

सत्यमेव जयते

# CENSUS OF INDIA 1961

## VOLUME VIII

## MADHYA PRADESH

## PART VI

## VILLAGE SURVEY MONOGRAPHS

No. 10

## GADHER
## TAHSIL & DISTRICT GUNA

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*Madhya Pradesh*

1968

## 1961 CENSUS PUBLICATIONS, MADHYA PRADESH

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

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|---|---|
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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 by-paths' and 'nearly every branch of scholarship, from anthropology and sociology to geography 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 decentralisation 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 day's 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 afield, 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 vessels; 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, introduced 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 interrelated 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.

# VILLAGE SURVEYS IN MADHYA PRADESH

Fortynine villages were initially selected in Madhya Pradesh for these surveys on the basis of four main considerations. First, the caste indicated for a particular district should be dominant in the villages. The principal caste/s of the district was/were determined on the basis of the 1931 Census returns as castewise or tribewise figures were not available in full for later Censuses. The second, which was also sociological, was that the village should be, as far as possible, at a certain specified distance from the nearest urban area. It was felt that a study of villages at different distances from urban centres would help us understand the strength of the forces of urbanisation. The 43 districts of the State were arranged in the order of Census location code numbers and a set of three distances (15, 25 and 35 miles) was repeated, only one figure appearing against each village. It was likely that this procedure would impart a somewhat random character to the sample in respect of urbanisation. Next came two administrative considerations: first, the village was to have a population within the range 250-400 yielding thereby some 50-80 households. It would have been impossible to cover a larger number of households in the desirable degree of detail. Second, the village should not have been already surveyed by a different agency. Though normally it was to be one village per district an extra village was selected in districts with a population of more than a million each so that the total number rose to 49 instead of being 43.

2. While it was not expected that it would be possible to stick to the exact distance (from the nearest urban centre) given for each village, it proved difficult to ensure that a village of the given population size also contained a large proportion of the members of a particular caste or tribe. This to some extent has distorted the pattern of purposes that governed the selection. It was also difficult to re-do the selection because it was not certain that a second attempt would succeed. In the last thirty years, the composition of the population seems to have changed quite a lot in some areas. And, we had no figures whatever to go on with so far as the 1960-61 distribution of the population among castes/tribes in villages was concerned. In any case, the main purpose of these surveys was to obtain a detailed picture of present day rural life and the statewise scatter of localities required for the purpose was ensured by making the district the primary group of the villages selected, 9 had each a dominant (Scheduled) caste; 16 had each a dominant (scheduled) tribe; and the remaining were multi-caste and/or multi-tribal villages.

3. It was soon discovered that it would be impossible to make a reasonably good job of the survey in respect of all the 49 villages. We started with a very simple questionnaire which was expanded in due course to some 70 or 80 pages. An attempt was made to make them factual but whether the investigator's or somebody else's view of the hierarchical level of a particular caste (or tribe) is objective enough to be considered substantially valid fact, is a difficult question to settle but inquiries of this kind were included. This basic survey was left to an official selected by the district authorities; in quite a few villages the results were not unsatisfactory. But the official of the Census Organisation who had to write the report found it necessary to go to the village once or twice again not only to go through most of the schedules right on the spot but also to collect some more information on particular aspects and prepare the pictorial part of the survey (photographs and drawings). It was at this stage generally that I came into the picture. I have also myself seen a few of the villages. My scrutiny of the first draft resulted in a number of suggestions

which were incorporated, the draft finalised and sent upto the Registrar General. The trouble with a survey of this kind is that there can be no end to it even though it is micro-cosmic in character. We tried our best to modify the report again in the light of the criticism made by the Registrar General. What happened as a result of the approach was that the number of villages we could deal with was determined by the number of officials we had in the Census Organisation who could write at least presentable first drafts. The initial ambitious design was, therefore, abandoned and the hope at present (December 1965) is that we should be able to produce in Madhya Pradesh some 11 reports, though spade work in respect of another 10 has been completed. The only apology I can offer for publishing them is that very hard work has gone into them even though a strictly socio-logical approach might have yielded different results. In every survey, an attempt has made to delineate the 'personality' of the village even if in the process the mere recording of information on various generally important aspects may also have suffered. It is like striking out the heading, 'relationship', in a census enumeration schedule and entering 'squint-eyed' in that space. It seems to me that the Census Organisation should continue in coming Censuses to supplement their microcosmic operations with studies of this kind-which together will probably give a better picture of the varied life of our people than mere statis-tical reports. For the results to be more satisfying than they have been in this Census, it will be necessary to make a careful study of the present schedules and draw up a new one.

4. I have to acknowledge the debt of deep gratitude that we in State Census Organisa-tions owe to the Registrar General, India, Shri Asok Mitra, who initiated and directed these studies. In the State, the main burden of dealing with matters relating to these surveys fell on Shri K. C. Dubey, Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations and Shri N. B. Basu, Chief Investigator (now in the Department of Tribal Welfare) to both of whom I am extremely grateful. Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, who helped us with advice and criticism, deserves our particular thanks.

5. The main interest of this study of Gadher village (Guna district, Madhya Pradesh) is the Saheriyas, a forest tribe widely found in the north-western districts of Madhya Pradesh. Like the Bhils further south and the Gonds further south-east, the Saheriyas also have been acculturised to a considerable extent though, mysteriously enough, this process has not been as effective in the development of the acquisitive instinct as in changing their language or in creating in them a feeling that calling themselves Hindus and adopting their customs would enhance their status. Their virtues are still for the most part those one associates with a pastoral community; for instance, they are not very much encumbered in the matter of immovable property. Even today, they do not have an intelli-gent and enduring interest in settled agriculture but depend on more elementary occupations like cutting wood in the forest and selling it or casual labour. Borrowings has been fairly freely indulged in, the sources being mainly cooperative or governmental; much loan-money, however, has been misused. The village is almost completely illiterate. One of the manifestations of this lack of education is their almost complete dependence on traditional roots, herbs and charms for the treatment of illness or injury. There are hardly any opportunities for recreation in the modern sense — the occasional festival being more or less the only departure from the humdrum routine of ordinary life. These festivals are usually in Hindu style and connected with Hindu gods or goddesses. Khoobat Baba, a dhobi turned tiger, is held in high esteem and his shrine is apparently a favoured place of worship for the Saheriyas.

6. Shri K. S. Bhatnagar, the author of this survey, had done a thorough and compe-tent job and succeeds admirably in giving an authentic picture of the process of transforma-

tion which this central Indian tribe has been going through. The directions which this transformation should take have of course not been consciously chosen nor, on the other hand, have they been externally imposed. It is the familiar case of the stabler, larger group permeating the mores of smaller groups whose genesis has not been non-conformist or protestant. This does not, however, necessarily mean progress towards a more rational outlook and, unless a massive educational effort is put through and the tensions such an effort creats sympathetically but firmly tackled, there seems to be no alternative to reason and knowledge having to compete with fear and the imitative urge in shaping the pattern of social change. It is of course not clear that the absence of tension is always a societal virtue though there may be something to be said for it when a whole human mass has to change and different parts of this mass have to have different rates of change. It may be convenient and tempting to think that the very smoothness of change is proof of its acceptability and desirability but that is much too facile a doctrine and cannot stand a moment's scrutiny. It is important that the methods by which the more obviously desirable forms of social change could be introduced into, and sustained in, traditional societies be studied and understood.

New Delhi
18-3-1968.

G. JAGATHPATHI,
*Joint Secretary,*
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Government of India
(Formerly) Superintendent of Census Operations,
Madhya Pradesh.

# PREFACE

This is an attempt to present a study of a road-side tribal settlement. The National Highway 3 winds its tortuous way through remnants of what was probably once a thick jungle. The steady process of opening up the countryside for settlement has denuded the land of the woods that encompassed it. Across the highway on the west lies the village, peaceful — peaceful and quiet despite the roar of the heavy traffic, gearing to climb the hill feature or honking its way down the slope. Like the brook the traffic glides almost 'for ever'. The seven tonner Leyland truck fully loaded — rather overloaded and the small Volkswagon carrying some foreign tourists in their colourful dresses are common sights. Apart from being on the road the village is also near the main urban centre of the district viz. Guna, and thus presents a good opportunity for studying the effects of its nearness to an urban centre, a feature that has had a remarkable effect upon the economy and the way of life, of the village.

We took up this study while, I was in the charge of Gwalior Tabulation Office in January 1962, and pursued it after moving to Bhopal in August 1962. The field Investigations were conducted in various stages by Shri S. K. Varma, Investigator of the Census Office. I took up the field enquiry in summer of 1963 completing it by last week of November 1963. (I was on way to Guna to complete the field study when the news of the assassination of President Kennedy was flashed). The report was ready by the summer of 1964 but later some more investigation was conducted and the scope enlarged. It is indeed remarkable, how the scope can be enlarged and the study widened, for every time it reminds one, of how little has been done and how much still remains.

A few photographs in the report are mine and others were taken by Shri S. K. Varma. The sketches were initially drawn by Shri I. N. Saxena and later by Sarvashri V. Mohan and B. L. Parganiha Investigators in Census Office. The cover design is by V. Mohan. The proof reading and lay out has been carried out by Shri H. C. Jain and Shri S. K. Varma, Investigators of our office. The manuscript were typed by Shri T. S. Shendurnikar. To all of them I am extremely thankful.

The Collector and Tahsildar Guna helped me immensely during the survey. I am beholden to Shri G. Jagathpathi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi and formerly Superintendent of Census Operations, Madhya Pradesh for guiding me in the study and offering valuable comments and advice. I am further grateful to Dr. Roy Burman, Officer on Special Duty in the Registrar General's office for going through the report and enriching it with comments. For people outside the Census Organisation, it may not be easy to realise how deeply indebted we are to our indefatigable Registrar General, Shri Asok Mitra, now Secretary in the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. It is his vision splendid, that we with all our shortcomings and deficiencies, attempted to put into effect.

Kant Swarup Bhatnagar
Superintendent of Census Operations,
Madhya Pradesh.

Bhopal,
28 February 1966

The Geographical setting of Gadher
( Produced from toposheet No. 544 )
¼" sheet 15′ — Fourth Edition

30°/0′

31′

25°/45′

30′

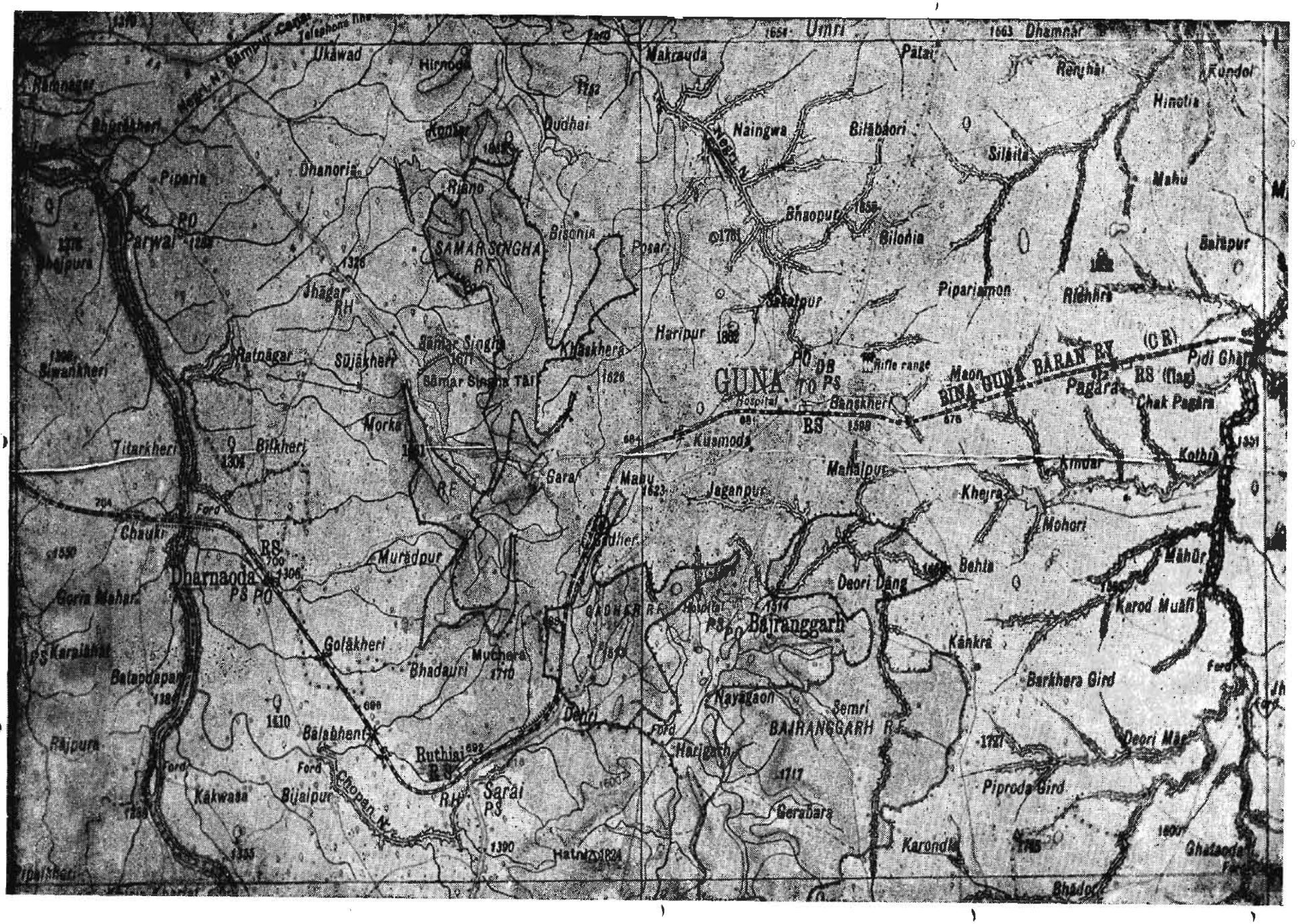


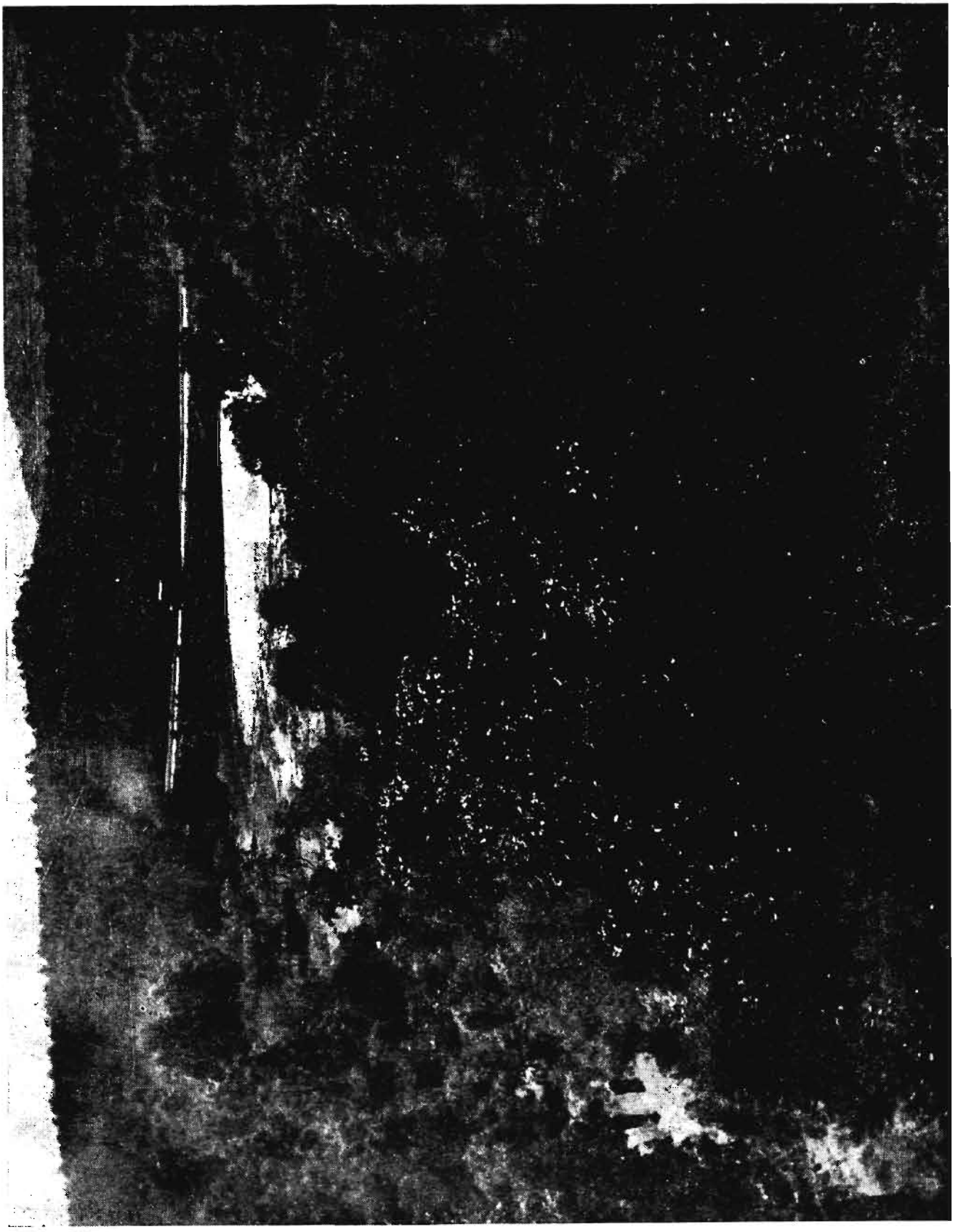

PLATE I

PLATE II

# NOTIONAL MAP OF GADHER AND IT'S ENVIRONS

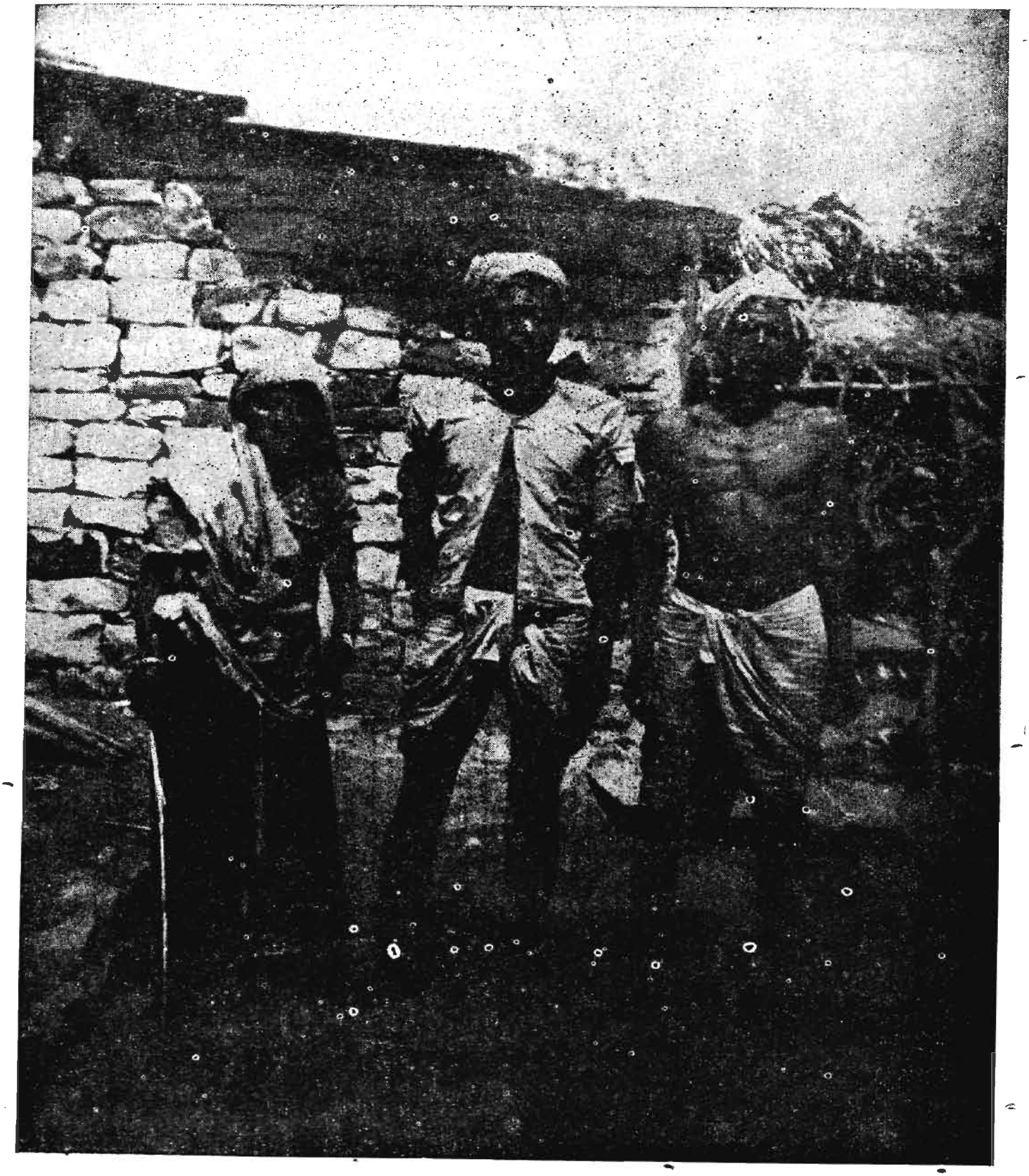


# PLATE III



A Scene from Ramkhedi
( The feature dominates the National Highway—3 )

# PLATE IV



Saheriya workers
( They were plucking Tendu leaves )

CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Gadher, population 305 persons, is a small village located at 24° 36′ north and 77° 14′ east in Guna tahsil of Guna district. It is situated on the National Highway No. 3 (Bombay-Agra Road) between mile 210-211 from Agra or between 6th and 7th mile south of Guna. About half a mile west from the village lies the railway line (Bina-Kotah section of Western Railway). The nearest stations on the north and south being Guna and Rothai six miles each. The village lies on the fringe of a reserve forest of the same name. The terrain is mostly hilly lying between 1500 and 1800 MSL, the highest point being 1875 MSL towards north-east of the village near Bajrangarh once a prosperous district headquarters now a big village (population 2,754) (Please see plates I and II).

The history of Gadher is as obscure as the village itself. It was enumerated in 1911. The inhabitants aver that the village would be about 150 years old. They explained that they were once living about a mile or two to the east in thick jungle at a place which was called Ramkhedi or Ramgadha. It was on the top of a hill and living conditions were hard, so they decided to move away and came to the present site. At present there is no village called Ramkhedi in Guna tahsil. In fact there never had been such a village. It appears that the name was only a local one and not generally used. The ruins of the place are now scattered over an area of 20 acres. It is mostly stone and mud debris that tell the tale of yester years. It was situated in thick forest on the top of a hill and overlooks a deep gorge below. Even to-day the vegetation is quite dense and a few huge trees add colour to the deserted wilderness. The site is reached by leaving the Agra-Bombay Road at furlong 4 from the main village and then turning to the north-east into the jungle. Thereafter one must climb hard and follow thorny foot-path covered with out-grown branches of nearby shrubs and trees. After covering about half a mile, one comes near the top of the hill and here lie scattered the remains, of what were once, dwellings. A few paces further one comes across some of the deities that still lie at the old village site. Even to-day occasionally the villagers trudge all the distance to offer their obeisance to the otherwise neglected deities. The hill feature towards south-west ends abruptly with huge rocks over looking a big chasm below where rain water collected to form a small lake, dammed on one side by the Agra-Bombay Road which snakes through this affluence of wilderness. Carefully perched up here, in what could be, "A Snappers Paradise" from where one could easily command this vital sector of the Highway, lie some of the neglected deities.

In these environments no wonder, life was very difficult. Water was nowhere near about. One had to go nearly a mile to get some water and the return journey with head-load of water must have been very tiring. The nearby tank lying in the gorge gave some relief, but one had to go down quite a distance to reach it, added to this was the fear of the wild animals which were in great abundance all over. The Agra-Bombay Road passing below must have tempted them to come down because of better accessibility and more easy mode of life which its proximity offered.

The first settlers of the village were the Saheriyas[1] who are known as forest dwellers. The other castes returned from the village are Rajputs, Jats and Chamars having one, two and five houses respectively. All Chamars excepting one have left the village for good. It is said that being unable to obtain land for cultivation, they left the village. They had come from an adjoining village Borkheda and have migrated to other places. Two of them have gone to Bajrangarh; details regarding others were not available.

The growth of the village has been as follows:—

| *Year* | *No. of households* | *Population* | | | *Growth* (+)(—) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *P* | *M* | *F* | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1911 | 19 | 90 | 45 | 45 | |
| 1921 | 21 | 100 | 53 | 47 | + 10 |
| 1931 | 59 | 196 | 107 | 89 | + 96 |
| 1941 | 30 | 155 | 87 | 68 | — 41 |
| 1951 | 43 | 159 | 85 | 74 | + 4 |
| 1961 | 65 | 305 | 164 | 141 | +146 |

The growth between 1921-31 is rather high. There are

1. Saheriya is a Scheduled Tribe in Guna district vide The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956.

no special reasons for it. The villagers aver that it must be attributed to temporary habitations, rising because of the work on the road or in the forest. Each year depending upon the quantum of work on the road or in the forest, the population fluctuates during spring and summer months. Except for the decade between 1941-51 when the growth is somewhat erratic, the increase has been fairly steady. In the last decade besides Saheriyas, Chamars and Jats came to settle in the village and this has caused comparatively greater increase in the decade.

The negligible growth between 1941 and 1951 is attributed by the villagers to the following causes. The population of the village broadly falls into two categories (1) those who stay permanently in the village and (2) those who do not. Generally speaking when the villagers have land and means to cultivate the same, they stick to one village and stay there. Thus cultivation in or around the village keeps them in it. To this category may be added such villagers who succeed in getting some casual employment of varying types fairly regularly during the year i. e. working with P. W. D./ Forest contractors or as agricultural labour. This forms the bulk of permanent population of the village. The second category consists of such persons who came to the village in the hope of getting some work at farms or in Guna or with the forest contractors. For a while they continue to work and then comes a slump during non-working season. They then fall out of employment, some manage to hang around precariously, while others seeking fresh pastures move away. Thus the village has some population which may be called the 'floating type'. This became still more obvious in the case of Chamars who have since left the village. Accordingly the comparatively poor increase is due to this 'floating population'. They also aver that during the winters the village receives a few persons in search of work and by the end of summer they move away.

## Climate

The seasons are fairly well marked. The village lies about 1600' above sea level on a plateau. The annual rainfall near Guna, is about 35". Monsoons break by the middle or end of June and it rains upto October. It receives the Arabian Sea monsoons. July and August are the wettest months, with forest abounding, the rainfall is slightly higher than at other places of the district. During the rains the weather remains cool. Winter sets in by about November and December-January are the coolest months with temperature going upto 40° F. From February to March it is the spring season, very pleasantly cool. With the advent of April the hot season commences and from second week of May, till the rains, the temperature shoots as high as 114° F.

## Flora or Fauna

The village being on the border of forest, the following trees are met with:—

| LOCAL NAME | BOTANICAL NAME |
|---|---|
| *kardhai* | *Anogeissus pendula* |
| *ber* | *Zizyphus jujuba* |
| *khair* | *Acacia catechu* |
| *tendu* | *Diospyros melanoxylon* |
| *chhokar or chhola* | *Butea frondosa* |
| *babul* | *Acacia arabica* |
| *imli* | *Tamarindus indica* |
| *sheeshum* | *Dalbergia sissu* |
| *semal* | *Bombax malabaricum* |
| *neem* | *Melia indica* |
| *amar bel* | *Agele marmelos* |

Wild animals of practically all descriptions are found viz. tigers, panthers, bears, hyenas, jackals, wolf, foxes, sambhars, cheetals, wild pigs, and nilgai along with other smaller animals are met with. Tigers, although comparatively rare now, can still be met with. No cattle lifting or man-eating tigers have been reported lately. It is said that about 20 years ago the forest was extremely thick and one could come across a tiger on the Highway.[2] These days owing to very heavy truck-traffic, specially at night time, a tiger would be rarely seen on or near the road. Reptiles and lizards abound. Snake-bite cases are often reported for which faith cure is common. Among the poisonous, snakes (*nag*), cobras (*Naga tripudians*), russel's viper (*Vipera russells*) are quite common, besides the harmless ones. Pythons though rare could still be seen near Bajrangarh. Scorpions, centipedes are also found, though their bite is not fatal.

The jungle in the past was known for its *shikar* and the former rulers of Gwalior State were fond of visiting the area for shooting animals. The forest though not as dense as it used to be sometime ago, still forms the major background to the village economy and life, and with a little luck one may still shoot a panther near about the village.

