandla	684,503	31,769	4·6	22·1
Sidhi	580,129	20,624	3·0	14·3
Balaghat*	806,702	8,738	1·1	6·1
Surguja	1,036,738	7,480	0·7	5·2
Bilaspur	2,021,793	2,916	0·1	2·0
Seoni	523,741	697	0·1	0·5
Jabalpur	1,273,825	399	0·0	0·3
Rewa	772,602	285	0·0	0·2
Others		36	..	N

*Only Balaghat and Baihar tahsils.

APPENDIX B

Distribution of Scheduled Gond population by Districts

Total Gond population of the State: 2,547,478

Name of District	Total population	Gond population	Percentage of Gond to total population of the district	Percentage of district Gond to State Gond population
1	2	3	4	5
Mandla	684,503	347,521	50·77	13·6
Bastar	1,167,501	235,265	20·15	9·2
Chhindwara	785,535	227,889	29·01	8·9
Surguja	1,036,738	222,278	21·44	8·7
Shahdol	829,649	206,619	24·83	8·0
Raipur	2,002,004	199,472	9·96	7·8
Bilaspur	2,021,793	197,924	9·79	7·8
Seoni	523,741	177,603	33·91	7·0
Betul	560,412	121,748	21·72	4·8
Durg	1,885,236	119,599	6·34	4·7
Sidhi	580,129	89,327	15·40	3·5
Balaghat	806,702	74,223	9·20	2·9
Jabalpur	1,273,825	64,094	5·03	2·5
Naisen	411,426	49,628	12·06	1·9
Raigarh	1,041,226	46,379	4·45	1·8
Narsimhapur	412,406	44,064	10·68	1·7
Hoshangabad	618,293	36,080	5·84	1·4
Satna	694,370	20,191	2·91	0·8
Panna	331,257	19,579	5·91	0·8
Dewas	446,901	13,120	2·94	0·5
East Nimar	685,150	8,979	1·31	0·3
Rewa	772,602	5,344	0·69	0·2
Chhatarpur	587,373	2,848	0·48	0·1
Vidisha	489,213	2,628	0·54	0·1
West Nimar	990,464	928	0·09	N
Guna	595,825	635	0·11	N
Mandsaur	752,085	525	0·07	N
Indore	753,594	272	0·04	N
Ratlam	493,521	121	0·03	N

It is only Scheduled population, and those returning themselves as Gonds and not as one of the bracketed sub-tribes.
Source: Unpublished Census tables.

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