2. In 1948 while motoring to Guna I came across a full grown tiger at a spot about half mile south of the village at about 7.00 P. M. on an early April evening.

## The Village Settlement

The earliest inhabitants are the Saheriyas — a Scheduled Tribe. They were the first dwellers. They claim to have been dwelling in the forests since time immemorial. As described earlier difficult conditions on top of the hill brought them down to the present site. Saheriyas have been followed by Jats, Rajputs and Chamars that order.

The Rajput family descends from an ancestor who came to stay here about two generations ago. During the reign of Maharaj Madhav Rao (1886-1925) a small out-post was established and the Thakur was posted in the charge of it. It was his duty to patrol the area covering 6/8 villages round about and prevent the smuggling of food-stuffs, to and from other Rajasthan States. For all exports and imports a duty was levied; some items were prohibited for export. Consequently it was the duty of the guard to apprehend these law-breakers. No specific place was assigned from where he could keep a watch; he was required to move around and see that no smuggling took place. The family came from district Bhind in north. This northern district supplied Gwalior State Forces with men; even today, it is a good recruiting district for the country's Armed Forces. The family having come from district Bhind is now permanently settled at Gadher. Earlier, they lived at a nearby village called Panj about a mile south-east to Gadher, but subsequently they acquired some lands and moved over to Gadher. One family hailing from the same stock has thus settled down. Rajputs therefore came to this area about 80 years ago.

The Jats have been in Guna district for quite a long time. The families that came to this village did so about 10/12 years ago. Prior to coming here they had lived in Panj village referred to earlier. It so happened that some agricultural lands in the village belonged to a Muslim Jagirdar who migrated to Pakistan after 1947-48. The Jats purchased lands from him and later came over to stay in the village. One of them is the village head-man to-day. Originally the Jats were resident of district Agra.

The Chamars came from village Borkheda about three miles south-west of Gadher. There they had no lands and little employment and so they came to the village after the Jats. They lived in the village for some time, eking out a meagre subsistence and finding little hope for any economic betterment decided to leave that village. They have been reported to have left it sometime in 1961-62 agricultural season, having stayed for about 7/8 years.

The Jat Patel or head-man of the village states that sixty years ago there was only one big cluster of huts at the present village site. He was then staying at Panj. He added that it belonged to the Saheriyas and as many as 15 families stayed in it. The Saheriyas thus lived together in their own clusters. Even today the cluster remains very much intact. When the others came they built their huts wherever they could and so the village grew up as and when people came to settle in it.

## The Village Contacts

Before coming down to live at the present site, the villager's exclusive contact with other places, was with Bajrangarh which used to be the district headquarters. In the erstwhile Gwalior State Bajrangarh 24° 35′ north and 77° 20′ east was the headquarters of the district known as Isagarh, from a town of the same name. In Guna the British had located their troops. An Assistant to the Resident was also stationed here; the entire area having been given to the British by the ruler, was placed under the control of the Resident at Gwalior. The British later handed over the cantonment to the State and thereafter district offices were shifted on 5th November 1922.

Bajrangarh was once known as Jharkon, and it was a Khichi stronghold. The village now appears in ruins and a great wall around it still reminds one of its importance at one time, as a strategic military base. When the Khichis were driven away from Rajasthan they came to this place and built it up as their bastion. It was re-named Bajrangarh in honour of their tutelary deity. In 1816 Jean Baptiste Filose captured it and since then it remained a territory with the Scindias. The Khichis who continued to hold territories around it, still held Raghogarh, a tahsil headquarters of the district, before it was merged in the new State of Madhya Bharat.

The picturesque fort around it now falling in ruins recalls its turbulent past. The villagers reach this ruined habitation by a cross-country foot path involving three miles of tedious walk over rough and hilly terrain. Bajrangarh is also connected to Guna by a pacca road and lies 5 miles to the south. As Guna expanded steadily the villagers started going there for purchasing their various requirements. Sunday is a market day at Guna locally called *hat* and so the villagers trek the distance to make their purchases. Except for a visit necessitated by personal reasons, they do not go towards Rothai in the south. In Guna they also sell whatever commodity they have to. Mostly it is fuel, timber,

grass and other forest produce which they may have been able to get. They get better price and a fairly ready market at Guna.

## The Administrative Link

Guna, the tahsil and district headquarters is the main administrative link. The village is covered by NES Block from Guna. All departments at district level have their headquarters at Guna. The important ones are listed below:—

(1) The Collectorate;
(2) The Civil & Criminal Courts upto District and Sessions Court;
(3) The Divisional Forest Office;
(4) Executive Engineer, P.W.D., and Irrigation;
(5) Schools and Degree College;
(6) The Co-operative Bank etc.

## The Village Institutions

A Panchayat Bhawan has been located in the village. The Panchayat is known as Hilagana Panchayat after the name of a big village in its jurisdiction. The building has been located here because of the village being situated on the road. A Primary School is also located in the village. The old building has fallen into a state of disrepair and so the classes are held in the Panchayat building. There is a forest out-post or *chowki* in the village with a forest guard staying there. There are as many as three pacca wells in the village and except for one the rest are owned by the State. The water in the wells is sweet. Besides the above, there is another *katcha* well. This is also owned by the State. There is one temple dedicated to God Shiva 1/2 mile away. The temple is reported to be an old one and is located in the small cave. It is said that a sage had constructed it by begging at various places. A fair is held each year on Mondays of the month of *Shravana*. The temple was re-constructed about 30 years ago. A *Pujari* lives at the temple. The villagers visit the temple frequently, mostly in the evening; although no ritual is associated with this. A fair is also held at the time of *Shivaratri* falling in the month of *Phalguna* or February/March each year. All castes and tribes of the village frequent the temple.

It is said that about 100 years ago there lived a hermit near the spot where the cave is located. This hermit was 90 years old and was highly respected in the region. He collected funds from adjoining villages including Guna and then had the building constructed. The idol which was already there, was then adequately enshrined. During the month of *shravana,* hawkers come from Guna and as many as 350-500 persons assemble on the mondays of *sharavana.*

CHAPTER II

# THE PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL EQUIPMENT

## Ethnic Composition of the Village

There are four castes in the village viz. (1) Saheriyas (57 households), (2) Jats (2 households), (3) Chamars (1 household) and (4) Rajputs (1 household).

## Saheriyas

The Saheriyas are a Scheduled Tribe for Guna district. Nothing precise is known regarding the origin of Saheriyas; they themselves are not able to offer any explanation. They do not seem to remember folklores regarding their origin, one elderly type in the village however came out with the following version of their origin. Brahma, the Creator was busy casting the Universe. He made out a place to seat all persons. In the centre of the place he placed one Saheriya who was a simpleton. As others came, they also began to sit and gradually pushed the Saheriya to the further end of the square. By the time all had come this Saheriya was pushed to an extreme corner or *khoont*[3]. When Brahma returned he saw the Saheriya in the corner. He asked him how he came there and the naive Saheriya replied that he had been pushed by others. Annoyed at this Brahma chided him saying that he was a misfit and unable to live together with others, therefore, he was cursed and sent away to live away from places where men congregate. And this is why Saheriyas came to stay in forests, jungles and such cut off places. According to him Saheriyas were once known as *khoontiya patels* in the region.

Another version given was that they hail from the same stock as Bhils, a common father, but as time passed, the two brothers went to eke out their living in opposite directions and then never did the twain meet. The Bhils, however, regarded themselves superior to Saheriyas and at present although they may interdine but marriages between two communities are not performed.

In 1901 the Saheriyas were described as a "quiet and primitive tribe with many exogamous sub divisions, which, however are said to be totemistic and not social; but when they come in contact with other tribes, such as Bhils, caste influence supervenes, for Bhils will not eat with or from Saharyas, though the latter have no such scruple as regards Bhils. The cause of this is that the Saharyas eat carrion and are therefore pollutted".[4] In the last sixty years the Saheriyas have given up carrion eating and Bhils take pacca food with them.

The Saheriyas do not know as to from where they came. The villagers aver that they have been there since ages and do not at all recollect if ever they migrated to these regions. The Saheriyas in the past were a jungle tribe, even now most of them live in the jungles. "The jungle is their home and provides them directly or indirectly with their subsistence." This was written in 1931, it is true even now but the wind of change is seemingly effecting the Saheriyas now, though in a very small measure.

In 1901 the Saheriyas were classified as "Animists" being regarded as follower of primitive form of religion which supposes that each of the forces of nature is controlled by a spirit or spirits who must be worshipped and conciliated. Johnstone found that they worshipped *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) and other trees with offerings of water and that they (Saheriyas) had no respect for cows and did not employ Brahmin priests.[5] Saheriyas have long ceased to be called Animists. They have been enumerated as Hindus because they declared themselves to be so and classification as Animists was given up 30 years ago.

In Chapter I, a brief reference to old village site has been made. The village was inhabited entirely by the Saheriyas: but this was a long time ago and today or for that matter since about 50/60 years ago, the Saheriyas do not live exclusively in their own forest villages but have come over to other villages, in many cases with mixed populations. Investigations by N. B. Bonarjee, ICS in Lalitpur Sub-division round about 1930 revealed the same tendency. Since Jhansi district and more particularly Lalitpur Sub-division is contiguous

3. 'Khoont' a Hindi word meaning border, side; khoont thus means corner.
4. Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXI, Part I, Report, By J. W. D. Johnstone, Census Commissioner, Gwalior State, p. 132.
5. Ibid.

to Guna it might be of some interest to refer to Bonarjee.

"They are now to be found not only in forest tracts but scattered throughout areas where no forest exists at all and many reside in Lalitpur municipality itself. There is no such thing as a complete Saheriya village, nor do any ruined sites exist in jungle areas which are said to have been inhabited exclusively by Saheriyas in the past. Usually Saheriyas inhabit 10 to 12 houses in a village which constitute a separate *muhalla* itself. This scattering of the tribe is important for it has increased the contact with the Hindu culture and greatly increased the rapidity of Hinduisation".[6]

## Migration of Tribes

C. S. Venkatachar is of the opinion that the present day tribes including Saheriyas have perhaps migrated into India from the west. He advances the following view:— "It may be hazarded as a point of view worth consideration that one of these took place due to sudden climatic changes. An important crisis occured in a early history of man when the northern ice cap over Europe retreated and the climatic belt that lay over Sahara followed it. The grassland of Sahara began to dry up. This resulted in the migration of the animals to more favoured regions and the hunters who hunted them followed them. These hunters spread towards the Nile and later on appear to have extended upto the Vindhyan hills in India and even to Ceylon".[7] He continues "These people largely lived on a small game, shot with their bows and arrows and supplemented their diet by digging up adible roots with hoes of flint.[8] Further, these people, we may designate as the proto-mediterraneans. They conquered or blended with (whatever process took place if it did at all) the early pre-Dravidian element in these parts. Nothing very definite, however, is so far known about the presence of a Negrito element in the aboriginal population of India in general and in the primitive tribes of Central India in particular. These proto-mediterraneans constitute the first of the racial strata in the Central parts of India and it is these whom we call the Munda tribes. They have at the present day everywhere been submerged by the later invasions and are mere remnants of a vanished people in the hills of Central India, represented by the Baiga, Kol, Saheriya, Sonr, Korku and Bhil tribes. The Austric family of languages should be associated with these people and the Munda branch of this family still survives in island patches in the Central regions".[9]

In view of their antiquity and prolonged stay since time immemorial, the tribes have imbibed a sort of a tradition and they claim to belong to the place where they are found. This is what probably made Bonarjee say, to all intents and purposes they (Saheriyas) may be regarded as Indigenous.[10]

Saheriyas in Census appeared as 'Aboriginals' in 1891, Animists in 1901, 11 and 21 and thereafter as Tribals.

## Their Spread out

Saheriyas are spread over the north-western districts of Madhya Pradesh commencing from Vidisha. They are mostly forest dwellers. In urban areas of Guna district only 619 out of 41,550 live. This is the biggest "urban concentration" in a particular district. Starting from Sehore as one goes north and north-west Saheriyas are found. In Vidisha, Guna, Shivpuri and Morena their numbers increase. The maximum concentration is in Shivpuri with 54,060 Saheriyas. In other districts the population is as follows:—

## TABLE A-1

SHOWING 1961 SAHERIYA POPULATION IN MADHYA PRADESH.

| State of M. P. | Total | | | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Persons | Males | Females | Persons | Males | Females | Persons | Males | Females |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | 174,320 | 89,185 | 85,135 | 172,677 | 88,341 | 84,336 | 1,643 | 844 | 799 |

6. Census of India, 1931, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Vol. XVIII, Part I, Report, By A. C. Turner, ICS, MBE, Superintendent Census Operations, U. P., p. 594; (Based on a very full note reported after personal investigations by N. B. Bonnarjee, Esq. ICS).
7. Corridor of Time, III 8 as quoted by C. S. Venkatachar, in Migration of Castes & Tribes into Central India & their Distribution.
8. Ibid.
9. Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, India, Part III, Ethnographical B. pp. 61-2.
10. A note on Saheriyas, By A. C. Turner, ICS, MBE, (Based on Investigations conducted by N. B. Bonarjee, Esq. ICS).

**TABLE A-2**

SHOWING SAHERIYA POPULATION IN DISTRICTS

| District | Total | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|---|
| Morena | 39,965 | 39,827 | 138 |
| Bhind | 172 | 172 | ... |
| Gwalior | 12,324 | 11,828 | 496 |
| Datia | 2,016 | 2,015 | 1 |
| Shivpuri | 54,060 | 53,844 | 216 |
| Guna | 41,550 | 40,931 | 619 |
| Tikamgarh | 12 | 12 | ... |
| Rewa | 4 | 4 | ... |
| Ratlam | 30 | 30 | ... |
| Indore | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Dewas | 102 | 102 | ... |
| Rajgarh | 907 | 905 | 2 |
| Vidisha | 18,215 | 18,093 | 122 |
| Sehore | 1,703 | 1,674 | 29 |
| Raisen | 3,256 | 3,237 | 19 |

In Guna district most of them live in Guna, Mungaoli and Ashoknagar tahsils. In the remaining two tahsils viz. Raghogarh and Chachaura their number is very small.

The Saheriyas were essentially jungle dwellers hunting and digging up edible roots for their food. They used the forest material to their advantage, depended and lived on it. Although many of them still follow the ageold traditional pattern, but deviations are being observed. They are also working as casual or agricultural labourers and in some rare cases have also taken to agriculture.

The language spoken in the village is basically Hindi, as spoken in the Malwa region. Some of the villagers speak Hindi in Rajasthani accent too. By and large the influence of Malwi seems very great; yet it is not Malwi that is spoken. The Saheriyas also speak a language recognised as *Saheriya*[11] which is Bundelkhandi Hindi spoken mostly in Sheopur sub-division of Morena district. Only two persons speaking saheriya have been returned in Gwalior division from Guna district. Saheriyas, generally speaking, speak the language of the region.

## The Jats

The Jats remember to have come from Bharatpur, Dholpur (Rajasthan) and Agra (Uttar Pradesh). They have been here for quite long time. In the erstwhile Gwalior State Jats were found all over the territories, starting from the present Bhind, Morena districts to Malwa plateau, including Shajapur, Guna, Ujjain, Mandsaur, Vidisha and portions of Dhar district.

## Their Background

Much has been written about the origin of the Jats. According to General Cunningham and Major Tod, the Jats belong to the Indo-Scythian stock. General Cunningham identifies them with Zanthii of Strabo and Jatii of Pliny and Ptolemy. Jatii entered Punjab from their home place and were firmly in it before 11th century. Tod has classed Jats as one of the Rajput tribes but Cunningham differs holding Jats to belong to Scythia being immigrants and he holds Rajputs to be of the Aryan stock.[12] Sir Herbert Risley however holds both castes as belonging to the Indo-Aryans. He wrote:— "We are concerned merely with the fact that there exists in the Punjab and Rajputana at the present day, a definite physical type, represented by the Jats and Rajputs which is marked by a relatively long (dolichocephalic) head; a straight, finely cut (leptorrhine) nose; a long symmetrically narrow face; a well developed forehead; regular features and a high facial angle. The stature is high and the general build of the figure is well proportioned being relatively massive in the Jats and relatively slender in the Rajputs. Throughout the group the predominant colour of the skin is a very light transparent brown with a tendency towards darker shades in the lower social strata. Except among the Meos and Meenas of Rajputana, where a strain of Bhil blood may perhaps be discerned, the type shows no signs of having been modified by contact with the Dravidians; its physical characteristics are remarkably uniform and the geographical conditions of its habitat tend to exclude the possibility of inter-mixture with the black races of the south. In respect of their social characters, the Indo-Aryans as I have ventured to call them, are equally distinct from the bulk of the Indian people".[13] Thus there are two clearly different views regarding the background of the Jats.

Writing about the Jats with reference to Central India C. S. Venkatachar says:

"This caste appears to have migrated originally from the west of Chambal, the country round about Bharatpur. It entered Hoshangabad district of the Central Provinces in 18th century, migrating from Bharatpur and halting in Marwar on the way. The Jats in northern Malwa have also a tradition that they migrated there from Bharatpur owing to the famine. This

11. Saheriya is a language vide Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. I, Part I, — 1927, By Sir W. D. Grierson.
12. Based on "Report of the Census of Punjab" Sir Denzil Ibbelson KCSI — Reproduced in Census of India, 1901, Vol. I, India, Ethnographic Appendices, By Sir H. H. Risley, pp. 74-75.
13. From Census of India, 1901, Vol. I, Report, By H. H. Risley and E. A. Gait, pp. 508-09.

appears to be borne out by their present day distribution. In north Gwalior they are found in small numbers but in the Malwa portion of Gwalior more than half are found in Ujjain and Mandasor districts. They are chiefly found in Central Malwa in this agency. They appear to have reached Narbada valley through the Nemawar district of Indore and Bhopal".[14]

The local inhabitants also say the same thing about their coming into Central India. One is inclined to accept Venkatachar's arguments specially in view of what the local villagers also confirm.

## Origin

As regards their origin the Brahmanical legend narrated in the village is identically the same as related by Russell and Hiralal.[15] It goes as:— "The Jats themselves relate the following Brahmanical legend of their origin, on one occasion, when Himachal or Daksha Raja, the father-in-law of Mahadeo was performing a great sacrifice, he invited all the gods to be present except his son-in-law Mahadeo (Siva). The latter's wife Parwati was however very anxious to go, so she asked Mahadeo to let her attend, even though she had not been invited. Mahadeo was unwilling to do this, but finally consented. But Daksha treated Parwati with great want of respect at the sacrifices so she came home and told Mahadeo about him. When Mahadeo heard this, he was filled with wrath and untying his matted hair (Jata) dashed it on the ground, when two powerful being arose from it. He sent them to destroy Daksha's sacrifice and they went and destroyed it and from these were descended the race of the Jats and they take their name from the matted locks (Jata) of the Lord Mahadeo. Another version of the origin of caste is that "The ancestor of the Rajputs was kashyap[16] and of the Jats Siva. In the beginning these were the only two races of India."

Crooke in his 'The Tribes and Castes of North-western Provinces and Oudh'[17] also gives the same legend of the origin of Jats. The local Jats regard themselves as having descended from Lord Shiva.

The Jats are mostly spread over in Gwalior, Shivpuri and Sheopur Sub-division of Morena districts. In the erstwhile Gwalior State they have migrated to this region from Bharatpur during the Mughal regime in the sixteenth century. According to 1931-1941 Census the returns from other districts were as follows:—

## TABLE A-3

SHOWING JAT POPULATION IN GWALIOR STATE DISTRICTS FOR 1931-1941.

| Unit | 1931[18] | | | 1941[19] | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Persons | Males | Females | Persons | Males | Females |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Gwalior State | 23,491 | 11,930 | 11,561 | 23,694 | 12,821 | 10,873 |
| District Bhind | 845 | 445 | 400 | 1,043 | 649 | 394 |
| District Gwalior (Gird) | 5,100 | 2,817 | 2,283 | 7,524 | 3,965 | 3,559 |
| District Tonwargarh (now Morena district) | 96 | 53 | 43 | 119 | 84 | 35 |
| District Sheopur (now a sub-division of Morena) | 2,405 | 1,280 | 1,125 | 1,661 | 870 | 791 |
| District Narwar (now Shivpuri district) | 549 | 309 | 240 | 250 | 133 | 117 |
| District Isagarh (now Guna district) | 1,199 | 653 | 546 | 1,146 | 660 | 486 |
| District Bhilsa (now Vidisha district) | 837 | 398 | 439 | 424 | 189 | 235 |
| District Ujjain | 6,190 | 2,648 | 3,542 | 4,749 | 2,675 | 2,074 |
| District Mandsaur | 4,067 | 2,076 | 1,991 | 4,418 | 2,391 | 2,027 |
| District Shajapur | 1,399 | 855 | 544 | 1,175 | 609 | 566 |
| District Amjhera (included in Dhar district) | 804 | 396 | 408 | 1,185 | 596 | 589 |

14. Migration of Castes and Tribes into Central India and their Distribution, By C. S. Venkatachar — as reproduced in Census of India, Vol. I India, Part III Ethnographical, p. 68.
15. The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India, By R. V. Russell and R. B. Hiralal, Vol. III, pp. 232-233.
16. Kashyap was a rishi or a saint, but he may probably have developed into an eponymous hero from Kachhap, a tortoise. p. 233 Ibid.
17. Vol. III, p. 25.
18. Census of India, 1931, Gwalior, Part II-Tables, Table XVII, Part I, District details, pp. 164-7.
19. Census of India, 1941, Vol. XX, Gwalior, Part II, State Table IV.

The political identity of Gwalior State was merged into Madhya Bharat in 1948. In 1951 Census their estimated population rose by 26.29%, the details are:-

**TABLE A-4**

SHOWING ESTIMATED JAT POPULATION.

| S. No | Unit | Estimated population 1931 | 1951 | Increase or Decrease | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. | Madhya[20] Bharat | 43,472 | 53,642 | +11,170 | +26.29% |
| 2. | Gwalior State | 23,491 | ... | ... | ... |

It is not possible now to estimate the caste-wise population in a district since in 1961 no returns for the caste excepting the scheduled ones were made; but as the people themselves conjecture their caste fellows could be found in greater numbers towards Sheopur, Gwalior and Mandsaur districts. Areas of these districts border near Rajasthan territories.

## The Position of Jats

In 1891 the Jats were included in Group I, i. e. (Military and Dominant). The relevant portion reads:- Para 47 — "Group I (Military and Dominant) contains 11,15,191 persons or 10.80% of the total population of Central India. Of these 6,01,972 are described as Rajputs, 2,04,501 as Gujars, 84,231 as Chhatries, 56,529 as Jats, 35,608 as Marathas, 37,757 as Deshwal (Musalman and Aboriginals), 24,241 as Rawats, 15,657 as Mirdha (Aboriginals), 14,724 as Thakur and 14,399 as Raghuwanshi. The number of true Rajputs is, of course, much under-stated, many Rajputs having described themselves as Rawats, Rathors etc. In the Baghelkhand Agency all the Rajputs seem to have been returned as Chhatries".[21]

Thus Jats found a place in martial castes and stood very high in the occupational status. In the social hierarchy they were among the higher cultivator coming in the category of just below the Rajputs. The language spoken by them is Hindi in the Bundelkhandi style. Inter-marriages with Rajputs is restricted to hypergamy; the Rajputs could marry the Jat girls but did not give their daughters to Jats. This continues upto the present time.

## The Rajputs

"Rajput (Sanskrit *rajputra* — son of a king). The warrior and land owning race of Northern India, who are also known as *Thakur* — Lord (Sanskrit- *thakkura*), or *chhatri* the modern representative of ancient Kshatriya."[22]

About them Hutton writes:— "An aristocratic caste, wide-spread in western, northern and central India, whose traditional functions are fighting and ruling. They represent the ancient Kshatriya *varna* and rank next to the Brahmans socially".[23]

General Cunningham was of the opinion that the Rajputs represented the Aryan race, a view to which many others also subscribe. The traditions of the tribe go back to endless antiquity and the usually accepted version is that there are two branches of Rajputs viz. Surajbansi from the solar race or Chandrabansi from the lunar race. To these is added the four *agnikulas* or the four fire tribes. The Rajputs always prided in their ancestry and regarded themselves valiant fighters. "Among the most conspicuous are a pride of blood, which delights in endless genealogies and ranks every one according to descent: a strong passion for field sports, combined with an equally pronounced distaste for peaceful and prosaic means of earning a livelihood: and an exaggerated idea of the saving virtues of ceremonial purity and precision in the matter of food and drink".[24]

Thus Rajputs for centuries in India, have been known for their martial qualities, for their valour on and off a battle field and during peace-time they filled the roll of administrators. In many regions specially around Gwalior, they are known as Thakur and the word *thakurat* has acquired a glamour and an aura hard to define. It signifies, being a *thakur* which is as much as saying a good family background, holding lands in considerable numbers and possessing rights to administer the same, either by letting them out or leasing them or giving to others by grace.[25]

## Their Status

At no time in the history did the status of the Rajputs go down. They were foremost in the arts of administration and war. Socially next to Brahmins they occupied a very privileged position in the society. In

20. Estimated population of Castes, 1951, 16, Madhya Bharat, p. 12
21. Census of India, 1891, Vol. XXVII, Central India, R. H. Gunion, Chapter I, p. 22, para 47.
22. Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. IV. By W. Crooke, Bengal Civil Service, published, 1896 p. 217.
23. Caste in India, By J. H. Hutton, C. I. E., M. A., D.Sc., p. 290, 1951 Edn.
24. Census of India, 1901, Vol. I, India, Ethnographic Appendices, By H. H. Risley, ICS, C.I.E., p. 81.
25. The Thakurs in Gwalior State had proprietory rights, they were called Zamindars or Jagirdars and enjoyed special powers over the ryots.

1891[26] they were among the military and Dominant Castes in Group I, referred to earlier although caste system is no longer very rigid, yet Rajputs are yet admired and respected.

## The Spread-out

They are fairly widely distributed in the region. They are numerous in Morena (which was once called Tonwarghar and Sikarwar district after the castes of Rajputs), Gwalior, Bhind, Rajgarh, Shajapur and Ujjain. In Guna district they are mostly found in Raghogarh, Chachaura, Guna and Ashoknagar tahsils. It is quite common for other communities to reform their names as those akin to Rajputs, a practice which dates back to many censuses. It was this which made Ranglal[27] observe:— "But there are indications that a census is used as a lever by many communities and individuals for raising their social status on paper. The general trend of the present figures seem to show that this caste has received large accretion from such castes as Ahir, Kachhi, Kurmi, Lodi, Mina, Rawat, Sondhia etc."

In the Indian Census, enumeration by castes was last tabulated in 1931. In 1941 this was not done and in 1951 an estimated population by castes for the State of Madhya Bharat was made available. In 1931 the Rajput population for Gwalior State districts stood as:—

**TABLE A-5**

SHOWING RAJPUT POPULATION IN GWALIOR STATE DISTRICTS FOR 1931-41

| Unit | 1931[28] | | | 1941[29] | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Persons | Males | Females | Persons | Males | Females |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Gwalior State | 393,076 | 213,136 | 179,940 | 476,726 | 262,337 | 214,389 |
| District Bhind | 66,176 | 36,975 | 29,201 | 71,633 | 38,659 | 32,974 |
| District Gwalior (Gird) | 14,969 | 9,262 | 5,707 | 37,843 | 24,202 | 13,641 |
| District Tonwargarh (now Morena district) | 61,204 | 36,669 | 24,535 | 90,078 | 53,673 | 36,405 |
| District Sheopur (now a sub-division of Morena) | 2,421 | 1,333 | 1,088 | 3,237 | 1,202 | 2,035 |
| District Narwar (now Shivpuri district) | 32,523 | 16,434 | 16,089 | 27,037 | 15,203 | 11,834 |
| District Isagarh (now Guna district) | 39,083 | 20,495 | 18,588 | 51,039 | 26,762 | 24,277 |
| District Bhilsa (now Vidisha district) | 30,437 | 15,826 | 14,611 | 37,149 | 19,738 | 17,411 |
| District Ujjain | 59,597 | 30,853 | 28,744 | 45,760 | 24,292 | 21,468 |
| District Mandsaur | 23,606 | 12,610 | 10,996 | 27,410 | 15,108 | 12,302 |
| District Shajapur | 60,188 | 31,267 | 28,921 | 76,464 | 39,449 | 37,015 |
| District Amjhera (now included in Dhar district) | 2,872 | 1,412 | 1,460 | 9,076 | 4,049 | 5,027 |

Out of a total of 2,13,136 males, 1,43,609 were in the Military.

In 1961 caste figures would not be available and estimated figures are for Madhya Bharat. In the State of Madhya Bharat there were 5,41,934* Rajputs in 1951 as compared to 3,93,076 from Gwalior State only. No comparison would be possible because the figures for Madhya Bharat included such other districts as were not in erstwhile Gwalior State.

The local Rajputs family have migrated to Guna from Bhind and belong to Chauhan sub-caste. In the village they are regarded as being of the highest order followed by Jats. The language spoken is Hindi in Bundelkhandi dialect. It is interesting to note that the family has practically forgotten the dialect spoken in Bhind. Generally as a class the Rajputs are economically well off and hold lands. Educationally they are not so advanced as some of the other castes, but now with holdings being divided and sub-divided, they are taking to education. In this particular family as many as five out of seven are literates.

## The Chamars

The Chamars are the skinners, tanners and workers

26. Census of India, 1891, Vol. XXVII, Central India, by R. H. Gunion, Chapter I, p. 22.
27. Census of India, 1931, Vol. XXII, Gwalior, Part I, Report by Ranglal, p. 232.
28. Census of India, 1931, Vol. XXII, Gwalior, Part II, Table — Table XI, Part A-127 Table XVII, p. 169.
29. Census of India, 1941 Gwalior, Vol. X, Part II Tables.

* Estimated Population by Castes, 1951, 16, Madhya Bharat, p. 14.

in leather generally found in northern and Central India. They are found in all districts of north and north-western Madhya Pradesh. Writing about them Ranglal in 1931 says:— "Chamars are by far the largest in the State. They are most numerous in Narwar (the present Shivpuri) and Isagarh (the present Guna) districts and their number rapidly decreases towards the south".[30] They numbered 415,950[31] in 1931 in Gwalior State.

## Origin

Their name is derived from the word *charmakars* which in Sanskrit means 'a worker in leather'.

Writing about the Chamars of Gwalior State, Johnstone[32] gives the following description:—

"Traditionally the Chamars or leather workers caste are sprung from five different kinds of union.

(1) Brahman father and Carpenter mother.
(2) Carpenter father and Brahman mother
(3) Groom father and Kshatrya mother.
(4) Kirsan father and Brahman mother.
(5) Tiwar father and Chandal mother. (Fisherman)

Thus they may be said to be five kinds of Chamars. From the first union are said to have sprung the *mochis* who now consider themselves superior to other Chamars and virtually form a separate caste. As already stated 208 sub-divisions of Chamars have been recorded. Of these 24 are endogamous groups called *khaps* the remainder being smaller exogamous divisions or *gotras* several being included in one *khap*. The first or *goliya khap* is generally looked upon as the progenitor of the first 21 *khaps* and consequently these can eat, drink and smoke with one another, though not with the remaining three, who are supposed to be the representatives of the last three of the five unions mentioned above, but on the other hand inter-marriage between any one *khap* and another is prohibited, each confining itself to its own branches for matrimonial purposes. As to the *gotras*, not only must marriage takes place outside a man's own *gotra* but further he may not marry into the *gotra* of (1) his mother's father, (2) his paternal grand-mother and (3) his maternal grand-mother.

The *goliya khap* seems to be the most respected and of its *gotras* the Nat, whose occupation is taking alms, singing and dancing before the first 21 *gotras*, is given the highest place, its supposed original ancestress being the famous witch Lona Chamarin.[33] This caste is the most numerous in the State and many have given up their traditional occupation and taken to field labour, trading in grass or the work of *saises*, with probably some improvement in social status. Their touch however is pollution to the Hindu, as they eat beef and carrion, and they have separate wells in villages. Widow marriage is of course allowed."

This short account of Chamars of Gwalior will give an idea of how caste rules and restrictions reach even the lowest classes of society.[34]

Thus the various descriptions of the origin of the Chamars seem to converge to their low birth. Another version of their lineage from Lona Chamarin is given in the foot-note (33).

## Earlier Status: 1891

In 1891 the Chamars were regarded as leather workers in group 38. The relevant para reads:—

Group 38 contains leather workers 9,58,121 persons or 9.28% of the population. In this group the Chamars alone number 8,88,018 and are found in every agency.[35] (In 1891 the State Unit for Census was Central India which consisted of the following agencies (1) Indore, (2) Gwalior, (3) Bhopal, (4) Western Malwa, (5) Bundelkhand Agency, (6) Baghelkhand Agency, (7) Bhopawar Agency and (8) Guna. This corresponds to the present (1) Indore, (2) Gwalior and (3) Rewa divisions districts (excepting East Nimar).

30. Census of India, 1931, Vol. XXII, Part I, Report by Ranglal p. 232.
31. Chapter XII, Subsidiary Table, Ibid.
32. Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXI, Gwalior, Part I, Report, By J. W. D. Johnstone, p. 124.
33. Lona or Nona Chamarin.
According to the tradition chamars, are descended from Nona or Lona Chamarin, a deified witch much dreaded in Eastern U. P. Dhanwantari, physician of Gods was bitten by Takshaka the King of snakes. Fearing death, he ordered his son to cook the body and eat it so that the son could acquire the skill of the father. Accordingly the body was cooked to be eaten, but then Takshaka appearing in form of a Brahman warned him to refrain from cannibalism. The cauldron was then allowed to float down the Ganges, and Lona Chamarin unknowingly ate from it. She acquired magical power to cure diseases especially snake bite. Lona with her magical powers could work with super human energies. The other women observed her one day, while transplanting rice. They found that she alone could singly do as much work as all her companions put together. One day, when Lona though she was alone, she stripped off all her clothes (for this was an essential ritual) and muttered some spell and threw plants in the air which atonce settled down in their proper places. She had been surprised for she was being watched. Thus surprised she tried to escape and as she ran, the earth opened and water of rice field followed her and this formed the channel of Loni river in Unao district.
From — W. Crooke, Tribes & Castes of North West Provinces and Oudh, Vol. II, p. 170.
34. J. W. D. Johnstone — Ibid.
35. Census of India, 1891, Vol. XXVII, Central India, R. H. Gunion.

The Chamar population in Gwalior State, during the period 1901-31 was as follows:—

## TABLE A-6

SHOWING CHAMAR POPULATION (1901-31)
Chamars[36]

| Unit | 1931 | 1921 | 1911 | 1901 | Net Variation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gwalior State | 4,15,950 | 3,75,554 | 3,63,508 | 3,19,517 | +96,433 or 30.15% |

Corresponding figure for 1941 is 4,95,694. In 1951 owing to political changes it is not possible to give comparable figures to the above; however estimated population for Chamars in 1951 and 1931 renders some comparison possible.

## TABLE A-7

SHOWING ESTIMATED CHAMAR POPULATION[37]

| Unit | 1931 | 1951 | Variation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Madhya Bharat | 5,39,366 | 7,06,382 | +1,67,016 or + 30.97% |

During the thirty (1901-31) years the population rose by 30.18% or at the rate of 10.06 in a decade and in the following twenty years by 30.97% or 15.49% in the decade, which is much higher. During these twenty years generally the living conditions were better and no epidemics causing major mortality were reported. Perhaps it is due to this reason coupled with a comparative fall in the death rates that conditions for growth were more congenial.

The Chamars were regarded as unclean and outcaste. In 1931 Census, Dr. Hutton referred to them as exterior caste.[38] They were classified as scheduled caste in 1951 a classification they still retain. The Chamars speak Hindi in Bundelkhandi accent.

In the village at present there is only one Chamar who lives permanently. He has a small holding and so follows the traditional occupation of making shoes. The others have all migrated gone over to Guna and Bajrangarh. A noticeable feature regarding the Chamar in village is that he too is not entirely dependent on the traditional occupation but having come to possess lands, relies to a considerable extent on cultivation. He got some land from the Government round about 1952-53 and since then has been regularly cultivating the same. He possesses about 4 *bighas*, 12 *biswas* or 2.36 acres of land and that is hardly sufficient to support him for the whole year.

## HOUSES AND HOUSE TYPES

The houses in the village fall within three distinct clusters, leaving aside the Shiva temple and the Panchayat building which lies towards north-western side about half a mile away. Since the houses form a haphazard growth along six furlongs of the National Highway, an accurate scale map has become difficult, hence a notional map has been appended. There are no pacca houses, but three distinct patterns on which they have been constructed are noticeable. The first category includes such houses as have *katcha* earthen walls loosely plastered with local tile roofs (Please see plates VI to XI). In the second category come houses where wall material remains the same but leaves are placed carefully at the roof. The third category is of houses which have walls and roofs of leaves and reeds. Generally speaking the first category of houses are owned by those who are not so well off.

**The Clusters:** (Please see map-plate V).

The first house lies opposite mile stone Guna 6 or Agra 210 and belongs to a Rajput, the sole representative of the community in the village. The house is situated on the west of the road. Opposite to this house is a Jat house, on the other side of the road. A little to the south of the Thakur, is the second Jat house and these three houses constitute the best houses in the village.

The three houses have a common architectural pattern. For building such a house, foundation upto 2-3 feet is dug. The houses are generally constructed in the summer months, for this is a period of comparative leisure, material is easily collected and wood procured at this time is dry, hence better suited for the construction. Before digging a sod of earth, however a Brahmin is consulted for suggesting an auspicious day. The Jats and Thakurs consult a Brahmin living in Guna. The Saheriyas sometimes consult a Brahmin, usually from Guna and also from Bajrangarh. This is done by a few Saheriyas and usually on rare occasions. When a Saheriya comes to a village he is not sure if the village would be his permanent home; so he does not

36. Census of India, 1931, Vol. XXII, Gwalior, Part I, Report,by Ranglal, Subsidiary Table I, p. 238.
37. Estimated population by Castes, 16, Madhya Bharat.
38. Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, India, Part I, Report, Appendix I, by J. H. Hutton, p. 480.

bother to consult any one before constructing/making a house. When, however, they desire to build a house with a view to stay there for long or permanently they may consult a Brahmin. Thus this is confined to those Saheriyas who are generally better off and intend to stay in the village on more or less permanent basis. The Brahmin at Bajrangarh still continues a link of the past. Consultation over the digging for the foundation commences. No labourer is employed because all the members of the household do the work themselves. A somewhat remarkable feature is the mutual co-operation in building a house. All the relatives and friends provide the working force. Relatives are often called from nearby villages to complete the work, friends when called to do the work, get no payment. The system has strict mutual reciprocity otherwise it would have broken down. This practice is limited to Saheriyas only. Although Jats and Rajputs also call Saheriyas for doing the work but the latter do not, as they respect these castes and would not ask them to work for them. The Jats and Thakurs do not pay the Saheriyas. After the foundation has been dug, it is filled with stones, boulders, yellow adhesive moist earth to hold these. This is prepared by sifting the powdery portion of yellow mud to which some black soil and water is added bringing it to thick consistency. This done, it is added to boulders and stones on which wall is raised.

## Materials

These houses are made of mud walls in which stones and boulders have been added. The walls are not entirely of stones, but often raised by placing the lumps of mud. When the wall is taken to a height of about 7′ to 8′ the roof is placed on it. The roof consists of local tiles: these tiles are usually made by the villagers themselves and are flat, locally called *khapra*. The roof is supported by raft called *myals*. On the centre length of the house are placed beams of wood called *badera*. This assures a resting corner for the roof and the middle ones also support the roof. Perpendicular to this *badera* are placed many small beams *geda* of inferior quality wood at such distance as will support the tiles. On these tiles are placed. The wood generally used for *myal*, is *babul* (Acacia arabica), *khair* (Acacia catechu), *neem* (Melia indica) and for *badera seeshum* (Dalbergia sissu) or *neem* (Melia indica); and any wood would do for *geda*.

## Pattern of House

All the three houses described have a small verandah which they call *osara*. It is usually covered verandah but not enclosed. Throughout the year this portion is used, as the main sitting-cum-smoking place. As inside the house there is little place for calling in male visitors, all the talking is done here leaving the inside portion to the privacy of females. This space thus becomes a 'sitting room' and also saves the inside from rain water on windy occasion. The door is usually of a small size 60″ x 24″ or 30″ and so one has to stop to enter or risk dashing the head against it. The door opens into the only room the house possesses. It is usually of big size, in some cases being as big as 25′ x 9′. This is the main living-sleeping and store room. The kitchen is also located in this room. Excepting in two or three houses in the entire village, which have small windows of the size 2′ x 1′ the rest have no arrangement for ventilation or light. It is not uncommon for them to remove a few tiles on a clear and sunny day to permit light into the room. All these houses have a small cow-shed along with it. They are enclosed with thorns and other grasses and the animals are securely tethered for fear of wild animals. The total built up area of these houses average about 250-300 sq. feet. These houses are to be found mostly in Cluster-A.

## Cluster—A

Apart from Jat and Thakur houses in this cluster there are some houses of Saheriyas. The houses of Saheriyas are of second and third category i. e. having mud walls but leaf roofs — and having walls made of leaves, reeds etc. and roofs also of the same stuff. They have been described with the houses in Cluster B. Apart from these houses there is a forest *chowki*, the building is owned by the department.

In Cluster A a portion has been marked as Ax. This is a group of Saheriya households. It is about 70 yards west of the road and appears to be the actual spot of the first settlement of the village. A *neem* tree towers over the houses and around this lies the deity *bhumiya*.[39] The Saheriyas, before settling down anywhere or founding a village first establish a spot for their deity. They also call him *kherapati*.[40] The Saheriyas say that there can be one *bhumiya* only for a village and usually the spot where *bhumiya* has been located is the oldest in the village, for it is never removed. The village may grow to any size, it may split up into clusters or hamlets but the *bhumiya* remains where he was first installed. If they decide to shift or leave the village, *bhumiya* will not be taken by

39. From the Hindi word 'Bhumi' or land. The dictionary meaning is 'God' of a village.

40. Kherapati: from the Hindi word 'Khera' or village — meaning master or lord of the village.

them. It will be allowed to remain where it was, although they may often come back to worship it as they do in case of their old village site. *Bhumiya*, thus is very much rooted in the soil in which it is installed hence perhaps the meaning behind this deity after 'earth' or *bhumi* or land. *Bhumiya* is also worshipped by the Jats and Thakurs. It is a village deity, a sort of presiding spirit over the village and gets reverence from every-body.

*Bhumiya* is installed by the community as such at the time of founding a village. If there are more communities than one then all join in the ritual, which consists of a formal inauguration followed by feasting and singing of devotional songs. At the time of installation five persons lift up the stones that have to be installed and place at the spot fixed for installation. Vermillion is applied and a platform constructed if the same has not been made earlier. Often this is done under the shade of a tree. No temple or enclosure or overhead shade is constructed around it and *bhumiya* lies exposed, to sun and shower. Sometimes an overhead roof is improvised, but generally *bhumiya* lies without a roof. Although enclosing *bhumiya* is not prohibited but this is generally never done. In the village the villagers maintain that paucity of funds prevented them from erecting a temple or suitable enclosure. *Bhumiya* has no specific shape so no images are built for him. Any stone which has an oblong shape is taken and smeared with *sindoor* before placing it on the spot.

## Cluster—B

Cluster B consists entirely of Saheriya houses and chronologically it came into existence after Cluster A. It is said that it was settled after about 30 years of A. It contained some new Saheriya settlers and a few from A. As time passed a few persons from Cluster A moved over to B and so it grew. The households in this cluster consist of the second and third type.

## The Mud Wall and Leaf Roofed Houses

Persons living in these houses are all Saheriyas and their income would roughly be between Rs. 50/ to Rs. 100/-. These houses are comparatively small in size. Although a small foundation is dug before making the walls but they are not particularly sturdy types and a lot of labour is expended in keeping the roof in good condition, but since the raw material for the roof is available at practically very little or no cost, the villagers do not seem to mind it.

## The Pattern

The pattern remains practically the same. There is a small covered sitting space in the front where the cots have been kept. The wall in these cases is about 6′ high and the door is only 5′. In some houses there are no regular doors but only wooden planks are placed across the gate-way. The total area which is made available for living is approximately 120 to 180 sq. feet. The construction of walls is similar, to the one described earlier. For roof *chhokar* branches are taken and they are padded with the big grass, *kans* (Saccharum spontareum) to give it a thickness of 3″ approximately. When sufficiently thick it gives effective protection against rains. These are securely tied to the *geda* across the width of the house. To secure the whole roof against winds a beam is placed on it or in some cases stones are also placed. *Chhola* (Butea frondosa) leaves are available in plenty around about the village. A big variety of grass and *kans* is also plentiful and so the villagers do not have to spend any money over these materials.

## Houses of Leaves and Grass

The poorest class of Saheriyas live in these houses. Their income generally is below Rs. 50/- a month. The material is obtained from the jungle and only labour is expended over it. The material mostly consists of thick variety of grass *kardhai* and *chhola* leaves. There are no regular walls except those of the *kardhai* and *siyari* stalks. A wooden frame is first made. This frame consists of *kardhai* and *siyari* stalks tied together by hemp rope. The frame is then padded up with *chhola* leaves; they resist the rain. The padding is made fairly closely and the whole thing becomes very tight and no holes are left. While it permits some breeze, no light is able to enter. In these houses the living space is about 80′ to 100′ sq. feet. Because the construction is light, *myal* or thick wooden rafter is not necessary. The construction is fairly sturdy in as much as snake cannot penetrate through the wall.

## Details regarding Houses

The house has only one roomed accommodation. Kitchen is managed in one corner of the house. Tiles or leaves are removed to allow smoke to go out during dry season. In wet season smoke goes out as best as it can. There are no bath rooms in these houses. The Thakur and Jat women bathe outside the house where the cattle is tied. The cattle leaves for grazing in the morning and after it bathing is not difficult. Among

the Saheriyas the women bathe at the well. The Rajput and Jat women also sometimes bathe at the well. Men generally bathe on the well or in the rainy season at any nearby pond. Bathing is not a daily ritual it averages about thrice a fortnight in women but some men usually have a bath each day. Everybody goes for easing himself in the jungle or nearby fields. There are no latrines in any house.

## The Construction

It is proposed to divide the rituals, customs and other practices connected with construction of a house into two categories (1) Tribals (2) Non-tribals; firstly because it is these two types that constitute the village and secondly because they present fairly divergent views in their approach.

## The Tribals

The Saheriyas represent two types of settlers; (1) those who settle down and live more or less permanently (ii) those who continue to wander from one place to another; from one village to another, seeking work or any other economic occupation. (1) Those who settle down observe distinct customs and practices. When a Saheriya decides to build a new house for the first time in a settled village, he consults a Brahmin, usually from Guna or Bajrangarh to ask him as to on what day he may lay the foundation or begin the work. This practice is of comparatively recent origin going back to about 20 years or so. Prior to this they worshipped *bhumiya* and offered him some sacrifice usually of a fowl, or pig or goat if available, wine was also offered and along with two or three relatives who had been called for the day, a small celebration took place. There was eating and drinking. Now-a-days after ascertaining the auspicious occasion — *mahurat* they go to *bhumiya* before commencing the construction and offer worship, by offering a cocoanut and tying a red cloth. Previously after offering *puja* to *bhumiya* they went towards the village *bhoot-pret* or Evil Spirits and offered wine and blood of the animal already killed praying to them to keep peace and permit the householder to live peacefully. In a small *thali* usually a copper one, they kept one lighted lamp, jaggery, a piece of red cloth, turmeric and offered it to *bhumiya* and the Evil Spirits. Now-a-days after a formal obeisance at *bhumiya's* place, they go to the site and begin work.

No plan or sketch of the work is made. The site is measured out by means of a small rope and the outline is marked by digging along the streched rope. They are not particular about the direction of wind and sun-rays. If houses round about already exist, then the facing of the house invariably would be towards each other. Often one finds a horseshoe pattern in which houses have been constructed. Facing each other, row to row ensures common space of meeting and when occasion demands a good square for meeting or celebrations. No taboos of direction are observed by them.

The construction commences and the householder is the labourer-cum-technician. All members of the household join in working and those persons whom the family has obliged earlier by working at their houses now volunteer their services. The offer is accepted and so they also join the work.

Collection of material usually precedes the house building. For the entire family it becomes a full time occupation. For a house of mud-stone walls and tiled roof 3′ to 4′ foundation is usually dug; for leaf-roofed house it is usually 2′ to 3′ and hardly six inches deep for the leaf walled houses. The foundation is filled with boulders and clay (please see plate XI). Clay is prepared by putting water into the loose earth of the black-clay type and making pasty by stamping on it with feet. Of this clay big lumps are made and they are put one upon another keeping the line straight in accordance with the foundation. These lumps are often alternated with boulders to add greater strength to the walls and by means of naked eye judgment the line is held straight. In this manner the wall is raised to the desired height varying from 6 to 9 feet.

## The Tile Roofed and Leaf Roofed Houses

The height of walls at the sides is about 6′ to 9′ but it is tapered off to form a pantagonal slope for roof support. The process may be briefly described as, though after the desired height of walls is reached, using this as a base a small triangle is constructed and at the apex is the roof support. For the leaf roofed type also the walls go in the similar pattern except that they are shorter.

In this way the four walls of the house are constructed. Inside thick rafters called *myals* are fixed horizontally between the two walls across their breadth. This is comparable to girder being put in roofs in urban houses. On one of these *myals*, the central one, a triangular structure also made of wooden beams is placed to support the roof. This is locally called *badera*. This *badera* frame would then be covered with *gedas* or thin wooden logs or cut poles to bear the weight of local tiles or leaves as may be used.

## Roof Tiles

Tiles are locally made by the persons themselves. Loose earth from the fields is obtained and mixed with water and the clay is shaped into tiles. Next, it is placed on ground over which some hay or *bhoosa* has been placed, to prevent it from getting stuck to the earth. After it is dry the clay tiles are put into slow oven made by digging a small hole and placing the *katcha* tile in it. The centre of this hole is left vacant, in this spot cowdung cakes and other small timber is placed and burnt slowly, and it is sealed up. In about two or three days time the tiles become ready for use.

These tiles are not particularly strong and last for a year or two, but often breakages, specially from monkeys, is too great and every year some of them have to be replaced. It does not cost much as all the raw material is available almost without cost and labour of the family is utilised. To save them from monkeys, thorns or wire is placed on the top.

## Leaves

*Chhola* leaves which are fairly broad in size and resist the water, are used. After construction of walls and the wooden frame for the roof, the leaves are placed on the *gedas* and is padded up with big grass and *kans* and tied together with the help of wet hemp rope — usually this tying is done by the women who stand beneath the roof while men at the top do the padding and secure it with the other beams. In this manner the two slopes of the roof are covered, but the gap in the centre is not covered. This is subsequently covered by means of placing small leaves or grass or tiles over it.

## The Leaf Walled and Roofed Houses

These are small types of houses and rarely exceed 120 sq. feet area. They are cheaper, less durable need constant attention but are very well suited to those who do not desire to settle permanently. The construction process is entirely different. First of all, a frame work of the wall is prepared. Wooden beams of the size 12′ and 8′ long or less as desired are first procured. Four such are needed for making each wall. These are tied together and smaller logs are placed at convenient distances. This frame is now padded up with *chhola* leaves *beria* and *siyari* stalks and leaves. Any available seasonal material for padding the frame with stalks is used but *chhola* leaves are preferred. In this way four walls are prepared. When these are ready, four pillars are fixed in the ground. These four pillars define the dimensions of the house and they are firmly implanted into the ground. A forked pillar or one having a hook is used to ensure better support for the roof. Around these four pillars, the four leafed walls constructed earlier are tied and secured by wet ropes. The roof is rested on the walls of the leaves. These walls are similar in shape to the mud walls, (please see plate XI), and since the size of the room is small, the roof too would be proportionately small sized, hence light in weight. The roof being light would not require *myal*. In some cases a *geda* is used.

## The Housing Material

Loose earth is usually collected from the fields or from the jungle involving no expenditure. Labour is invariably provided by members of the family.

## Boulders

The villagers obtain their supply from the jungle nearby and even from the village waste land. They pick up the stones and bring it. They do not have to go very far to get it and it again involves no expenditure.

## Timber

This is obtained on payment from the forest department. The department runs small depots where building material is available. The cost of these are announced in advance and suffcient publicity is made. All Panchayats are informed. The cost is fixed by the department. The rates were: (Season 1962-63)

| | |
|---|---|
| *Geda* | .75 for 100 pcs. |
| *Badera* or *Balli* | .06 per pc. |
| *Myal* | .25 per pc. |
| Other Logs | .12 per pc. |

## Other Grass and Leaves

These are available in the jungle at no cost.

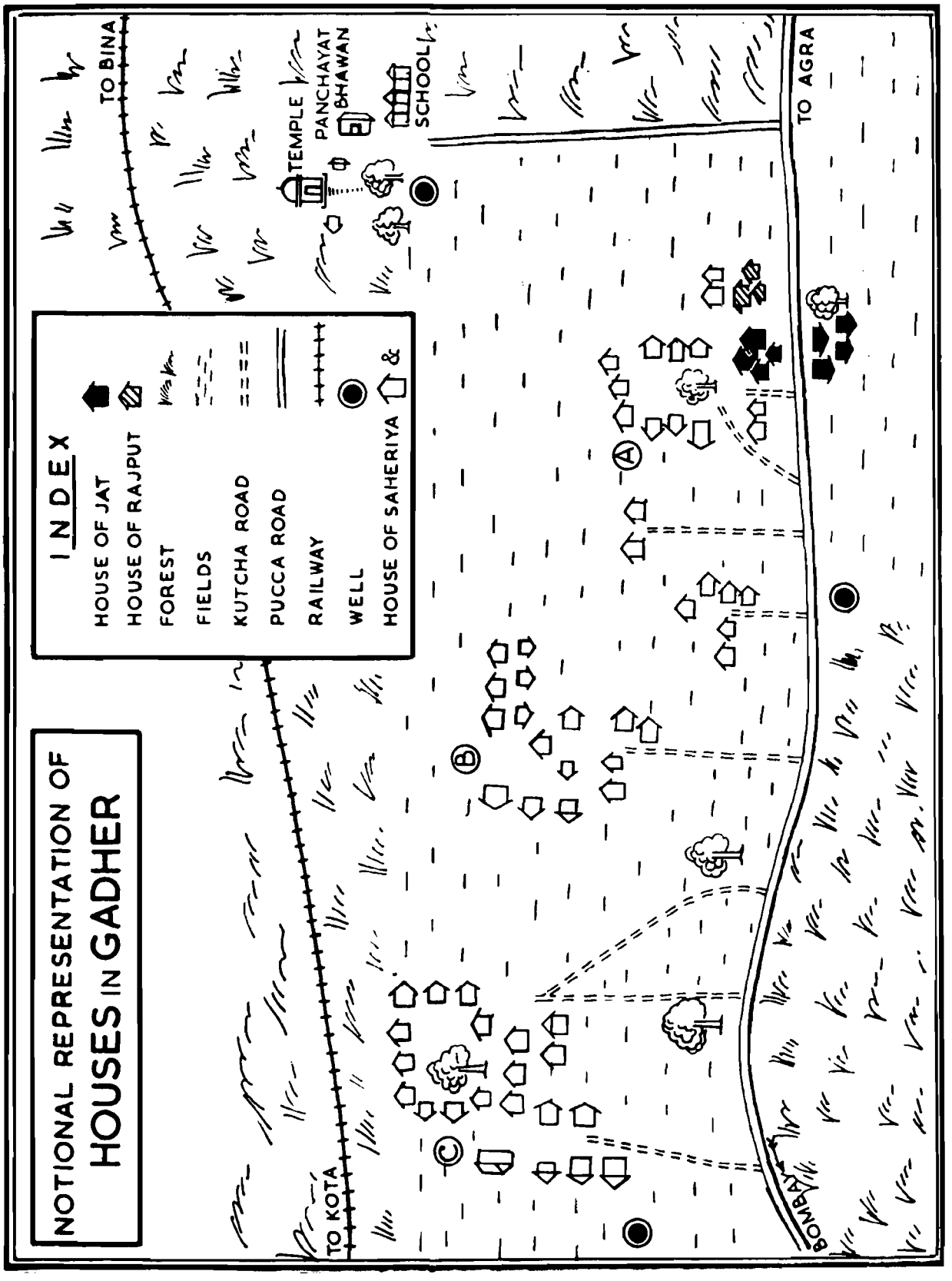
## The Cost of Material

For a Class I & II houses, timbers would cost as below:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 *Myals* | @ .25 = | Re. | 1.00 |
| 100 *Geda* | @ .75 = | | .75 |
| 16 Other Logs | @ .12 = | | 2.00 |
| 4 *Baderas* | @ .06 = | | 0.25 |
| | | Rs. | 4.00 |

The people of Gadher usually cut these logs and timbers themselves, as bringing them from the depot is very inconvenient. The procedure is that they pay

PLATE V

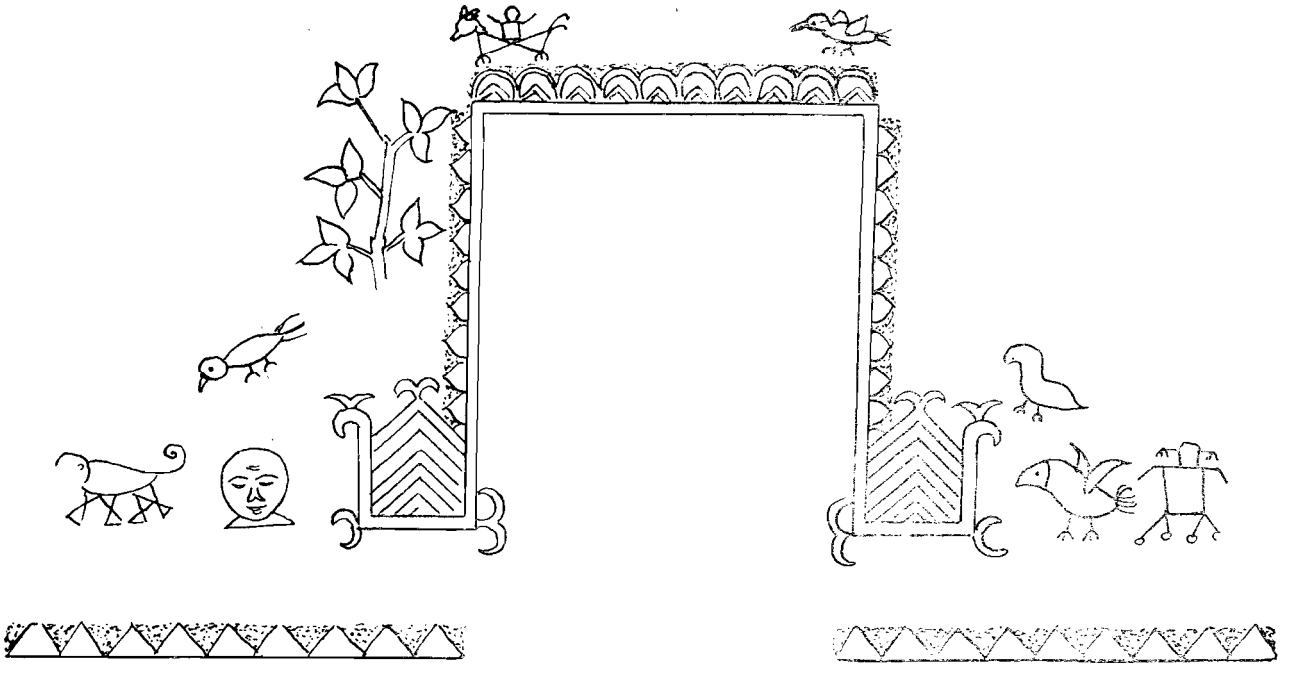

NOTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF
HOUSES IN GADHER
INDEX
HOUSE OF JAT
HOUSE OF RAJPUT
FOREST
FIELDS
KUTCHA ROAD
PUCCA ROAD
RAILWAY
WELL
HOUSE OF SAHERIYA
TO BINA
TEMPLE
PANCHAYAT BHAWAN
SCHOOL
TO AGRA
TO KOTA
BOMBAY
A
B
C

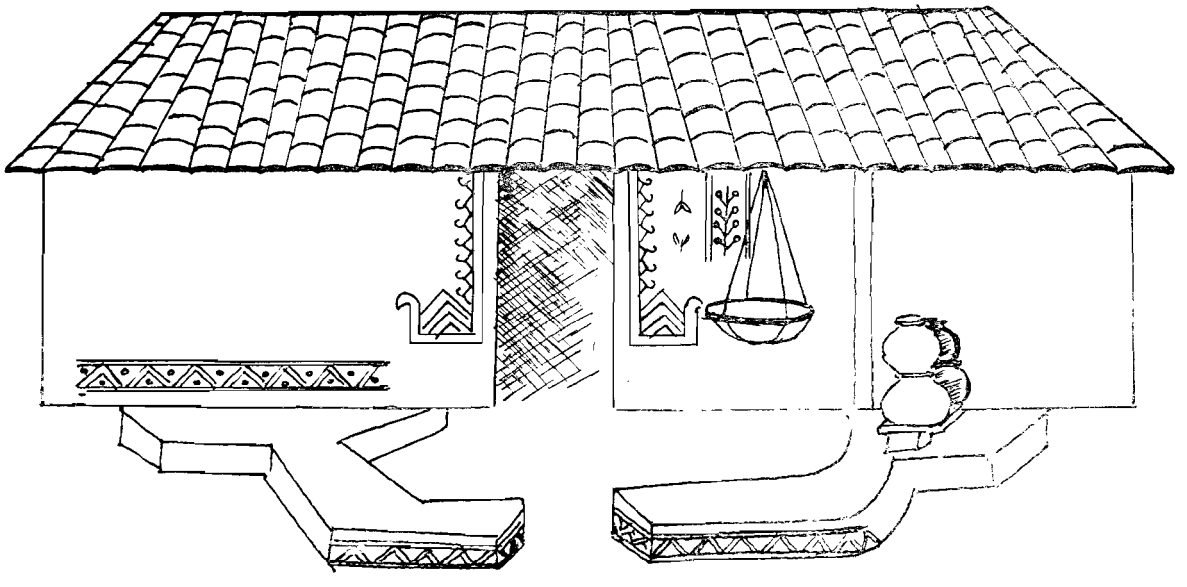
# PLATE VI



A Saheriya Cluster

# PLATE VII





House Decorations

PLATE VIII

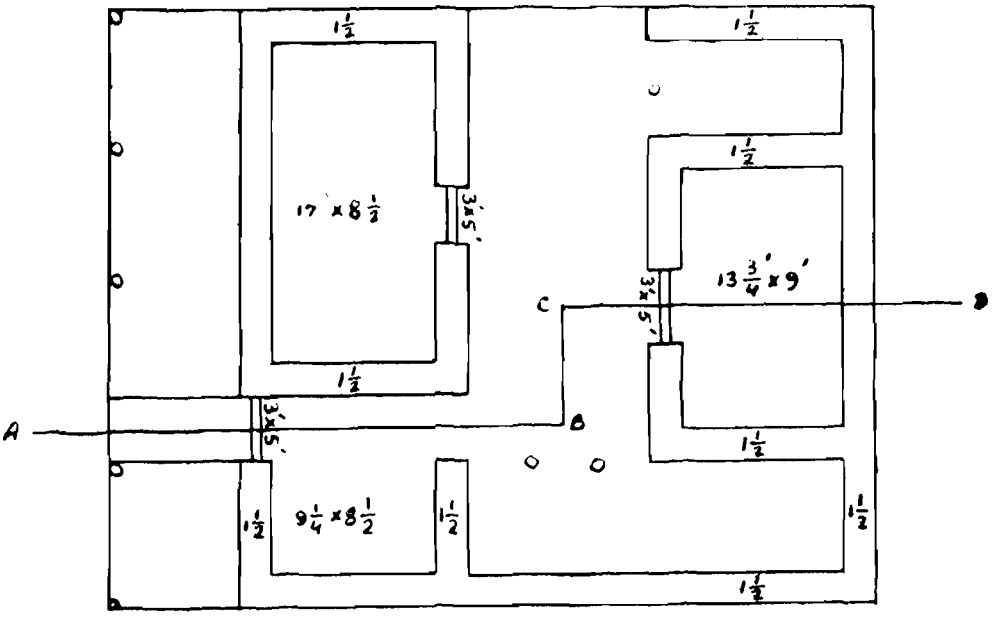
# HOUSE OF BHAIRON SAHERIYA

VILLAGE GADHER

TAHSIL GUNA

SCALE 5'=5"

PLAN



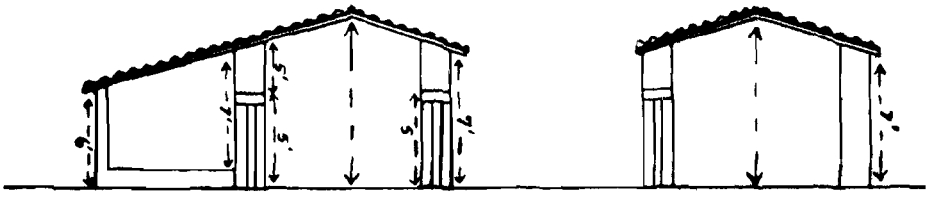



PLATE IX

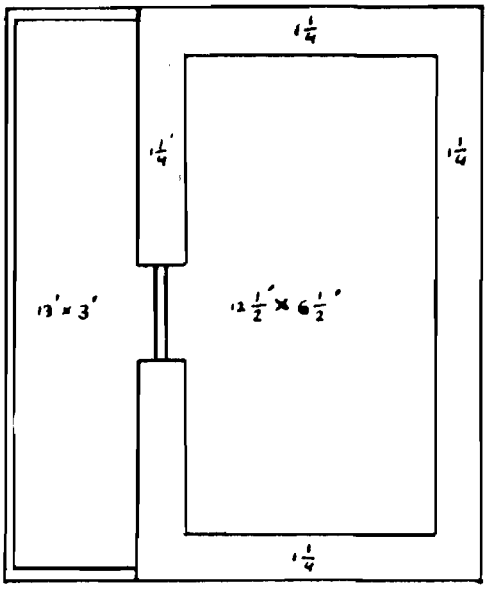
## HOUSE OF BHOLA SEHARIA

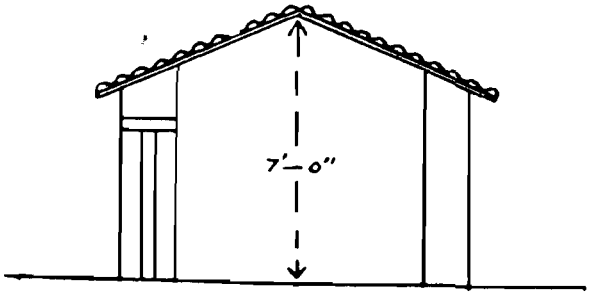
VILLAGE GADHER

**TAHSIL GUNA**

SCALE 5'-2"

PLAN



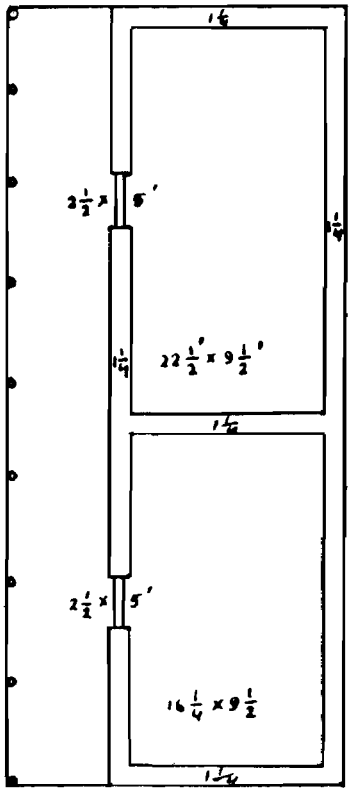

## HOUSE OF FAILI SEHARIA

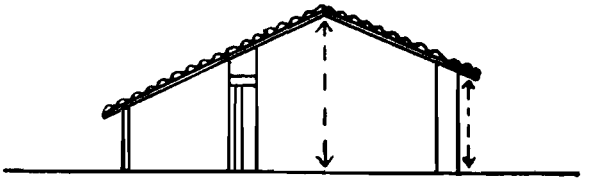
VILLAGE GADHER

**TAHSIL GUNA**

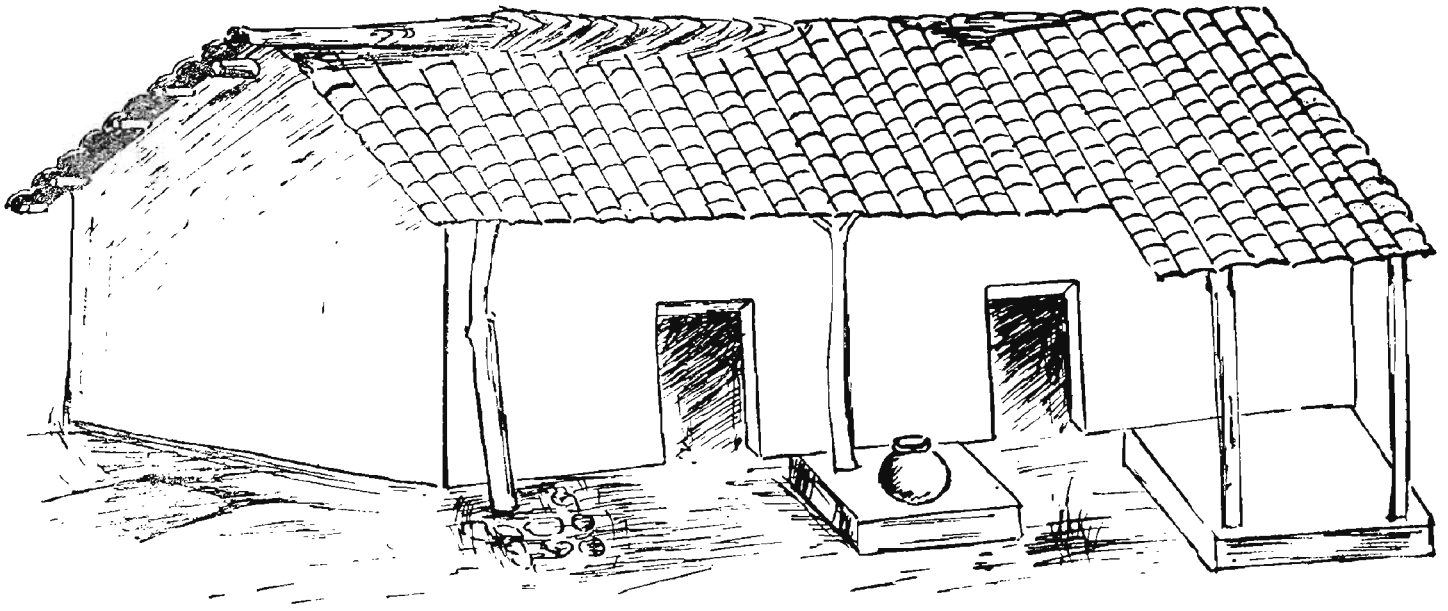
SCALE 5'=2½"

PLAN



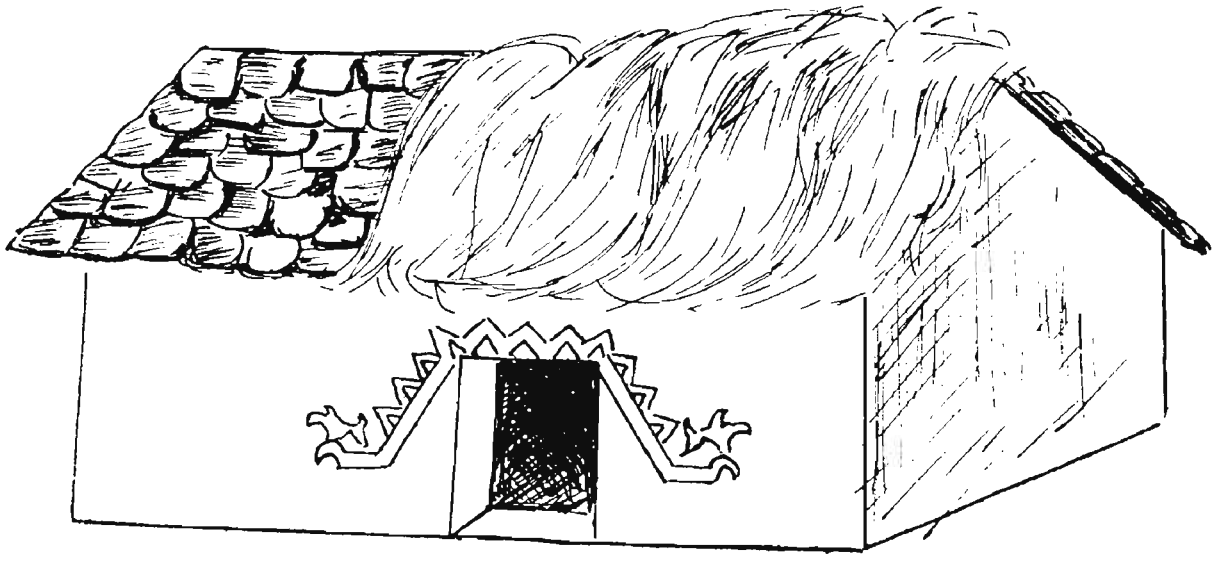



# PLATE X



A DOUBLE DOOR HOUSE

THE MUD WALL & LEAFED HOUSE





Repairs to a house



Repairs to a house

Re. 1/- to the Forest Guard and obtain a permit for felling the timber. They further specify their requirements and pay up accordingly. Often the matters are mutually settled on other considerations and the departmental regulations are forgotten. Consequently the Forest Guard obtains some payment and permits removal of the timber. The last method is fairly popular being helpful to both the parties.

## Other Fittings

Only frame of the door is not locally constructed. This is obtained from the Guna market and has to be paid for. A carpenter at Sonthi village, 3 miles north-east, also does the job and charges Rs. 4/- for it. The timber of course has to be provided for by the person concerned.

## The Finishing Touches

The floor area inside the room is now attended to. This job is mostly done by the women. Loose earth is made into thick paste, cowdung and *bhoosa* (wheat husk) is added to it. The whole floor is smeared with this: two or three such smearings are necessary before it settles down to a regular smooth shape. This gives a fairly clean floor on which the smearing has to be renewed after sometime. Then they make their hearth a local *chulha*. The hearth is always facing north, so as to look towards Ganga the holy river which is in north. They call it *gangen*. Near the hearth a small raised platform for keeping kitchen utensils is made. Somewhere on the floor a small mortar is made for crushing the corn. Generally the hearth should not be visible on entering the door. For this a small *kothi* which stores all the grain is kept on the side of hearth to cover up the view.

The outside walls are plastered with mud, cowdung and wheat husk. Of wheat husk it is said that, it prevents the paint from cracking, holding it together. After the rains but usually before the *Diwali* the walls are painted with *katcha* lime.

Before entering the house, a dinner for a few relatives is arranged. It is not on any grand scale but in the nature of a small private party. In this dinner meat and drinks are served. About thirty years ago followed a different ritual on entering a house. *Tilla* seed was roasted and jaggery added to it. This was then given a shape of a "demon". It was placed at the entrance of the house and cut up. This was then distributed as *prasad* and drinks were followed by dinner. They offered two explanations for this custom (i) that it signified that no one would enter the house, this was done to frighten away all evil spirits; (ii) that for practically all ceremonies, a sacrifice was deemed essential, but in entering a house, this symbolic sacrifice rather than an actual one, associated with shedding of blood was deemed enough.

## Customs Amongst the Non-tribals

The Rajputs and Jats follow the customary Hindu rituals at the time of construction of a house. Whereas the construction process remains the same, the ritual differ.

A Brahmin is consulted to give the suitable date or occasion for beginning the construction. On the appointed day and time i.e. *mahurat* the Brahmin is called who prepares his food and then with a cocoanut goes to the spot. The Brahmin lights up a small fire, burns some incense and conducts a brief *puja*. Some part of food (very little) is consigned to fire and to the fire is added a little ghee. This done the Brahmin distributes some *prasad* and commences to eat. After he has finished his meals the actual construction would commence. The relatives etc. are not invited. After the ceremony the work commences.

In these households skilled labour is often called and paid about Rs. 2.50 or Rs. 3.00 depending upon the market rates. Cash payment seems to have become the rule and daily payments are made. Besides the labourers other members of the family also help in the work. The women however do not work.

When the house has been completed, the Pandit is again consulted to advise as to the opportune time for going to live in it. On the day so fixed, the place is well decorated with mango leaves all round the doors and seating arrangements made. The Pandit who comes starts with the *katha* (*Satya Narain ki Katha*) and the near relatives are invited to attend. The householder is required to sit with the Pandit throughout the proceedings of about two hours. The Pandit quickly reads through the *katha* and *prasad* consisting of (1) curd, (2) milk, (3) crystal sugar-*mishri* is distributed to those persons who are present. This is followed by a small *puja*. After the *puja* is complete the head of the family would go around sprinkling some water, on the foundation of the walls, around the house. The food which in the meantime has been cooked, is then eaten.

## The Changing Customs

The changing pattern of customs and rituals is a significant factor, for it throws light upon the progress

of the Saheriyas. It possibly suggests that the tribals are steadily being de-tribalised. The influence of urban-contacts, other cultures, village customs is steadily seeping through and changing much of their old patterns. Twenty years ago or before, the predominant feeling at the time of constructing a house seemed to be the fear; the *fear* from ghosts or evil spirits, hence they were placated. The fear still exists at the back of the mind, but it seemed to have lost some of its terror. The evil spirits are not placated on the occasion. It was thus a negative approach, fear that harm may befall then and lest harm befalls, the evil spirits were worshipped. The mode of offering further reflects the progress of thinking. No longer is a small animal sacrificed and wine offered but a less violent method seems to gain favour. This could be due to influence of other castes of village or urban areas. Even in housing pattern the influence of other castes seems to be seeping through. The fact that some of them have been staying more or less permanently in the village, in houses which cannot be distinguished from non-tribal houses, reveals a change in their mental make up. There was a time when a Saheriya's average stay at a place was less than six months. Though many still follow the pattern but others have been weaned away from it. When a Saheriya house is complete and he begins to stay in it he hoists a pole on which a black, earthen pot which is unusable is hung on it with its bottom towards the sky. This saves the house from 'Evil Eye' or *nazar*. For this would absorb the shock and leave the house safe.

### Living Conditions

For each Saheriya house there are 4.91 persons in the village. The average space including the hearth and space for other material goods works out to about 110 sq. feet. This gives an average of 24.4 sq. feet per person. In actual practice it comes to much less. There is thus a lot of congestion in the house. In some cases as many as 8 persons live in an area of 100 to 120 sq. feet. In others the position, though not so bad, is quite difficult. With this much accommodation available there is very little scope for privacy. Often the aged parents sleep in the outside covered verandah or in the cattle-shed leaving the main rooms to the married son.

### Hygiene

Ventilation is poor. There are no arrangements for guiding light into the room. During the monsoons the position becomes worse. The rooms are dark and dingy, with flies abounding. There are no urinals or latrines so the near about approaches from behind become specially dirty. The kitchen water runs into alleys or remains in the house. All around squalor abounds. In the leaf roofed houses, insects, rubbish and dust keeps falling over the floor and since everybody is a worker, each leaves the house sometime in the morning with the result that, none has sufficient time to clean it up.

## DRESSES

### Tribal (Males) — Daily Wear

The clothes worn generally in the village have been adopted by the tribal. Head wear is worn by the older generation the younger types (age groups upto 25 years) go bare headed. Usually a five to six yard coarse cloth is wrapped around the head. They call it *safa* same as a turban worn elsewhere. Often *dhoti* which is worn out is wrapped about thus. This is helpful against sun and for carrying head loads. The younger generation has not evolved any substitute for the *safa*.

The upper portion of the body is without any clothes among the poorest classes, when they move about at their work or in the village, but when they go out to the market etc. they put on some clothes. Some wear a jacket-cum-half sleeved shirt corresponding to a waist-coat locally called *angarkha*. It is open in the centre and has cheap buttons, the neck is fairly tight and the sleeves go upto the elbows. It permits quite a lot of movement and is cheap. Stiched for about 30 to 40 P. requires about two and half metres of cloth. From shoulders it covers upto the waist only. Those who are little better off than the above, wear a *kurta*, loose flowing garment with sleeves upto wrists and cloth covers up the body from the neck to the knees where it hangs loosely. This is made of white bleached long cloth of the cheap coarse to medium quality costing between 0.75 P. to Rs. 1.25. A *kurta* requires three yards of cloth and is stiched at Guna. Charges being Rs. 0.75. This is the favourite upper garment with the upper age group of persons (30 and above) of the best means in the villages. Among the younger persons western shirt is finding popularity. It is obtained from Guna in readymade form. As far as children are concerned the age group 0-5 usually is allowed to remain without clothes. Thereafter shirts are used. Mill made cloth is preferred.

A cotton cloth *dhoti* is the commonest lower garment. It costs Rs. 4 to 5 and measures 4 to 5 yards. The elderly persons generally prefer to wear the clothes upto their knees where as the younger ones wear upto

the ankles but when working they invariably roll it upto their knees. Sometimes they split up a *dhoti* into two pieces and use each piece as a part of working dress, the regular *dhoti* being then used while going out. As regards children — the school going ones generally put a small shirt and a nicker locally known as *kachha*. It is made of cloth preferably a striped one and held by a string at the waist. The non-schooling ones, if allowed to wear clothes, use any as may be made over from worn out clothing of parents. The festival clothes do not vary except that a full *dhoti* is almost invariably worn, and rarely if ever better clothes are used.

### The Non-tribal Males

They are rarely to be seen without the full body being covered. They put on shirt or *kurta* generally. The Patel or village headman is alone in the use of turban. The Jat boys use *payjama* as a lower garment. The clothes are of superior cloth when compared with tribal apparel. The *dhoti* worn upto ankle is the most common garment, on festival days clean clothes are put on.

### Females (Tribal)

The head is usually covered by a *loongda* which is a loose cloth worn over the skirt and blouse covering the breasts. The upper garment consists of a very short blouse which leave the back completely exposed and starting from behind the neck, spreads out for both sides into sleeves coming down in the front to cover the breasts. It is enough barely to cover the breasts and in some cases leaving the cleavage between the two visible. It is tied securely at the back by a string and dispenses with any other form of under-wear like brassieres. In the front it does not go below a point about six inches above the navel, leaving the stomach open. This garment is locally known as *reja* and some of the women make it at home or a pedlar sells it in the village for about Rs. 0.75 to 1.00 In winter often over a *reja* a full sleeves blouse or shirt is worn but for the most part of the year a *reja* is sufficient. Generally *reja* is worn after marriage and birth of a child. Prior to this a loose shirt like garment with the front closed is worn (please see photograph plate XIV)). In this case the girl although married, has not acquired the status to wear a *reja*. Once the use of *reja* is begun it continues for the rest of life.

The lower garment consists of loose skirt like hanging from the waist to the ankle and called *lenhga*. It is of thick, plain or printed cloth of red or blue colour. Nothing is worn below it therefore this cloth is of a thicker variety. Eight to ten yards of cloth are required to make a *lenhga* and is available in Guna, costs anything between Rs. 12/- to 16/-. It is secured at the waist and with many folds hangs loosely upto the ankles. When walking fast it sways to and fro giving a pleasant rhythm in the movement. A complete set of female clothes costs upto Rs. 20/- (*reja* Re. 1.00, *loongda* Rs. 4 to 5 and *Lenhga* Rs. 15). The women hardly have more than two sets of these clothes. None of them possesses any silken garments.

For girls above 8/9 years of age a small *lenhga* and a loose jacket is given for wearing. The children have to content by wearing worn out clothes of the mother. Clothes of the same type are worn by the smaller children. As regards wearing of clothes is concerned no distinction between married/unmarried and widowed female is observed. The widows wear clothes of all colours.

### Festival

There is no specific festival dress. Sometimes they put on dresses of their marriage on these occasions. Generally a tendency to wear better and cleaner clothes on festival days is noticeable. The clothes are rarely washed; and bathing too is not very common.

### The Non-tribal (Females)

Among Jats and Thakurs the women have been wearing *dhotis* of a thicker and coarse variety without any under garments. The women prefer white or red colour, even married women put on white *sarees*. The upper garment consists of a loose blouse locally called *polka* worn without any underwear. The *polka* completely covers the back (of *reja* where back is exposed), and the breasts (it is not low necked; of *reja* again), and goes upto the navel. It will be observed that this dress leaves much less body exposed. No distinction of clothes between married and widowed exists. Usually the women have 3/4 sets of such clothes. A *polka* costs Rs. 2.50 to 4.00 and *dhoties* Rs. 6/- to 10/-. Since women do not bathe daily, the frequency of washing the clothes is considerably less. On festival days, superior quality of *dhoties* or *sarees* are put on. Petticoats are used only on festive occasions. Children wear a *kachha*, frock and *polkas* and generally remain dressed up.

### Foot Wear

Men and women who are required to move out into the jungle invariably amongst both castes use

shoes. These shoes are generally of three types for the males. The lowest quality ones being of rubber or tyre soles are available in Guna market for about Rs. 4/- to 5/-. For rainy season a shoes of coarser hide without any fine work over it is worn. It costs about Rs. 6/- to 8/- and is barely able to last the monsoon months. The best type of village shoe is the type described above but of better quality leather and with some decorative work by golden or other coloured threads. The soles have more heavy pins and it lasts for over a year. It costs about Rs. 8.00 to 12.00 and is available in Guna market. The children among the Saheriyas are not given any foot-wear. Among the Jats tyre sole chappal were used.

Many women among the Saheriyas do not put on any foot-wear. Some who can afford use tyre sole chappals costing Re. 1.00. The women among Jats and Thakurs use chappals costing about Rs. 3.00 to 5.00 and are obtained from Guna. While walking over the asphalt road they often carry chappals in their hands preferring to walk bare footed.

## Ornaments and Body Decorations

Among the males the following ornaments are worn :—

(a) *Tabiz*
(d) *Dhulaniya*
(c) Rings for upper ear-lobe and forefinger.

There are only ten Saheriyas who wear these ornaments in the village. As far as Jats and Thakurs are concerned they put on only golden rings and *dhulaniya.*

**The Saheriyas :—** Their economic condition is difficult, so as a rule they do not wear any ornaments, a few of them however can afford some ornaments and so about ten of them have taken to wearing it. The wearing of ornaments indicates their 'status' and makes for a better show. The ornaments are mostly of silver, in fact they have not been able to use gold so far, and are purchased from silversmiths in Guna, who often cheat them. Saheriyas generally are not able to distinguish between silver and other metals, this increases the chances of their being cheated. A goldsmith from Bajrangarh often visits the village and sells these ornaments. He opined that the Saheriyas have only recently taken to the use of gold and silver ornaments. According to him they started using these in the last 10/12 years. He had been selling these regularly for the last 7/8 years. He brings cheap ornaments and offers generous credit facilities, but has so far always managed to recover the debt. When he realises that the other party is in no position to pay cash he does not hesitate to get the payment in kind. His chance visit to the village during the investigations threw interesting light into various aspects of the transactions. Often when the villagers needed some money, they would re-sell their ornaments to him and he would buy it back for half or a third of the price paid. This deal always took the form of a simple mortgage. The Saheriya would give it to the goldsmith, telling him that he would redeem it, whenever he had the money. He never was able to have the money and so the ornament remained with the goldsmith.

This goldsmith has quite a persuasive way of selling his wares to the women. He would, if the male member is absent, speak very nicely to the women, show them the ornaments, persuade them to covet it and then at the appropriate psychological moment request her to keep it and not worry about the price, which he would settle with the husband or collect later. More often than not, we gathered that he succeeded. He tries to identify himself with the Saheriyas. Another ruse he often uses, is to pay some women say about Rs. 5.00 to Rs. 10.00 and thus get them to do some very effective publicity, who keep praising his fair dealings. These women circulate reports that the goldsmith is cheaper in his prices as compared to other in Guna or that he has an excellent collection of wares and that they are selling off quickly. On one occasion when he had to collect a bill he told the house-wife that her husband had told him to collect the amount from her, and that the amount was in the house. The poor women fell in the trap and gave him the money only to be beaten when the husband returned and discovered the version of the goldsmith. On another occasion he bluffed a co-wife of a Saheriya by telling her that the other wife had three pairs of bangles and that she should not remain behind. By playing her against her rival, he sold to her two pairs of bangles, much to the annoyance of her husband. On yet another occasion, he borrowed some ghee from a village and later told him that, since he had no cash, he would sell some of his goods in return. The other party made the bargain .He has ingratiated himself into the village, with men and women and manages to do quite little business round about. He however is not a regular money lender.

## The Ornaments

**Tabiz :—** A *tabiz* can be made out of brass or copper or silver or even gold, but gold is not used. It costs between .25 P. to Re. 1.00. In size it is usually 2 cms. x 1 cms. with a human head embossed upon it and on

the top it has small socket through which a thread or a chain could pass and is then generally worn in the neck or worn on the upper portion of arm, a little above the elbow.

*Tabiz* is an amulet or a charm and is very popular among the Saheriya. Nathu Saheriya reads a few unintelligible words and ties a *tabiz*. It will ward off all evil spirits and diseases like malaria. Nathu is also the village doctor practising excorsion to drive away evil spirits. Nathu is a cultivator in the village and during any sickness he is invariably called for. He charges no fees.

Tying of *tabiz* saves the children from (1) *nazar*, (2) periodical illness, (3) the evil spirits, (4) from accidents and (5) ensures good and healthy growth. To safeguard against the above contingencies a *tabiz* has to be 'read' by some one who knows how to practice it and in the village only Nathu knows it. This service he does gratis. The villagers often feel that some evil eye has forced illness or hard times over them; this is often described as *nazar* from the urdu word "Nazar" meaning 'look, sight or glance'. That this evil eye cannot bear to see prosperity and happiness is accepted as a fact by them. The effects of this *nazar* can best be warded off by the *tabiz*. When an evil eye has afflicted, they call it *nazar lag-gai*. In fact, the first suspicion, after a healthy child has fallen ill is against the evil eye and accordingly treat the child for *nazar-lagna*. To forestall this *nazar-lagna* a *tabiz* is worn. A *tabiz* once worn is never taken out. Another may be worn in addition if necessary. If a sorrow befalls the wearer after putting on the *tabiz* he would never attribute it to the *tabiz*, for a *tabiz* only saves people never harms them. A *tabiz* which has not been 'read over' is considered less efficacious and so they get it blessed by Nathu.

## Dhulaniya

Excepting Jat who possesses one of gold the others including Saheriyas wear a silver one. It is cylindrical in shape and hollow from within. It is usually about 2 cms. in length, has two loops from which strings could be inserted and is worn in the neck. A gold one costs as much as Rs. 10-15 and a better one may even go upto Rs. 25/-. The silver ones cost about Rs. 3.00 to 5.00 and both are available with the pedlar goldsmith and at Guna. Apart from ornamental significance it has none other.

## Rings (Fingers)

These are made from gold, silver and copper or brass. The Saheriyas do not use any golden ones. Only one Jat possesses a golden ring and it costs Rs. 35/-. The prices vary from Rs. 25/- to Rs. 50/-. Silver rings cost about Rs. 1.50 and the friendly goldsmith has succeeded in giving these to many persons. Almost all males wear this. Its only, significance is decorative. The Saheriyas have been known in the recent years to give these rings as present during weddings to their relatives.

## Rings

A Thakur was seen wearing a golden ring in the upper lobe of his ear. A few children in the Jat house were wearing silver rings in the ear-lobes. When children are taken to attend wedding they use these earrings as decoration. Among the Saheriyas this is fairly common. The ear-lobes are pierced and some of them wear these rings made of silver. The cost of golden ring is Rs. 25/-, upwards and the silver ones Rs. 2/- to 5/-. They are available from the pedlar goldsmith and at Guna.

## Women

Ornaments apart from decorations also proclaim status. Women as a rule are extremely fond of ornaments and use up all their savings and even incur debts in buying them. These are on the other hand the only savings a family may fall back upon, in rainy days. Rajput and Thakur women have all along been found of silver and golden ornaments. If they could afford it, then they always went in for them. With the tribals the position was slightly different. Previously i.e. before twenty years or so they never had any gold/silver ornaments and perhaps they could not afford any. To-day they possess a few silver pieces and look at golden ones with a fond hope of fulfilment some day in not too distant future.

The tribals are not barred from wearing golden or silver ornaments. The only taboo regarding golden ornaments, observed by all communities is that no gold is worn below the waist. Depending on its means, every family possesses some ornaments. As far as Saheriya women are concerned this appears to be the third stage of wearing different types of ornaments. The first, that is known to them and which they remember pertains to wearing ornaments from lac, glass and other coloured stones which they collect and put it into a thread worn around the neck. Some of these ornaments are still worn by them, but this is regarded as antiquated

wear. They are not buying these types any more but they could be purchased even to-day. After this they took on to wearing ornaments of *rango* or the foil a cheap metal resembling silver. It is mixed in silver as an alloy to bring down the quality. Lately as they claim, in the last 15 years or so they are taking to the use of silver. It is only in the past 8-10 years that they have taken more to the use of silver.

## Ornaments of Head and Hair

For head and hair the following ornaments are used:— (1) *boar*, (2) *gutti* and (3) *jhella*.

**Bore** (Please see plate XVI).

A *boar* is worn about two or three inches above the fore-head in the centre at the parting of the hair. The cylindrical portion is hollow and through a loop pass strings with which it is fixed in the hair. It costs about Rs. 1.00 to 3.00 and is worn by usually Saheriya females of all ages.

**Gutti** (Please see plate XV).

This is comparatively a heavier ornaments weighing as much as 100 grams each (or 9 to 10 tolas) and a pair costs Rs. 80.00. The lighter ones cost about Rs. 20.00. The Saheriya women wear it. There are few who own these. Among other castes this is not worn. It is a favourite with young married ones.

**Jhella** (Please see plate XV).

It is tagged on to the *boar* and hangs in the centre of the fore-head. It is made of silver and the cost varies between Rs. 10.00 to 15.00. Only the married Saheriya women put this on. Among the Jats and Thakurs a slight variation of *Jhella* called *bendi* is used. It is usually made of gold.

## Ornaments of Ear

The commonly used ornaments of the ear are (1) *karn-phool*, (2) *ear-rings*.

**Karn-phool** (Please see plate XVI).

It is worn in ear that have been pierced earlier. The Saheriya married women are fond of it and it is made of silver costing about Rs. 2.00. Almost all married women wear it, even widows may wear it and there are three such women who are wearing it. It is not popular among the other castes.

**Ear-rings**:— These are usually worn by Thakur and Jat women. They are like some of the modern types and are made of gold or any other metal that glitters like gold. The golden ones cost as much as Rs. 75.00 to 125.00. The Jat women in the village are using it and the Thakurs do not claim to use it. Generally speaking the Thakurs appeared rather evasive in their replies specially regarding golden ornaments. Nothing could allay their fears that these enquiries were not connected with recent control over gold.

**Nose**:— The only ornament worn in the nose and this is *long*. In all castes before the children reach the age of 5 or 6 years, the nose is pierced and thereafter *long* is worn in the nostril. Women of all ages and castes wear it. Amongst Jats and Thakurs a *long* is made of gold costing between Rs. 3.00 to 10.00 and amongst the rest silver ones costing between Rs. 0.50 to 0.75 is worn.

## Neck

The following ornaments (1) *khangwari*, (2) *janjira I*, (3) *janjira II* and (4) *dhulaniya* are worn.

**Khangwari**:— (Please see plates XVI and XVIII).

This is the most popular ornament for the neck and is worn by all castes. It weigh as much as 20 tolas or 220 grams and is of silver. The cost varies between Rs. 40.00 to Rs. 60.00 and can be purchased from pedlar goldsmith and at Guna. This is a first choice with all women and is made of smaller size for the children. It hangs around the neck and if properly designed and well made it becomes a very pretty decoration.

**Janjira I**:— (Please see plate XXI).

This is made from coloured stone glass and lac. It is a very colourful item of decoration and is still very popular with the Saheriyas with whom it has been associated earlier. It is comparatively a cheap type of ornament costing between Rs. 0.50 and Re. 1.00.

**Janjira II**:—

This too is very much like the above and is usually used for children. Cost varies from Rs. 0.25 to 0.75.

## Dhulaniya

It is worn in the neck like a necklace. *Dhulaniya* is put into a piece of thread or golden or silver chain to be hung around the neck. This is a common ornament between the two sexes. Women among the Thakurs and Rajputs prefer to put on a golden one and others use a silver one. Males and females of all ages can use this.

## Wrist and Arms

The most popular ones are (1) *choora*, (2) *kangana*, (3) *kakaniya* (Jats only), (4) *bangles*.

**Choora :—** (Please see plate XVII).

This is worn by all castes and is made of silver weighing upto 5 tolas or 50 grams. Those meant for children are much lighter and weigh only 20 grams. All castes are known to use it. Among all castes right from the age of wearing ornaments (say after 10-12 years) and throughout their lives *choora* is used by them. It is available from the pedlar goldsmith and in Guna town and costs upto Rs. 15.00 for adults and Rs. 5.00 for children. Among the Saheriyas all women generally wear a *choora*. The poorer ones wear such *chooras* as are made of alloys and hence cost less. In the arms this is one ornament which is generally worn by every one.

## Kangana

*Kangana* is worn above the wrist and is lighter in weight as compared to *choora*. It weighs upto 3-4 tolas or 45 grams and is generally made of silver costing about Rs. 15.00. Children do not wear it. It is a sign of a married woman and usually given to her at marriage. The cheaper quality *kanganas* are made out of alloy with silver and cost about Rs. 5.00 or so. All Saheriya women have these *kanganas*.

## Kakaniya

This is similar to *kangana* but the craftmanship is better and instead of being flat at top, it is embossed on side. It is made of silver and weighs upto 2½ tolas or 25-30 grams costing Rs. 10.00 to 15.00.

## Bangles

The Saheriya women generally use lac bangles which are thick and studded with glass (please see plates XVII and XVIII). The other communities wear glass bangles and these are available in the *hat* or the market place at Guna. These cost about 0.6 P. per piece sometimes 20 to a rupee.

## Waist (Kardhauni)

This is used by Rajputs and Jats women only. It is a chain-belt worn over the waist line upon the folds of the *saree*. Usually it hangs loose on one side but does not fall off. It is made from silver and the bigger ones weigh as much as 3/4 seers or about 740-750 grams. It is a fairly heavy one and often mars the gait while moving around but it is one of the most coveted ornaments. It is quite common to mix some alloy with silver in which case the cost comes down upto Rs. 75.00 to 100.00 (weight being about 400-500 grams), but otherwise costs between Rs. 175.00 to 250.00. It is perhaps because of this that Saheriyas do not wear it. Only three women in the village possess it. It is worn by married women.

## Legs

All castes use (1) *kada* and (2) *amla*.

**Kada** (Please see plate XX).

They are hollow cylindrical ornaments usually made of silver weighing upto 50 grams and costing between Rs. 15.00 to 20.00 per pair. They are secured by means of screw. All castes use it. Among the poorer Saheriyas (income 150 and less) they are mixed with some alloys and are available for less than Rs. 5.00 per pair. They can be purchased locally from the peddling goldsmith or from Guna.

## Amla

*Amla* is very much similar to *kada* except that they are better designed and appear corrugated. They weigh about 6/8 tolas a pair and the silver ones cost about Rs. 15.00 to Rs. 20.00. They are worn below the *Kada*. (Please see Plate XX).

## Ornaments Generally

The villagers buy smaller type of ornaments from the hawking goldsmith; but all purchased from Guna. If there is a marriage in any of the households then they invariably buy from Guna. In Guna they buy from any goldsmith.

## Tattooing

The women have been getting their bodies tattooed since long. Why this has been done, they do not know. To the question as to why did they get tattooed, their reply was 'because it looks good'. Tattooing then seems to have only a decorative aspect. In all castes tattooing is done. Some women replied that perhaps it must have been a custom for fair women to decorate their bodies thus, but it has now passed on to all types. They still feel that the fairer a woman is, more tattooing she should have. Women are tattooed when they reach age of 10-12 years for tattooing is a painful process. No ceremony or ritual marks the occasion. Women tattooers come from nearby village

Rothai, and do the tattooing. They are paid in kind at the rate of 1¼ seer wheat 2½ seers of juar for covering the two arms, the calves of the feet and forehead.

### Tattooing Designs

#### Bhamri

*Bhamri* is tattooed on the calves of the legs (please see plate XXV). It depicts two peacocks along with cherrons and berring bones lines. Below it is a triangle with circle and a cross in the style of maltese. The base is formed by two parallel lines with oblique hatching.

#### Poncha

A *poncha* is tattooed on wrist is depicted in the plate. It consists of a dotted triangle followed by two parallel lines obliquely hatched and small circles.

**Chaupai** (Please see plate XXIII).

Two parallel lines support double parallel triangle arched which the main design is made with a splashing of dots at the top and a flower with a leaf below it.

#### Bahen

A design tattooed on the arms consists of two parallel lines with oblique hatches a splashing of few bands, followed by two lines converging at a point and decorated.

There was no case where fore-head had been tattooed.

## HOUSEHOLD GOODS

The commonest and perhaps the only item of furniture to be found in households of all castes in the village is a cot of varying sizes and shapes. The other items are an improvised stand for hanging their clothes and in a few houses a *kothi* or barrel drum for storing corn but made from earth. A stand made out of poles and planks is also seen in a few houses.

### The Cots

Not all houses can boast of possessing cots. Thakur and Jat households have about 6 to 8 cots per household. The well-to-do types among Saheriyas have more than two cots. They number 12 families. Families possessing only two cots number 16 and one cot 4. Over twenty families have no cots of their own. The villagers make the cots themselves. Timber is available easily from the jungle and so they cut it. They generally make cots out of *neem*, *babul*, and *dhonkar* trees. It is strung with rope they make it themselves. For making rope they obtain *kans* a variety of big grass and then weave rope out of it, in summer months; a period of comparative leisure.

Not all persons sleep on cots as would be obvious from above. Cots are not used for sitting generally, for squatting on floor is preferred to sitting on the cot. The cots are usually of small size being 60" x 30" or even less. Sometimes even smaller ones are made for children, size being 48" x 20".

### Clothes-stand

A pole is suspended across two supports and all clothing or housthold linen or bedding is hung across. it. A similar stands serves as a rest for keeping utensils.

### Kothi

*Kothi* is made to stock grains, so only such cultivators who produce enough grains to be able to save some make one. There are only 17 such persons including Jats and Thakurs who have made *kothis* (please see plate XXVIII). A *kothi* is made from loose soil mixed with wheat husks and cowdung. It is supported on stones or planks to save it from moisture. When no grains are stocked, it is used as a box and clothes and other articles are kept for safety.

### Cooking Utensils

The Saheriyas use the cheapest of cooking utensils and have few in number. The chief among them are:- (1) *thali*, (2) *lota*, (3) *katori*, (4) *tawa*, (5) *tasla*, (6) *balti*, (7) *parat*, (8) *chimta*, (9) *glass* (tumbler), (10) *dekchi*, (11) *katora*, (12) *tasliya*, (13) *matka*, (14) *kulhad*, (15) *potli*. The utensils are further divided into the metals of which they are made; these are:- (a) bronze and brass, (b) iron, (c) aluminium, (d) earthen ones. These are the common household utensils found all over viz. *thali*, *lota*, *katori* and *glass*.

The iron utensils are—: *tawa*, a plate for cooking *chappaties*, a *balti* or bucket, *chimta* or a pair of tongs for adjusting coals and pulling *chappatis* out of fire. The aluminium vessels are *dekchi*, for cooking and *katora* a small cup for eating.

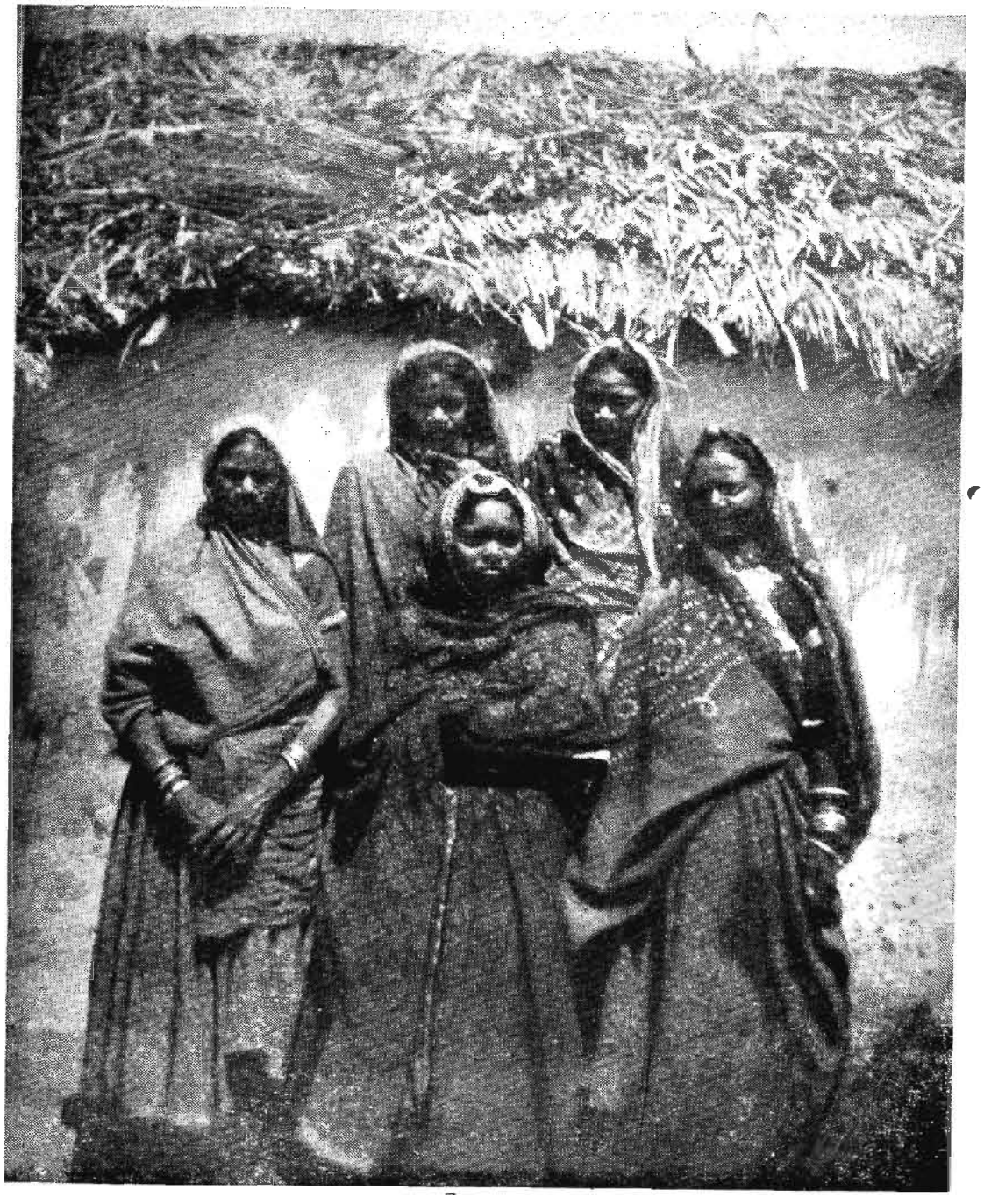
Among earthen vessels for cooking which may be mentioned is a small *ghada* in which a gruel of juar called *lapsi* is prepared. The advantages of cooking in

# PLATE XII



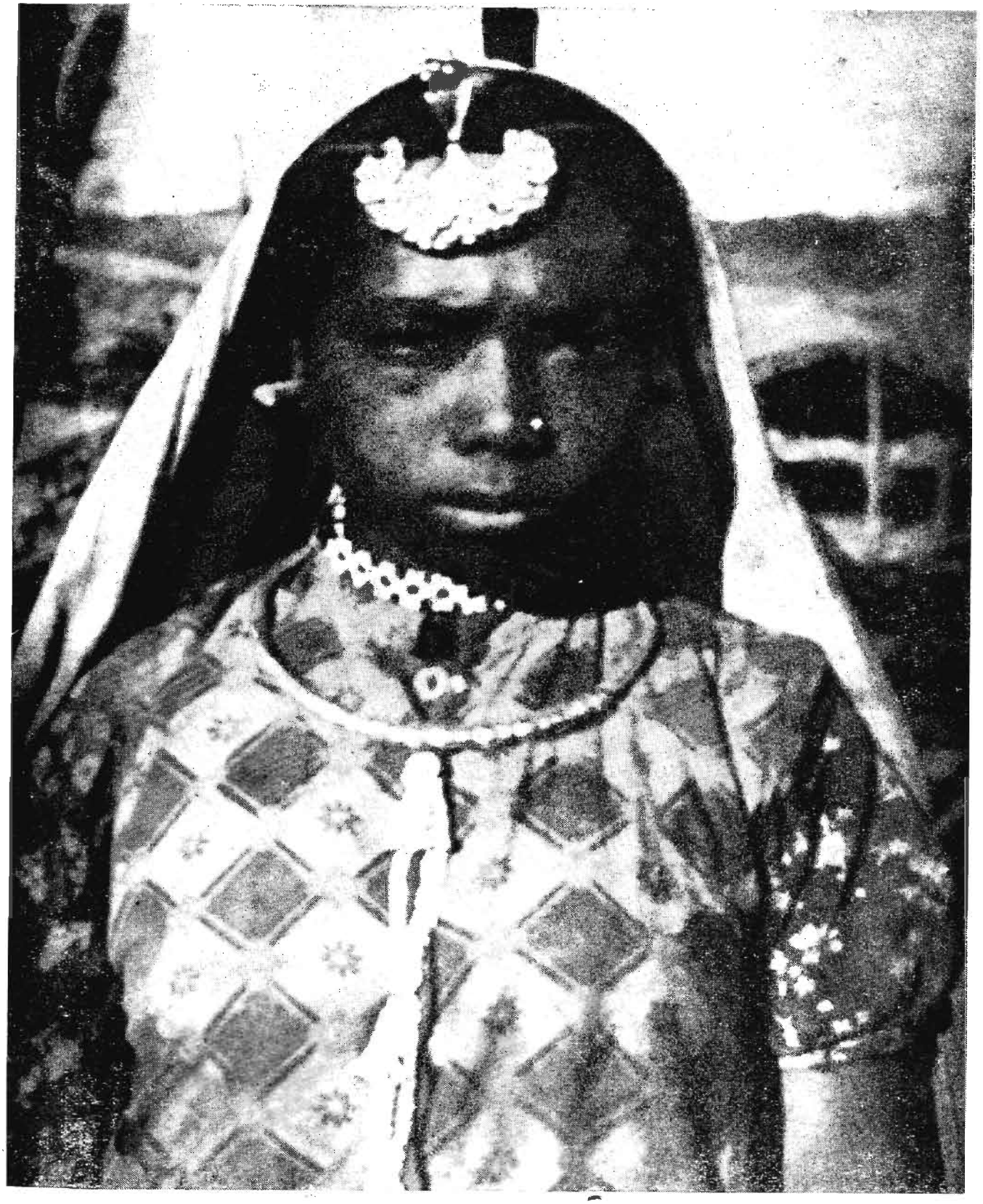
"The Methuselah" of the village
( Age 80 + )

# PLATE XIII



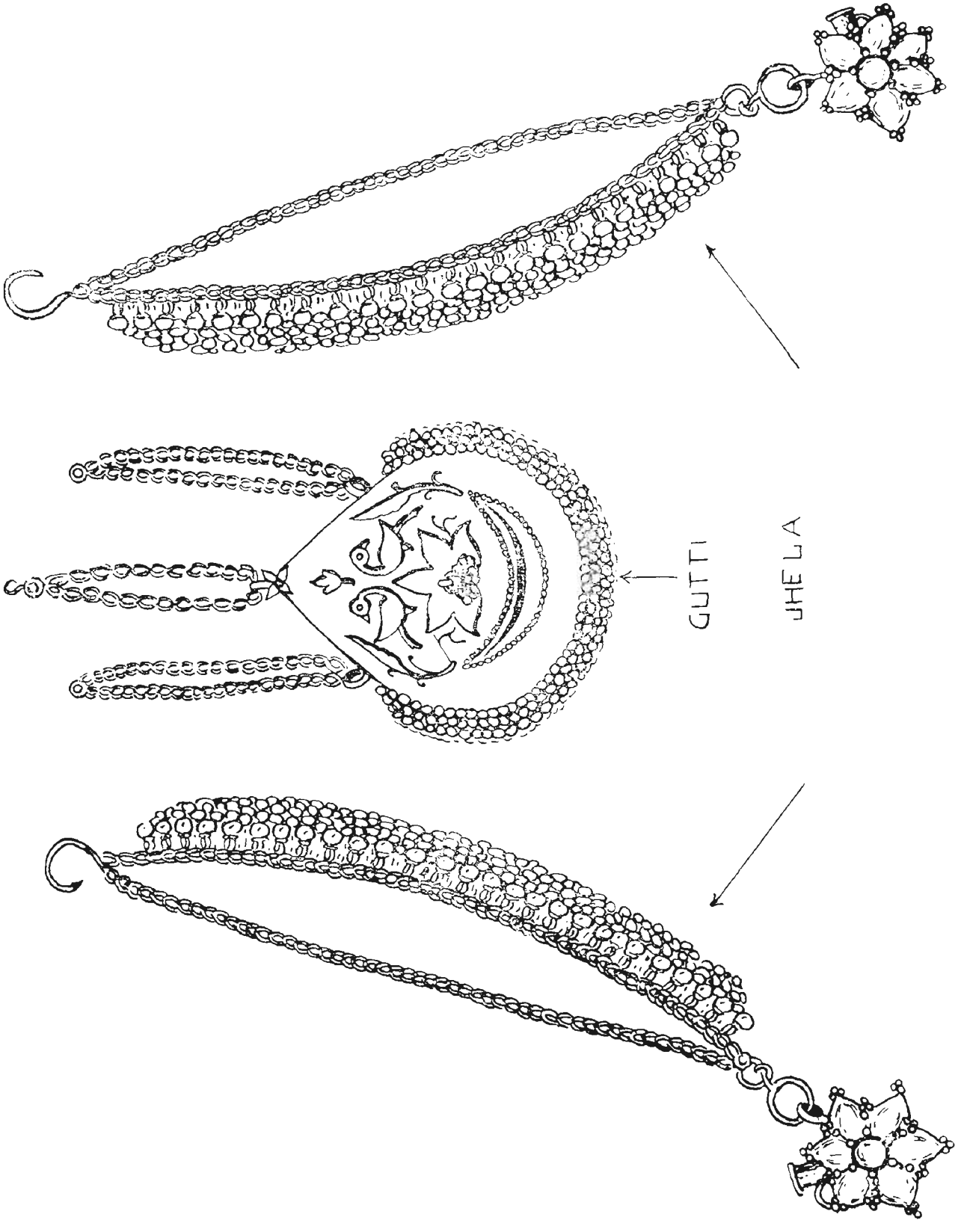
A group of Tribal Women

# PLATE XIV

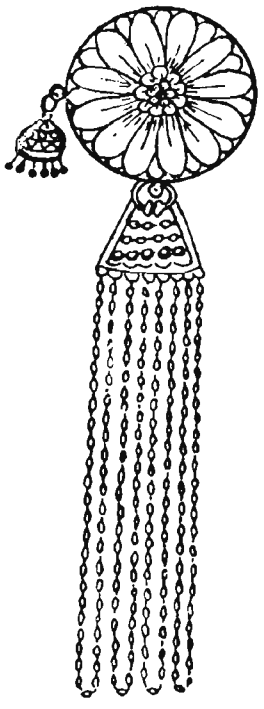


A Saheriya Girl with ornaments

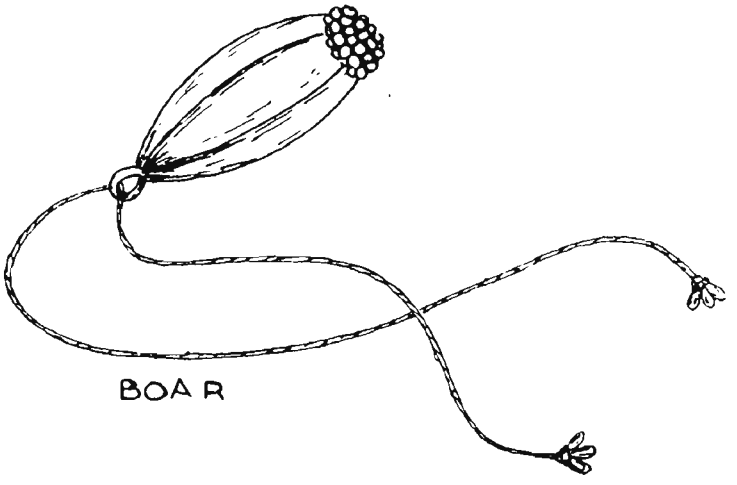
# PLATE XV



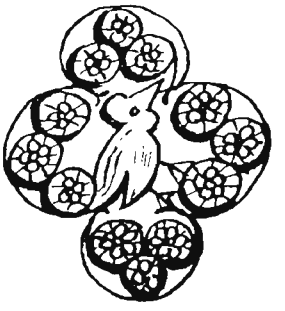
# PLATE XVI



KARNPHOOL



BOAR



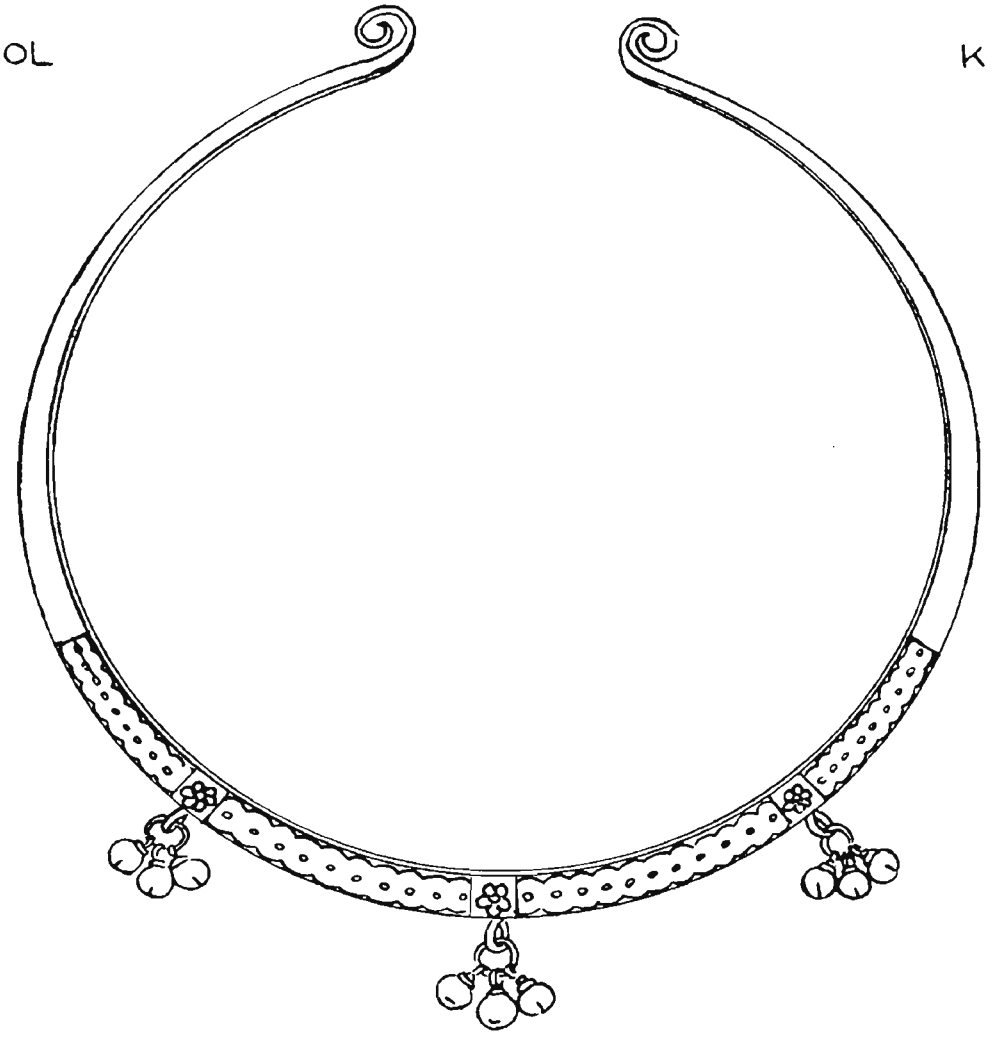
JAHAJ



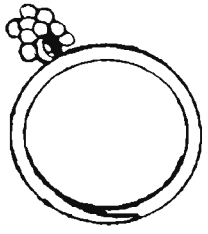
BULAK



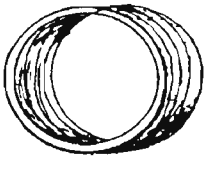
KARNPHOOL



KHANGWARI



RING



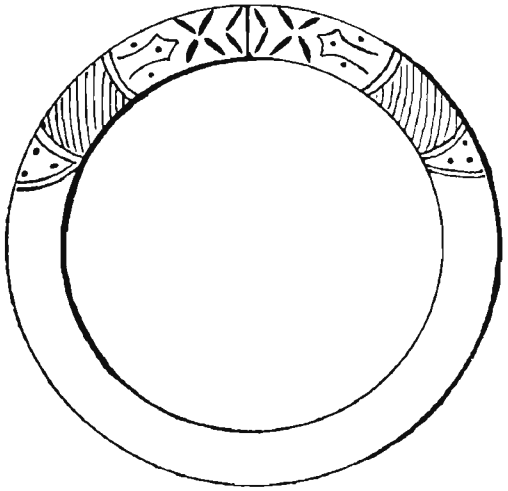
CHHALLA

# PLATE XVII

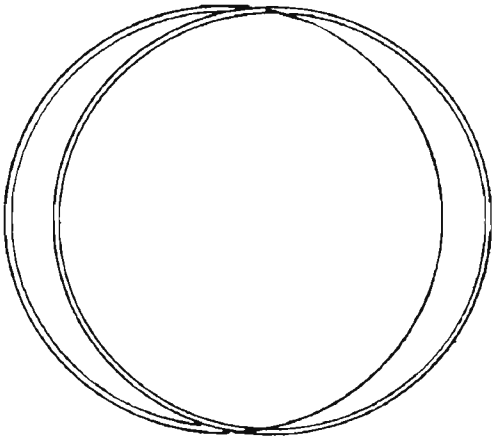





RING

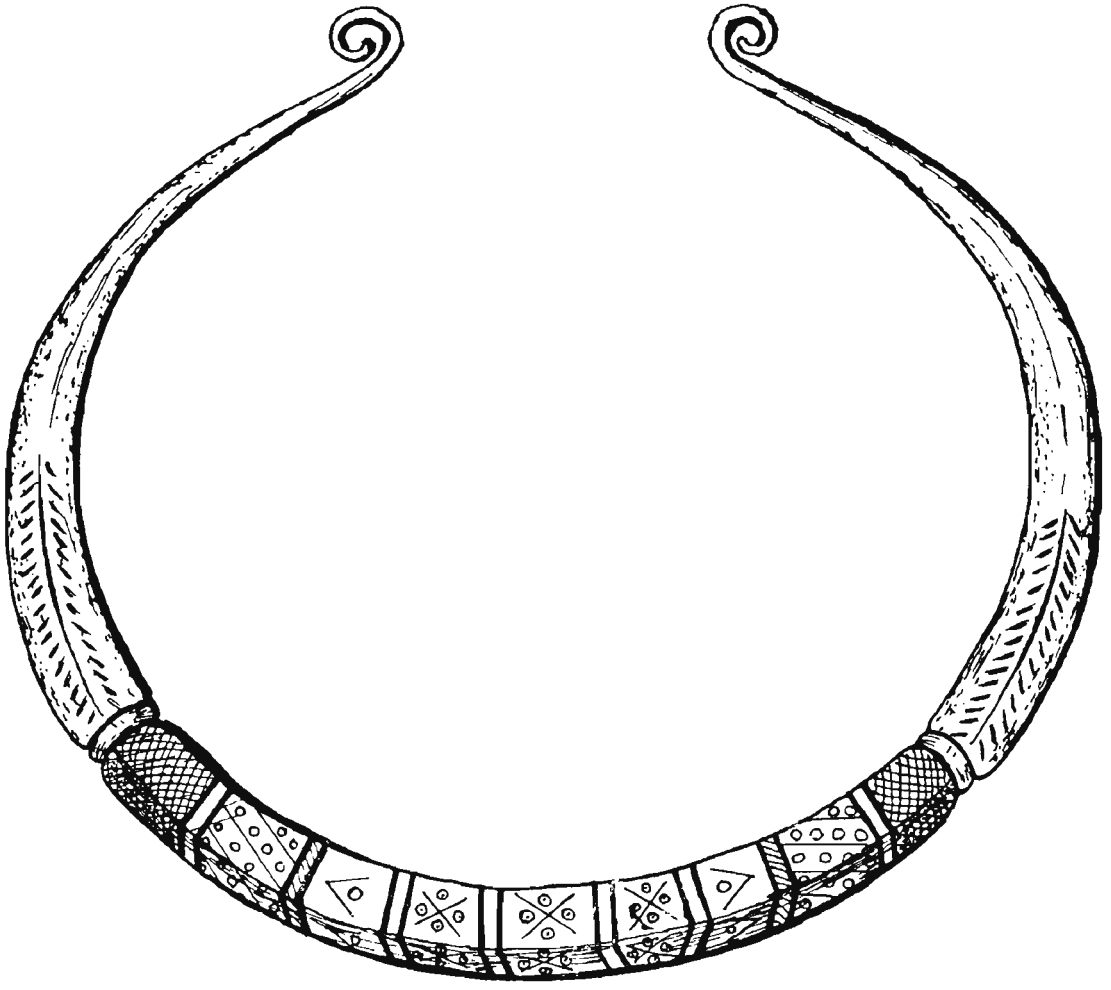


CHOORA

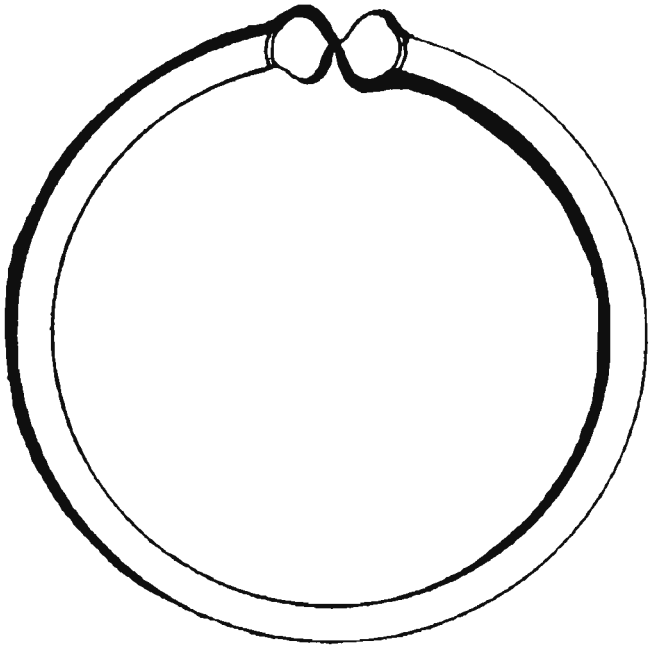


CHOORI

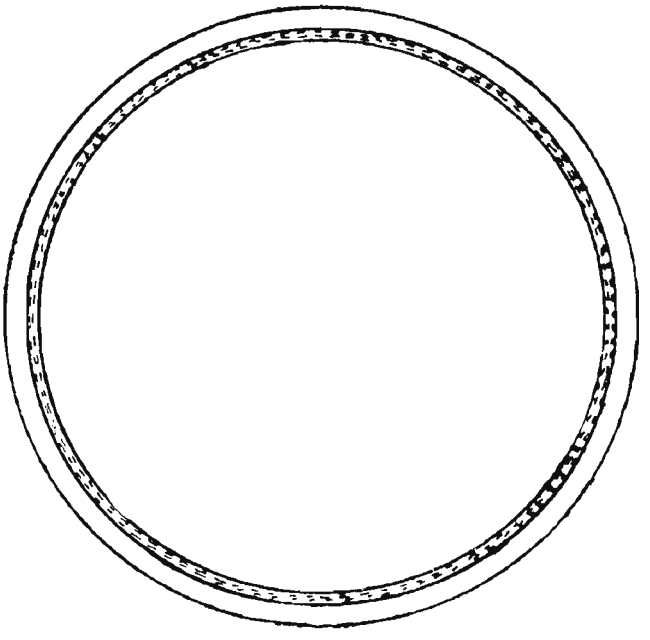
# PLATE XVIII



KHANGWARI



CHOORI

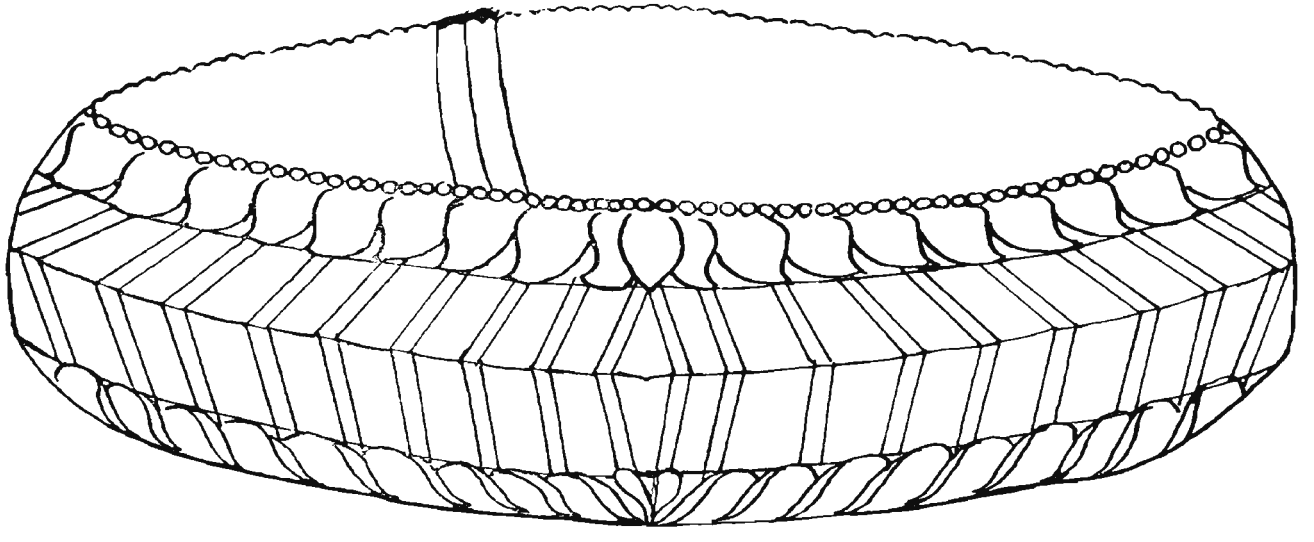


CHOORI

# PLATE XIX

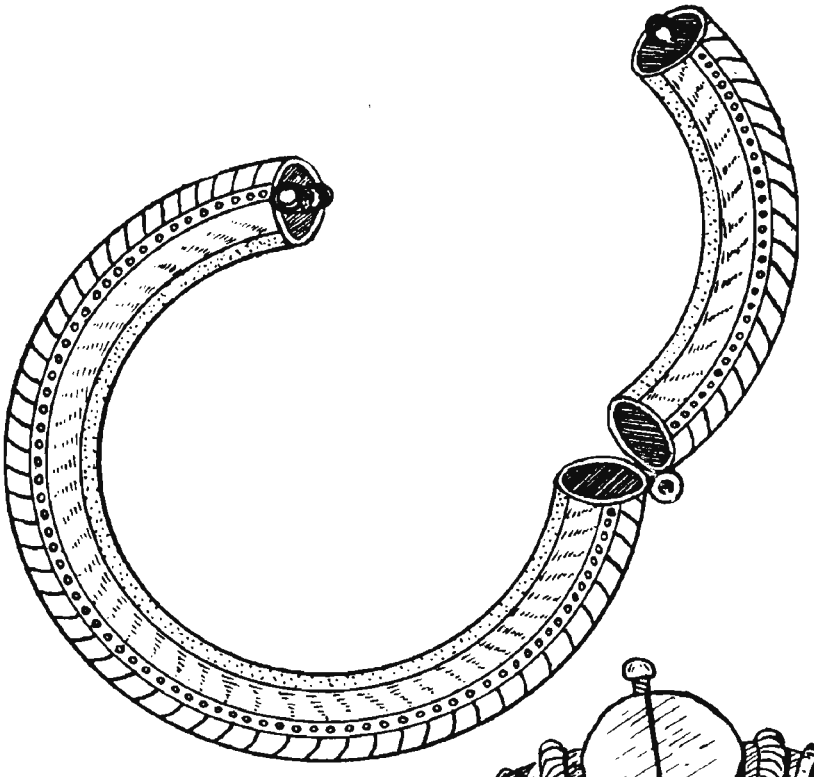


LACHCHHE

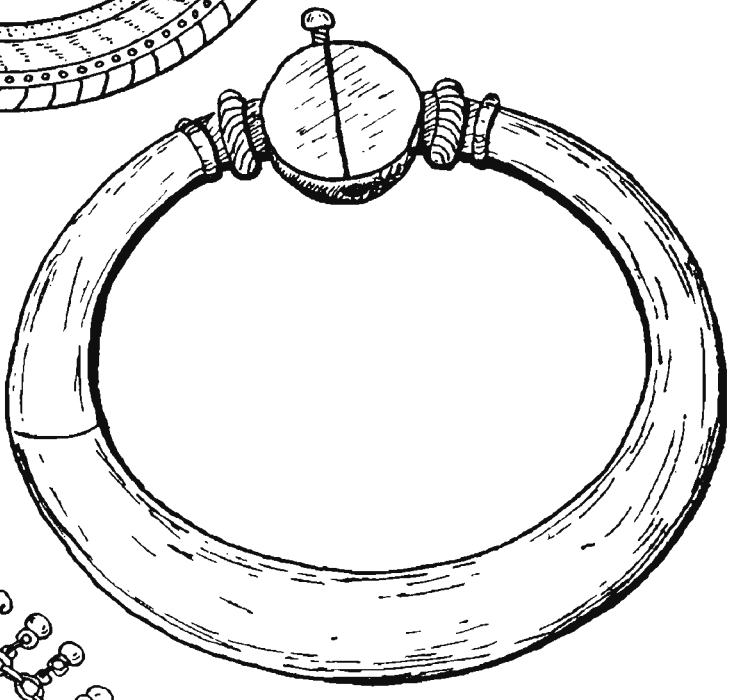


PAIJANA

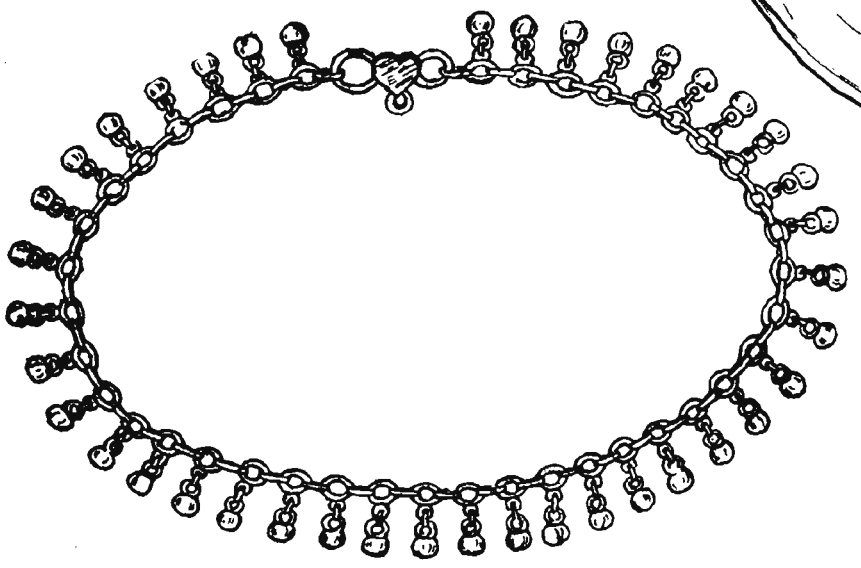
# PLATE XX



AMLA

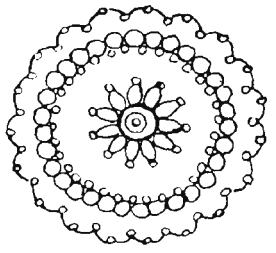


KADE

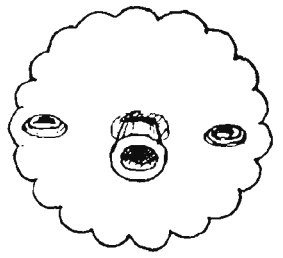


PAYAL

# PLATE XXI



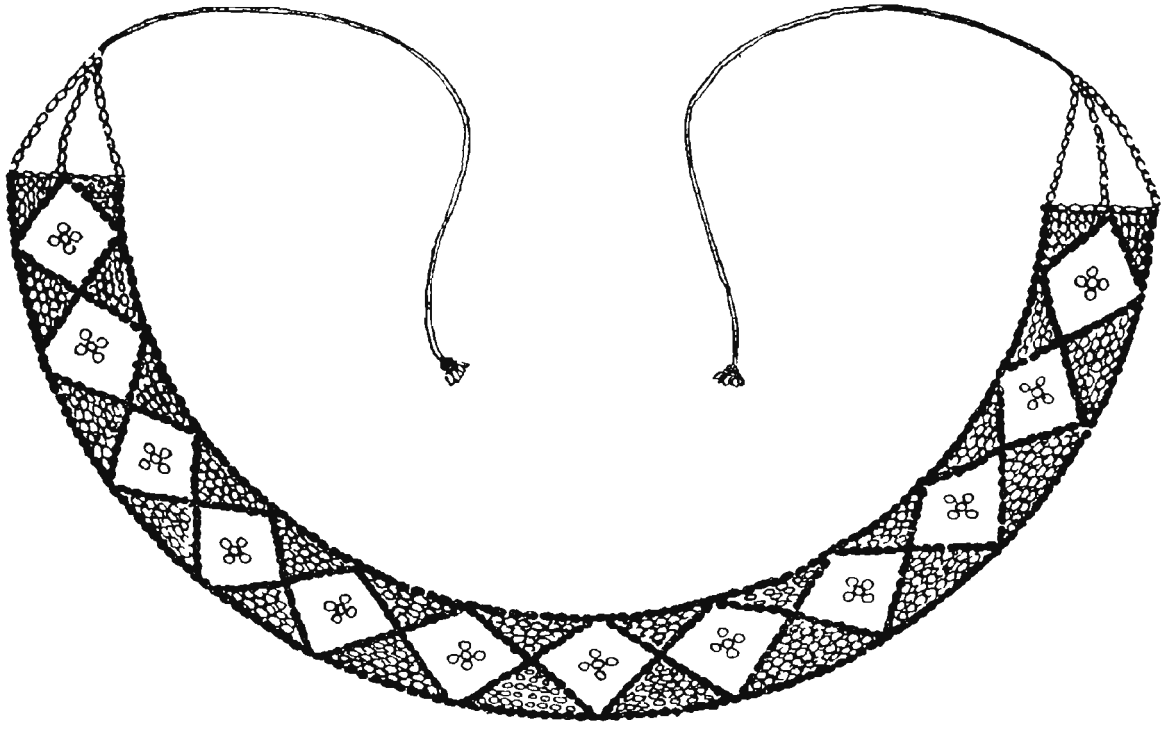
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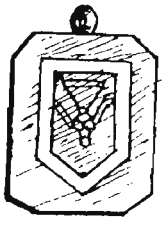
2.

KARAN PHOOL

(No. 1. FRONT No. 2. BACK.)



JANJIRA 1



TABIZ

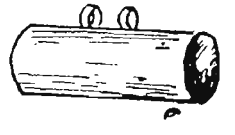
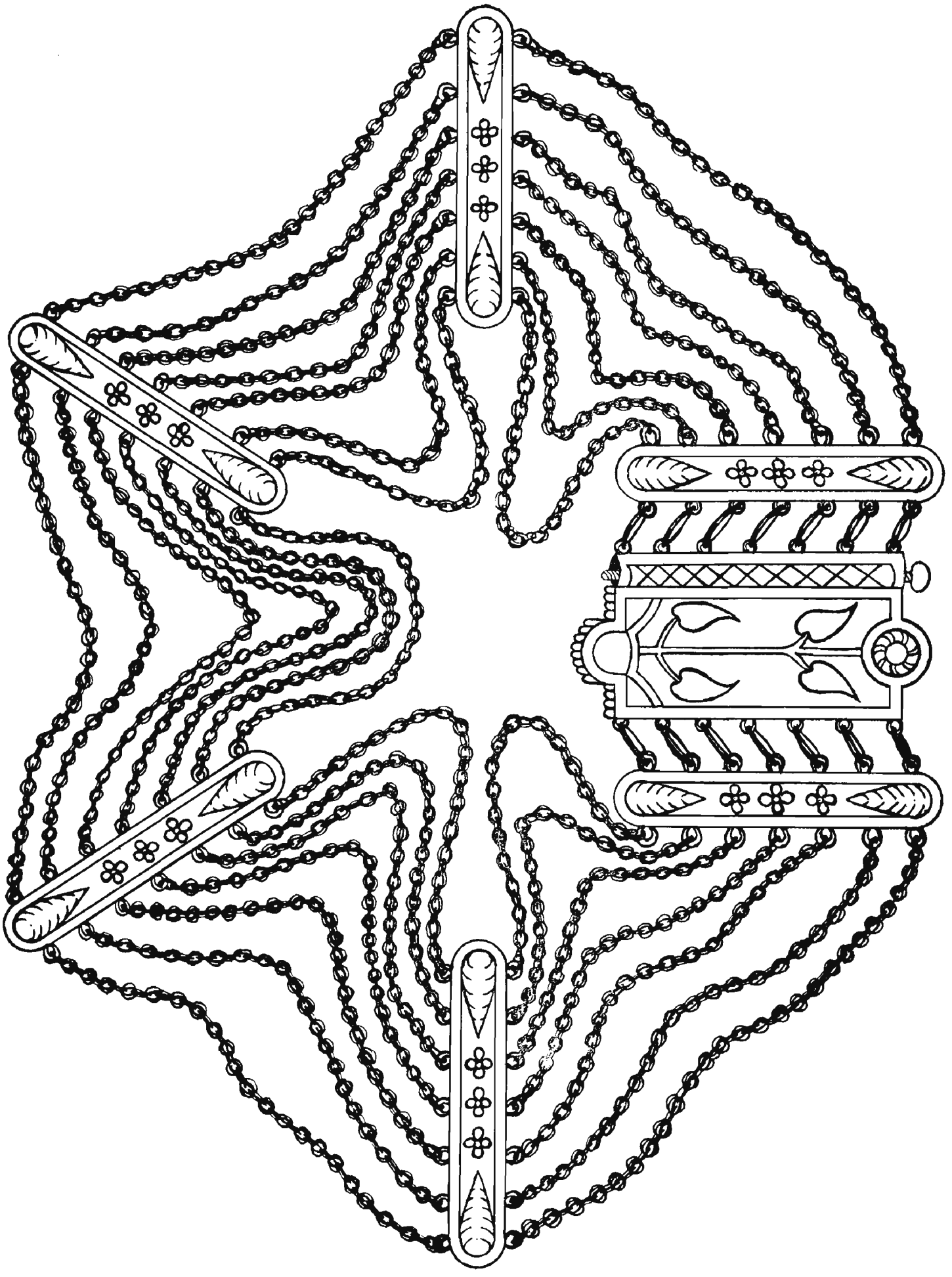
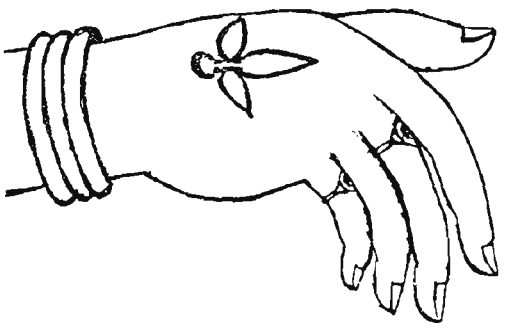


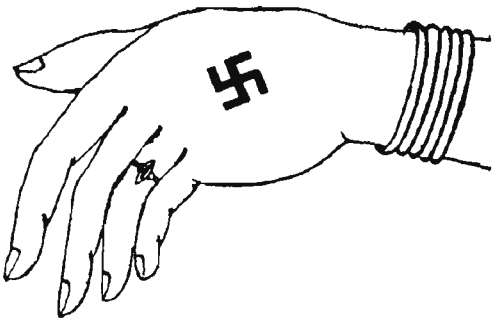
PLATE XXII

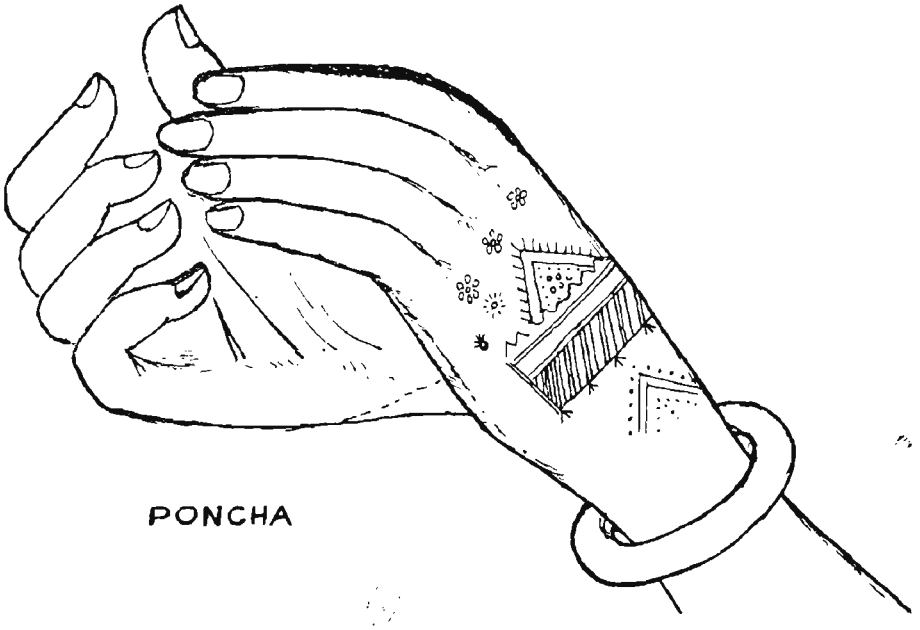


Kardhauni

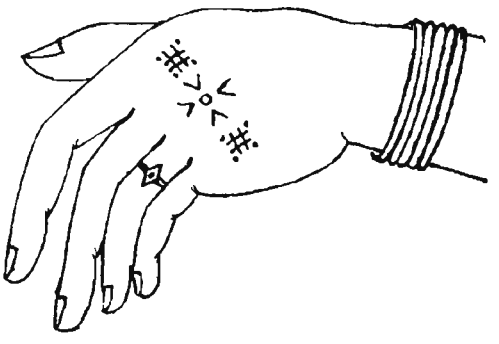
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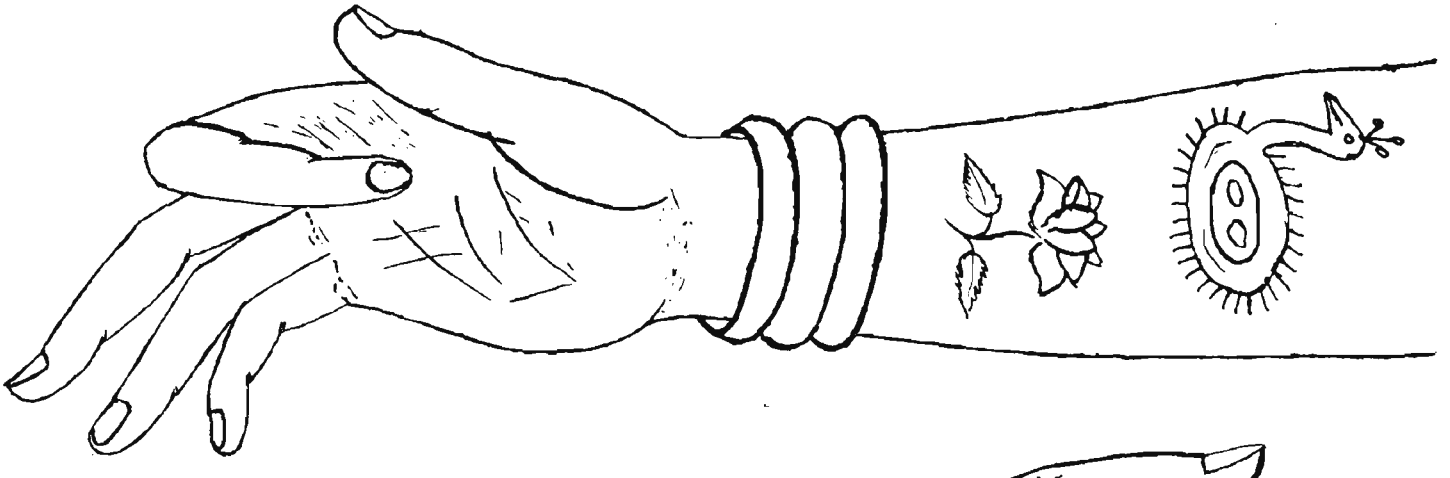


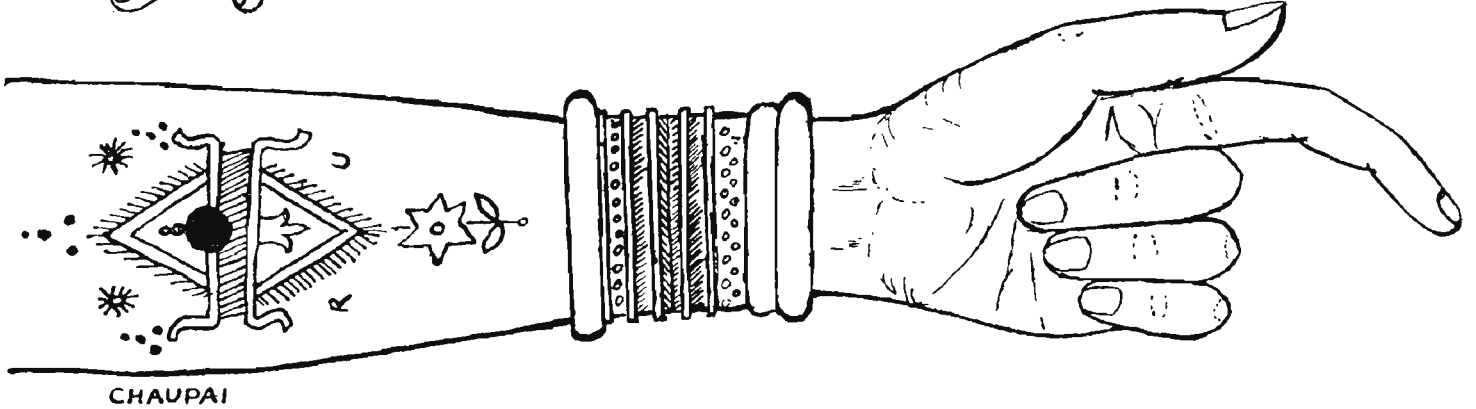




PONCHA



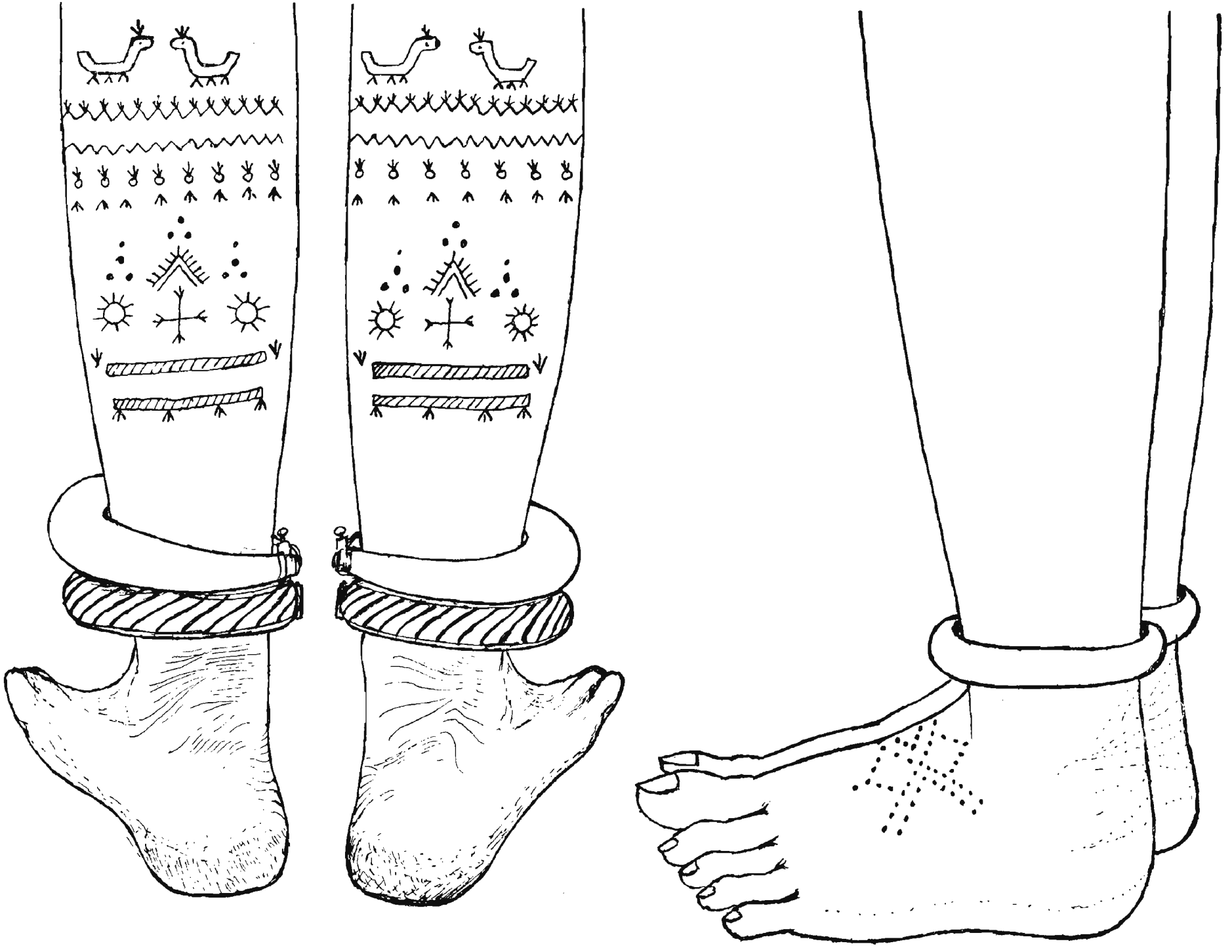




CHAUPAI

Tottooing Designs

Tottooing Designs

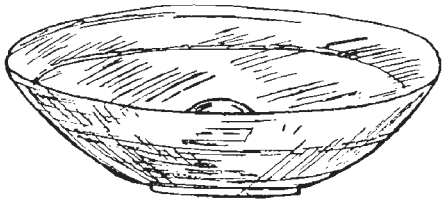


BHAMRI

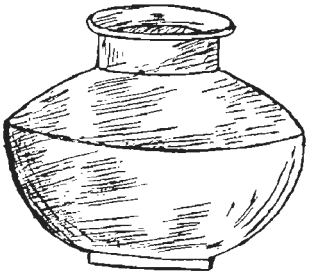
Tattooing Designs

PLATE XXV

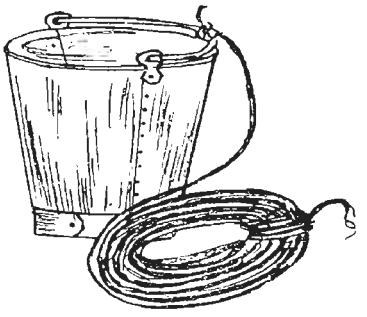
# PLATE XXVI



BELA



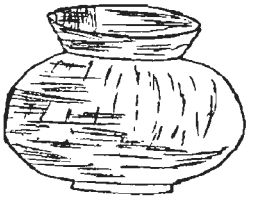
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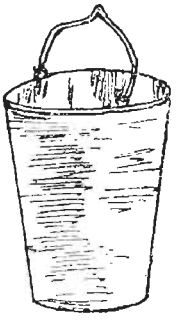
BALTI



LOTA



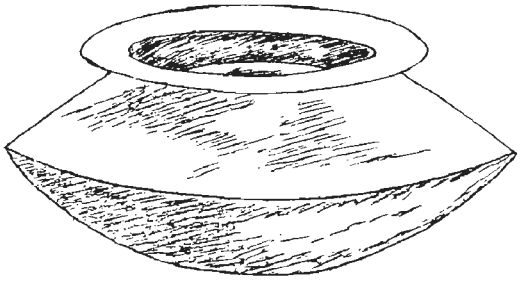
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BALTI



PAUA



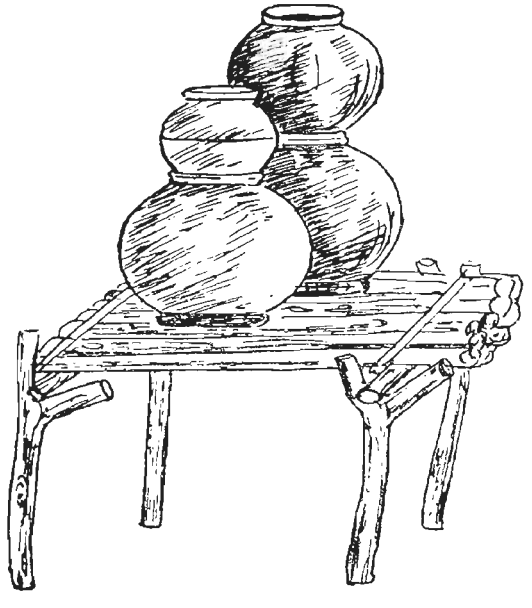
PATILEE



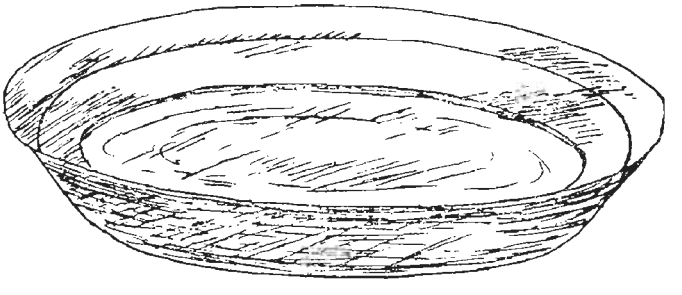
TAWA



KATORI



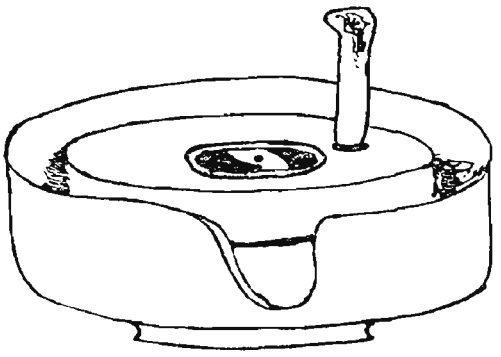
PADHERI



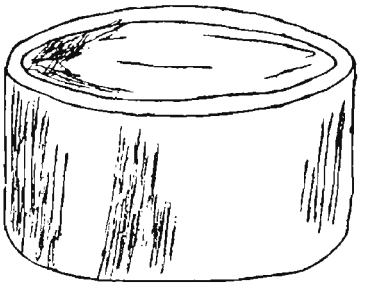
PARAT

Household Utensils

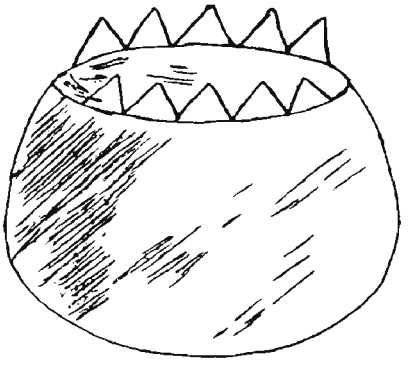
# PLATE XXVII



CHAKKI



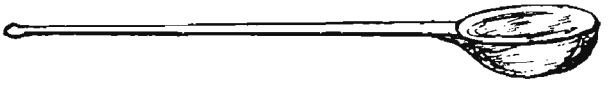
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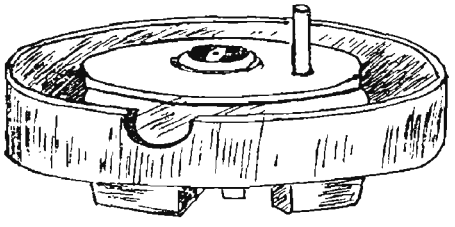
TABELA



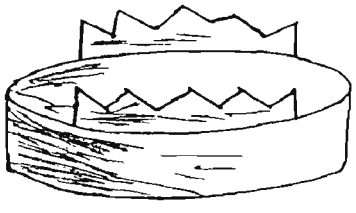
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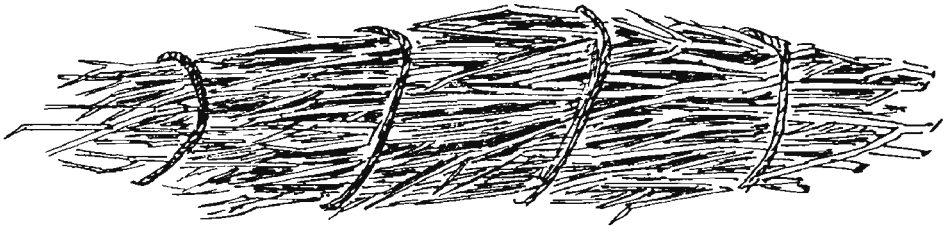
CHAMCHA



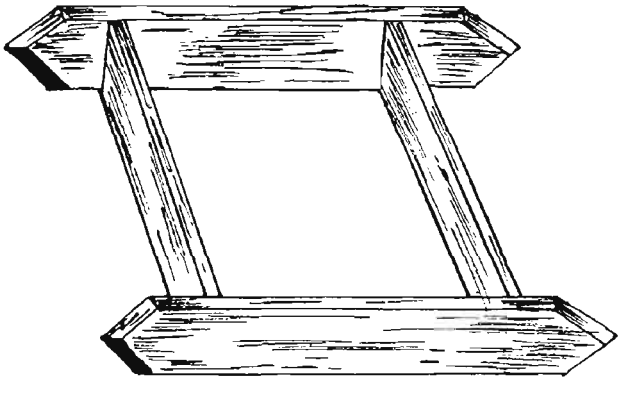
CHAKKI



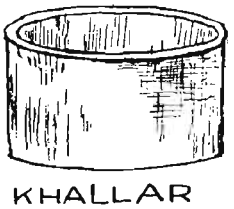
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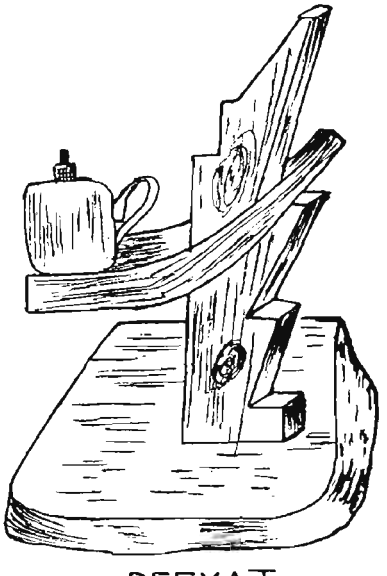
GOHRI



SANCHA OF WOOD



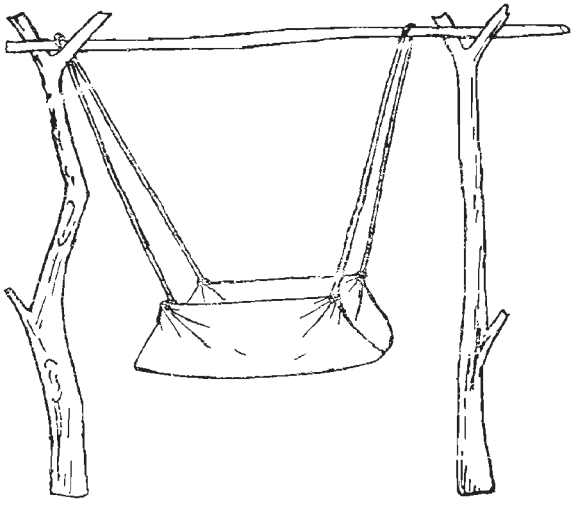
KHALLAR



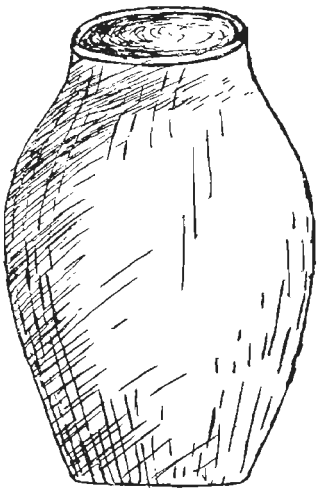
DEEYAT

Household Goods

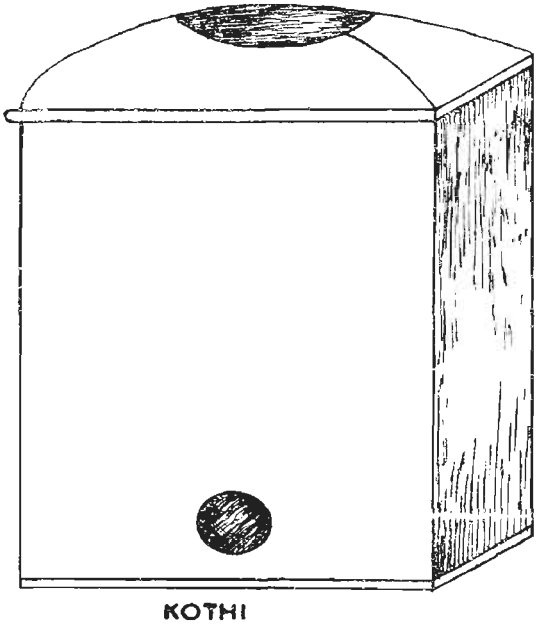
# PLATE XXVIII



PALNA



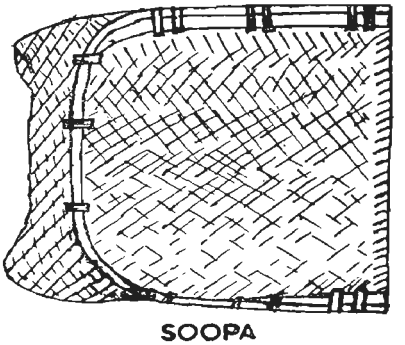
NAND



KOTHI



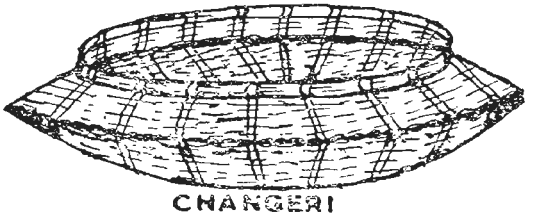
MOOSAR



SOOPA



COMB



CHANGERI

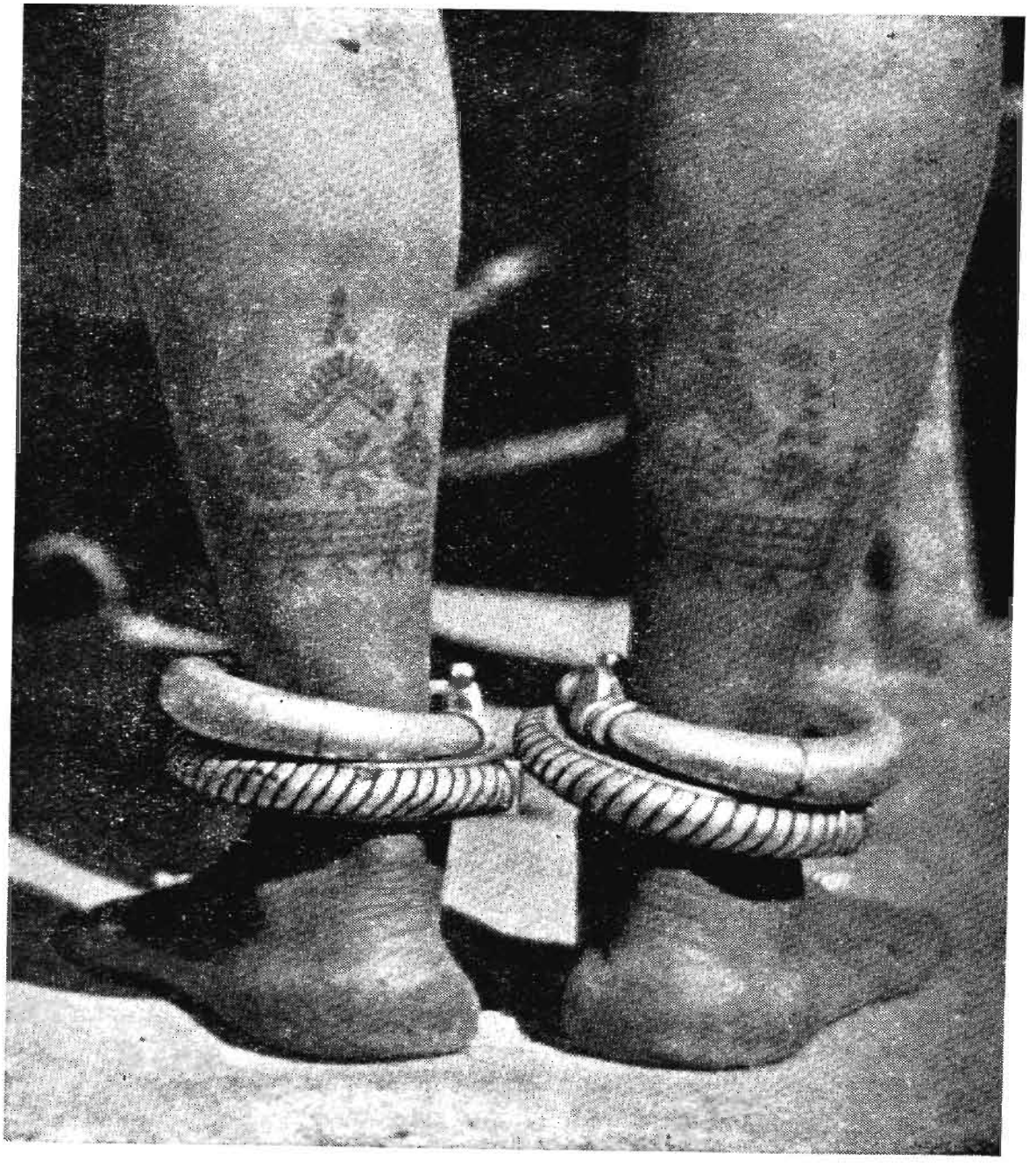
Household Goods

# PLATE XXIX



The Village Chowkidar with his Gun and Bicycle

# PLATE XXX



Ornaments, Tattoo and Birth-marks.

such a vessel are that it is a very big one, cheap and lastly while the gruel is being put to boil it would not spill over. Almost all the Saheriyas do some cooking in this vessel. *Kulhad* is used for heating milk. Among Saheriyas the use of wooden spoons was also noticed. Wooden spoon is used for making gruel and for cooking other pulses. The spoon is made from *chhokar* wood and made by the villagers themselves. The Saheriyas do not possess any other utensils.

Among the Rajputs and Thakurs the vessels are of better quality. Only one Jat house possesses some crockery. These consists of cups and saucers of thick type. He has only two cups and saucers and a couple of tumblers.

### Other Household Goods

Leaving agricultural implements the other households goods are (1) cycles-8, (2) wrist watches-4, (3) a muzzle loading gun, (4) beddings of each family, (5) small tin boxes for keeping their belongings and (6) mill-grinder.

### Cycles

Five Saheriyas, two Jats and one Rajput possess their own cycles. Two of the Saheriyas are working with the P.W.D. and go to attend their duties in the sector which is nearby. The other three Saheriyas possessing bicycles are the cultivating type and use it as a mode of transport for small wares. The two Jats are in government service and they move about on their cycles. The Thakur is a cultivator and his cycle is used more often by the son for attending the school at Guna. Three of these cycles are new and were purchased from Guna, the rest were purchased second-hand. There are four persons possessing wrist watches and all of them are Saheriyas. None of these watches are worth more than Rs. 60.00. Three persons who are employed with P.W.D. possess these. A Saheriya Chowkidar possesses a muzzle loading gun. It belongs to him and he knows shooting. (please see plate XXIX).

The beddings among the Saheriyas consist of a *kenthri* or a quilt made of all unserviceable clothing stiched together. Some of the Saheriyas about six in number have blankets. A *kenthri* is used as a mattress and quilt. The use of anything better in bedding is not known. Lately about 6/8 persons have started using ordinary *durries* purchased from Guna for about Rs. 4 to 6. In other castes the Jats have mattresses quilts and sleep on the cots. The Thakurs also possess these and in addition have *durries*. Both of these castes have no blankets.

### Mill-grinder

All the non-tribals and as many as 40 tribals possess the hand mill grinder (please see plate XXVII). It is made from earth to which cow-dung and *bhoosa* has been added. The disc which enclosed the handle is made of stone and it rests on the round stone on which the article to be ground is placed, handle and upper grinder being removeable. Then the latter is placed and grinding commences. The whole thing is finely ground and collects in the space between outer disc and inner one. A spoon enables one to take out the corn or pulse. This is used with facility for both corn and pulses. All corn, pulses and other condiments are ground in this way in the village.

## VII

## FOOD AND DRINKS.

All households are non-vegetarians. Meat is a very welcome item of food but its availability and price makes it impossible for them to eat it each day. Beef is tabooed. The popular varieties of meat are pork, chicken, mutton, goat meat, rabbit and sometimes partridge meat. Meat is procured from Guna, but this is somewhat costly and so whenever an opportunity arises they hunt down an animal and eat the meat. Rabbit is clubbed to death and a boar would be tracked down by about half a dozen Saheriyas. Usually they know the spots where the animals are expected and they surround the same. Often the gun of the Chowkidar is borrowed and the beast is killed. The villagers use a spear, *gandasa* or a thick sharpened iron blade attached to their pole staff and axes in their hunting expedition. Whenever they can get an opportunity to hunt they do so. They admit that about twenty years or so ago, they did a great deal of hunting but now-a-days the wild life is scanty and animals are found with some difficulty, hence they are unable to hunt. Sometimes the villagers pool some of their resources and buy a goat which they bring to the village and share it among themselves. On a few occasions this becomes an occasion for a picnic-cum-dinner-cum-singing and drinking. On such occasions they would formally sacrifice the goat and then commence eating. The women among Jats and Thakurs also partake of meat.

When a few households decide to buy a goat the animal is procured from Guna. It is slaughtered near the site of the abandoned village and offered to *khedapati*, the old village deity. After this it is cooked

in sweet oil. The eating is preceded by drinking liquor. Liquor is procured from Guna from the excise contractor. The most popular brand is locally called *rasi* a 60 up. liquor manufactured at government distillery and costs Rs. 3.30 for a bottle of 750 millilitres. The other variety is *dubara* 45 up. liquor costing Rs. 4.54. According to them the 'blue-riband' liquor is *masala* 25 up. costing Rs. 7.62. They cannot afford to buy it too often and so *rasi* is deemed good enough. They do not distil liquor themselves. The Excise officials also confirm that the Saheriyas do not indulge in any illicit distillation. They appeared satisfied about the quality of liquor. No complaints regarding dilution of liquor were made, however, they were not very happy at the insistence of the contractor on cash payment. According to them credit facilities would be welcome. The liquor is drunk according to time and mood. When it is intended to have a long sitting it is diluted with water and taken in slowly but nearly always at a gulp: rarely is it sipped. When the liquor stock is little and it is intended to have a 'quick one', it is taken neat and no wry faces are made, the gullet reacting smoothly as though to a "gentle and mellowed liquor". The drink sessions are however confined to the members of the tribe and a few other friends. The Thakurs and Rajputs are no tee-totallers but they prefer to drink, when they are more to themselves. There has never been community drinking.

## Staple Food

The staple food of the village is *juar* and *macca* (maize). Wheat is used on various occasions, viz. on the arrival of some guests, on some festival day and during the harvesting time when it is given to them in form of wages. As compared to the Saheriyas the Jat and Thakur households use more of wheat but the broad pattern however remains the same. Among pulses *moong, masur, chana, urad* and *tur* are popular. The cooking medium is sweet oil. *Ghee* is not used. Milk does not form a part of staple food. There are only three Saheriyas, two Jats and one Thakur households in which milk is available and only the children are allowed to take some milk. Tea is generally not drunk except by two persons in service of the P.W.D.

The staple food remains the same throughout the year: at the time of harvesting of wheat, they switch on to wheat. Vegetables as a rule are not eaten except in rains. Garlic and onions are welcome. During the rains, pumpkin, *kaddu*, gourd, *loki* are planted by them near the huts and in the rains as they grow up. They are eaten upto November or December. Sometimes while returning from Guna, vegetables are purchased. The only condiments known to be used are salt and chillies. No Saheriyas are known to use rice. The Thakur and Rajput use rice mostly for sweet pudding and sometimes for eating it otherwise. Potatoes are now beginning to show up in Saheriya households. The Thakurs and Jats however use vegetables more liberally.

## Food — when eaten: (Saheriyas)

No fixed hours for eating seem to be observed. The time to eat appears to depend on the nature of the work that has to be done during the day. This could be divided into three types (a) when it is not necessary to go out of the house, but attend to work generally in the house or in the village, (b) when they have to go out but in non-agricultural and non-forest errands, (c) when working in the fields or in forests. Incidentally the nature of work also determines the number of times it is necessary to take food.

On missions (a) and (b) three meals a day are deemed sufficient. The day begins with an early morning breakfast which consists (1) *lapsi*, (2) *chappaties* saved over from the previous evening. This is taken at about 7.00 or 8.00 hours. In case he is required to go out then he carries his lunch with him tied up in a piece of cloth. The lunch consists of *chappaties*, onions, a *chutney* of ground garlic and salt and chillies. It is all easily packed for it consists of non-liquid foods. Often cooked potatoes are taken. When they do not have to go far, *daal* for eating with *chappaties* is carried in a small earthen cup called *kulhad*. If he is only working in the village he will come back for a lunch at about 11.00-12.00 hours and eat it at home. Usually he carries food sufficient for one time for he plans to return by the evening when he can get fresh food at home. The third meal is taken at about 19.00-20.00 hours as a regular dinner.

If he goes to Guna then perhaps he would return after a meal, a non-vegetarian one and if the business has been good, (if he has sold a cart-load of timber) then it may be with drinks. It is not uncommon for these persons to have some snacks like *bhajiyas, kachories* or *dal-seo* or bring a few sweets when they return home. If only a little money is left to them then they would be too glad to have a go at the wine-shop. Even when they go to Guna for the market day, they eat in the town and if children accompany them then they too are treated to sweets, a favourite one being *jalebis*.

During the working season either in the fields or when they go to the forests to collect timber or as a forest labourer they eat four times a day. The day starts with an early breakfast as described in preceding paras. Thereafter they are off to work. When in the field, their wives bring the afternoon meal with them. The husband leaves early in the morning and is then followed by the wife, at about 9.00 hours, who in the meantime has done all the cooking. She helps him in the work and at about 11.00 or so they settle down for a lunch. This done the work commences again and at about 15.00 or 16.00 a small meal is again taken. Usually after this the couple continues to work for another hour or two and then the wife returns followed by the husband at sunset. She takes juar *chappaties*, *daal* and onions with salt and chillies or sometimes a vegetable. This is followed by an evening meal at 19.00-20.00 hours. In case the husband has to go to the forest and the wife cannot accompany him, then the food sufficient for two meals is packed. By the evening the husband returns. As far as children upto the age of 10 years are concerned they keep eating whenever they can get something.

Among the edible produce *ber* or plums or wild berries are very useful. They grow in abundance and after plucking are allowed to dry. It is then ground to powder and mixed with salt, chillies for being eaten. Apart from this *karonda*, *achar* are some of the forest produce eaten raw. The villagers do not eat any other edible roots.

## Eating Habits of Thakurs and Jats

The pattern of eating hours remains the same as described earlier. Generally the quality of food stuff eaten by them is better. The Jats spend more on eating and appear fond of eating richer varieties. The Thakur and Jat do not visit forests on many occasions . The Jat and Thakur generally use *chappaties* made of wheat flour when they are out of their houses and these are smeared with ghee or oil to keep them soft and retain freshness although at home juar is eaten. They eat more of vegetables and generally eat better.

## Method of Preparation

(1) *Chappaties* : made of unleavened flour, baked over slow fire.

(2) *Lapsi* : Water is boiled and coarsely ground flour of maize or juar is added. It is then boiled and when the gruel retains the consistency of thick syrup, salt, chillies are added and allowed to cool. It is eaten with *chappaties*.

(3) *Daal* : Water is boiled and *daal*-pulse crystals along with turmeric, salt and chillies added to it. When it attains consistency of honey it is removed, cooled and eaten.

(4) *Chutney* : Garlic cloves are taken and salt, chillies added to it. It is then ground to a pasty consistency.

(5) *Meat* : It is prepared in two ways (1) boiling, (2) roasting. It is first boiled and then roasted with other condiments like ground garlic, onions, salt, chillies etc. Alternately other condiments called *masala* locally is roasted along with meat.

(6) *Vegetables* : Cooked in oil by frying them.

## Festival Foods

These foods are served on (a) festivals, (b) arrival of some important guests, (c) important occasions like marriages etc. They consist of (i) *poories*, (2) vegetables, (3) *khichadi*, (4) *sheera*, (5) *kheer*.

(1) *Poories* : are prepared by kneading the wheat flour and then rolling into small round pieces. These are fried in oil or ghee till they become crisp and brown. The Saheriyas also make these.

(2) *Vegetables* : are cooked in oil with water added for making it soft and ready to eat.

(3) *Khichadi* : Rice and pulse — *moong* are mixed put in boiling water which is allowed to dry up leaving *khichadi* in ready to eat condition.

(4) *Sheera* : Sweet preparation made from wheat flour, jaggery and oil. Wheat flour and jaggery is heated slowly to become brown. Oil or ghee may be added with a little water and when it remains of syrupy consistency, it is fit for eating.

(5) *Kheer* : is a sweet preparation popular in Jat houses. To boiling milk sugar and rice are added and allowed to boil when a thick honey like consistency is reached, it is cooked.

The festival food is cooked by all castes on (1) *Holi*, (2) *Rakhi*, (3) *Dussehra*, (4) *Diwali*. The Jats and

Rajputs cook more festival foods on (1) *Shradha,* (2) *Janmashtami,* (3) *Shivaratri,* (4) *Akshaya Tritiya,* (5) *Nav Durga,* etc.

### Other Food Habits

In the village the Thakurs and Jats will not eat with Saheriyas and Chamars although the latter would eat at their places. Among themselves the Thakur would eat both *kachha* and *pacca* food at Jat's place and vice versa. Saheriyas will not eat with the Chamars and vice versa. The Saheriyas would not be invited for drinks either by a Thakur or Jat or Chamar; although Jat and Thakur would drink with each other. Thus all the castes in the village live as a group into itself. Food and drinks do not seem to bring them any nearer.

An interesting fact that comes to light is the fondness for spending money over food items. Whenever they go to Guna and if there is some money with them, then irrespective of the fact that the money may be badly required at home, a Saheriya cannot resist, the temptation to spend it over a snack or something hot and may be sweet too. Money may be hard commodity to obtain, but when obtained it must satisfy the gullet. Fondness for eating and drinking then remains a very powerful desire. Perhaps at the back of this desire may be the extreme limitation of their culinary art. It may be useful to study the expenditure pattern on food. Out of the total average roughly expenditure on food without intoxicants is:

## TABLE A-8

SHOWING EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND INTOXICANTS.

| S. No. | Castes | Food | Intoxicants |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. | Saheriyas | 58% | 14.13% |
| 2. | Jats | 59% | 11.51% |
| 3. | Rajputs | 50% | 8.33% |

The above table indicates that Saheriyas are more fond of the bottle than their other neighbourers in the village. In the opinion of some Excise officials, the tendency among the tribals usually is to make their own drinks. The village however appears to be a good exception.

# VIII

## BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONCERNING BIRTHS:

### General

The villagers are aware of the biological phenomenon leading to pregnancy, although children are God's gift. When Gods are annoyed children are not born. They expect children to be born after two or three years of marriage in the normal course. For further three years they are prepared to wait for birth of a child. Thus where no children are born even after six years of wedlock, the case begins to cause anxiety. Their settled approach seems to be that the woman is barren and barrenness is due to divine displeasure. Nothing ever goes wrong with a man, for otherwise the woman would not have stayed with the man. They attribute the divine displeasure to the previous life in which her deeds were not virtuous: because she has sinned in the past, she would be punished in this life. Their pet reply seems to be *'Jaisa uska karma hai: Uska phal milega'*. She would get due reward for her deeds (or misdeeds). It is a very philosophical approach.

If a woman has no child for sometime then her friends begin to chide her and ask her all details about her sex life. In some Saheriyas it is reported that under similar circumstances, some women acting as a friend of the childless woman, suggest to her to have some extra-marital relations with other men. Such women act either as a procurers or if successful receive a little money for the job. Usually such women have themselves been corrupt and they may add more recruits to their tribe: The possibility of some benefit always looms large before her. If the marriage is not dissolved and if these excursions succeed and the childless one gets a baby then everybody seems happy.

### Barrenness

None of the castes are known to have resorted to seeking medical aid in the event of barrenness. Although it is due to divine displeasure, but Gods could be propitiated, hence prayers and supplication form the remedy. Yet another akin reason appears to be that because either Evil Spirits or village Gods or God is annoyed with a particular woman, she would remain barren. The barren woman is so much upset that she would do anything and everything in the mere hope of getting a child. It is against this background that various types of prayers are held: firm in the faith

that "More things are brought by prayer than this world dreams of".

## Remedies

Nathu and Suraj Saheriyas are consulted for curing cases of barrenness. Their advice is prayer and usually takes the following form. (1) *Peepal Puja*, (2) *Sindoor* smearing, (3) Sacrifice of a goat before Thakur, a deity, *mata*, (4) Worship of *Bali Devata*, (5) *Katha* recitation, (6) Prescribing certain acts on certain happenings. Nathu and Suraj have by now learnt to play upon the gullibilities of human nature. When a patient goes to them, they question the couple patiently. Nathu, the senior among them commands more respect and wider clientele. He would look at the pulse of the patient, think over the 'malady' and then tell her the disease and cure for the same. He would say "Because *Thakur* is annoyed with you, you should worship him and then all would be well or again because *Bali Miya* is annoyed you should pray". He gets no fee then but the couple would promise to give him feast later on. In the present case it so happens that Nathu is an influential person in the village.

## (1) Peepal Puja

*Peepal* is the resort of *'GIN'* an Evil Spirit. If the *Gin* is annoyed then the woman should place a lamp of ghee or oil every evening for a specified period.

## (2) Sindoor Smearing

Nathu would specify the day on which this has to be done. The woman would place upon her head two or three stones picked up from the nearest place and bring them to the *Thakur*. Then she would carefully place them along with the other ones lying there; wash them with water and apply *sindoor* or vermilion to these stones. She would pray for a while there, with folded hands and return. Then as advised by Nathu she would visit the spot every 3rd or 5th or 7th day and continue to pray and apply vermilion. On the Puja day/s the couple must sleep together and cohabit.

## (3) Sacrifice

The advice in such cases is that a goat may be sacrificed during a particular period say within the next four or six months. In this case the husband alone goes out, wife remaining at home. He purchases a goat, usually of a small size costing about Rs. 20.00 or so. The husband goes along with a few relatives or friends about three or four in number, with a goat to the site of the ancient village. The goat is taken to the *Mata* and killed in one stroke. The head is severed off. The dismembered head is hung upon the deity and blood oozes out in profussion falling on it. The sacrifice is now complete. A red flag is then tied to the tree under which the deity is located and cocoanut broken at the spot. This completes the ceremony. This is followed by a feast at the very spot where the sacrifice took place. The party that went out, would now cook the meat and every one present at the sacrifice would dine there. There is no restriction against the use of wine but they say it is not drunk on the occasion. Whatever food has been left uneaten is brought home and children along with other members take it. Throughout the ceremony the woman for whose benefit the sacrifice is supposed to take place, remains out of the picture. The couple is expected to cohabit that day.

## (4) Bali Devata (Bali Miya)

*Bali Devata* lies on the approach road to old village site, the foot of the hill, and he is worshipped by offering a cocoanut and liquor. The process is simple, on the day suggested by Nathu and Suraj the offering, is made.

## (5) Katha

Sometimes a *katha* is advised and then a Brahmin is called, for reciting the *katha*. He is paid Rs. 1.50 for the work and is usually called from Guna. If the whole *katha* has to be recited then he is paid Rs. 2.00 only. After the *katha prasad* is distributed.

## (6) Miscellaneous

This appears to be a mysterious treatment and the case history is given in details.

'B' is about 22 years of age and stays with her second husband. The first husband also hailed from the same village. She had been married to him since 14 and had no children from him for about six years. She appeared rather dissatisfied because she had no children. After a while 'C' her present husband started paying attention to her and about two years ago she eloped with him. Her former husband still lives in the village, he is now 18 years of age, 'B' looked more sturdy and better built. Having lived for some time with 'C' and without begetting children, she consulted Suraj about her ailment. She wanted a son. Suraj told her, "Whenever a male child is born in the village, you should take a pitcher full of water and break it behind the house of the newly born infant. Thereafter you

too would be blessed with a child". She has a daughter now. Such type of treatment is quite often followed. This case produced definite results although it did not give 'B' a son, she got a child, and thereby it enhanced the reputation of Suraj. The circumstances of the case almost thrust success upon him. The former husband was not able to give 'B' a child, he was much younger in age and physically also much inferior. For a young girl like her a strong young man would have been most desirable. That she did not get and when got one, she responsed as might have been expected. The credit however did go to Suraj.

Cases of barrenness are comparatively rare. In cases where children die after birth or only females continue to be born or where more children are not born after one or two other courses are prescribed. The most important among them is worship of *maili bhoot*.

## Maili Bhoot

*Maili bhoot* is also known as *ghatoiya* and stays near rivers. It is often visible in a female form and haunts mostly the females. During pregnancy it is known to attack the women. Sometimes children are also attacked by it. Illness is often attributed to the displeasure of *maili bhoot*. It is reported to be an evil spirit who closes the opening of the womb. This prevents the birth of children and children also die as a result of her displeasure. In some cases where a woman is pregnant and if her previous issues have died then also, *maili bhoot* is worshipped.

The 'physician' prescribes the mode of offering. It consists in sacrifice of a goat on a specified day at the platform at the old village site. There are no stones over the platform. The sacrificed animal is then brought home to be cooked and eaten. Among the invitees Nathu and Suraj are almost invariably there. The offering is also invoked to keep the mother and the child safe in the pre and post-natal periods.

Besides this a *devata* may be invoked and asked questions about these things. (For invocation of *devatas* please see under chapter — Religious Beliefs and Practices). No cases of barrenness have been found or reported from the Jat and Thakur families. These persons lay greater faith in the modern medicines and visit Guna frequently in search of medical aid.

## Pregnancy and Pre-natal Practices

The generally accepted sign of pregnancy is the stopping of menstrual discharge, followed by nausea and vomits. The villagers describe this condition as *jee michlana* and *tabiyat kharab hona*, or to nauseate or feel sick. It is the elderly ladies of the house who come to know about pregnancy in the family. When the woman begins to feel sick, she discovers it through some friends of the pregnant woman, to whom she may have confided. After pregnancy no precaution or special care is taken. The villagers appeared supremely indifferent to any such suggestions. Pregnancy or non-pregnancy, they exclaimed a woman's cycle of birth never remains in abeyance. There have been cases where a woman has her labour pains in the forest while bringing a headload of fuel and by the time she reached her place delivered the child. When the women were asked they replied with equal indifference *"Hamere to chalte phirte hojate hai: Yadi asa na kare to kya khaye?* meaning, "Children are born to us while we are walking or moving about. If we do not act thus, what will we eat?" The informant had herself delivered a child on returning from forest with the headload. Where the husband has to depend so much on the economic efforts of women no wonder, slaving till the last day of child birth, is a part of their lives.

Among the Jats and Thakurs however more care of the woman is taken. She is not assigned any heavy task after 5th month of pregnancy. They may either do the work themselves or call some elderly female relation to help in managing the household affairs. In all the castes living in the village there are no ceremonies or ritual to marking the fact of pregnancy. Among the Saheriyas the husband and wife sleep together upto the time of delivery and no restrictions are observed but the Jats and Rajputs husbands leave their wives alone at the end of the sixth month of pregnancy. The Saheriyas do not give any rich foods to the prospective mother and the common diet is all that she can expect. Among the Jats and Rajputs she is occasionally given rich foods but there is no regularity or method about it. There is practically no pre-natal case; when asked about the Health Visitor who may be visiting them from time to time, they proffessed complete ignorance about her existence, even the Jats and Thakur families do not seem to have heard about her. From this it follows (1) that conception of pre-natal care is almost absent, (2) among Saheriyas their economic conditions have made pre-natal care extremely difficult if not impossible, and (3) little has been done to cultivate a sense of pre-natal precautions.

## Delivery and Disposal of Placenta

The Thakur and Rajput households send their

women to their relatives to Guna where they are admitted in the maternity hospital and delivered. Since there are only three families of this caste it is perhaps possible for them to do so. The Thakurs and Rajputs by custom have deliveries at the husband's place and never at the wife's house. Among the Saheriyas all deliveries take place at the house of her husband. Women are never sent to the hospital and never has medical aid been sent for or sought, though a woman may die in the process. In the last two years there have been no deaths but prior to that, two deaths have occured. Our Jat friend went to the extent of saying that they (Saheriyas) would permit the woman to die rather than call for medical aid. Their opposition seems to be based on three factors (a) their innate belief that they know the job better than any one else, so even if a doctor is called there is precious little that he would be able to do; (b) life and death are in God's hands; there is very little the doctor would be able to do under the circumstances; and lastly (c) their financial position hardly permits them to seek medical aid. The child birth according to them is a very normal process hence no importance is attached to it. They maintain that even if they are to take the woman to the hospitals where medicines are free, it would still involve financial hardship. At least 10-15 days of work would be lost and this is something they can ill afford. The woman should not remain idle for such a long.

## Delivery

Among the Saheriyas the delivery takes place in the house in which they live. As may have already been observed very little space is left with them. Yet in that little space arrangements for delivery are made. The place is not cleaned up earlier but when the woman complains of labour pains she is brought in the room. For ensuring privacy the door of the house is closed; clothing and other materials that have been stored on the hearth side are removed. The reason for keeping her towards the hearth side is that (1) she would not be exposed to sight from the door; (2) she would also be safe from being exposed to the wind. This done she is made to sit on the ground on which a *kenthri* has been spread. She sits with knees drawn up and the back is supported against the wall.

In the meantime a sweepress *mehtarani* from the Mehtar caste (a scheduled caste) living in Sonthi, a village about three miles away is called for. In case this woman is delayed and the woman delivers then there are other two women in the village who are called. These two women are Saheriyas and by experience have picked up a few useful points which enable them to deliver the child. In case the labour pains are too long and cause great difficulty then a 'decoction' prepared by the local 'doctor' Suraj is given. Suraj is called and he prepares a drink called *chhoot* by adding some ashes to plain water and recites a few verses. The decoction is given to woman. Some is meant for drinking and the rest is sprinkled around her. Suraj is not permitted inside and no fee is charged. The Saheriyas believe that the *chhoot* water gives definite relief, it hastens a less painful delivery.

When all preparations have been completed and either the sweepress or other ladies have come or when *chhoot* has been given, the pregnant woman still sits in the posture described earlier, for she must deliver on the ground and only later may she be given the comfort of a bed. The other women in the meanwhile lend her a helping hand by supporting her. When the child is delivered, either the sweepress or other elderly women who have been called will receive the child. The infant is almost immediately given a warm water bath and wrapped in clothes. He is then tucked away in more clothing and put on the bed. The umblical cord is cut by an unsterlized thin leather gut. The leather gut could be found in a Saheriya household.

When the child has been born the woman is attended to more studiously. Her clothes are changed. Her stomach is tied and she is now laid upon the cot along with the child. The place is now cleaned up either by the *mehtarani* or the women attending on her. Placenta is tied up in a small bundle of cloth and the *mehtarani* takes it away to some remote spot and throws it. There is no other way of disposing placenta. It appears that even if placenta is taken or eaten away by the wild animals or birds nothing amiss could be apprehended. Her clothes which she was wearing before the delivery are kept in a small bundle outside the house. A piece of cloth is hung upon the door to prevent air. The other inmates of the house are not allowed in and they spend a few days either in the cattle-shed or outside verandah or at neighbours. In the winter days her cot is kept warm by lighting a small fire. The woman's former clothing is washed before further use.

Although placenta may be easily thrown away, but umblical cord is important and great care is taken. The cord is not buried or disposed off immediately, but preserved very carefully for about five or six days, by which time it dries up. Even during this period care is taken to see that it is not eaten away by rats or other insects or mischievously taken away by some scheming

woman. Often the cord is placed in an earthen vessel and the vessel is kept buried with mouth closed. When the cord has dried up it is buried, underneath the cot or at the spot where the infant was born. Usually a corner and a dark place is selected for it. There is no ritual for it and any elderly lady who is attending the convalscent mother buries it deep. The cord is not buried earlier because it would be wet and therefore it would decompose easily in the ground. An umblical cord should not be decomposed thus for it is considered ill. A male cord is very jealously guarded against a possible theft. Women who do not have their own children or whose children are sickly resort to stealing a cord in the hope that this may help them to beget one or more the children. On the other hand an infant whose cord has been stolen may come to harm by the act of the person stealing it. She (i.e. the thief) may see the little one with an 'Evil Eye' locally called *nazar*. Perhaps the infant may continue to remain sickly and the thief's child may regain again. It appears that by stealing the umblical cord, the qualities or benefits from one may be transferred to another. The cord would transfer these properties and so the newly born could come to harm hence great care must be taken. As regards a female child, the cord is also kept carefully but if lost then the botheration is not so great although it is regarded as inauspicious. The local name for a cord is *nal* or *narra*. If a child dies immediately after his birth, his *narra* is not coveted.

## Birth Marks

They hold very interesting belief about birth marks. Birth marks are made by *baimata* or the Mother who creates the child (distinct from the mother of child), in a mood of annoyance. *Baimata* represents Universal Mother: *janani* and births and deaths of infants take place at her bidding. Thus she is responsible for health and welfare of the child. The more the marks, the greater the annoyance of the Mother. The birth marks are due to scratching of the *baimata* who according to their version is blessed with claws. In these birth-marks is written the 'Fate' or *Kismet* of the child, intelligible to a very few. None in the village is able to interprete nor do they know if any one round about, is capable of doing so. Nathu and Suraj know nothing about it. An old woman told the following story about the birth marks:—

Once Emperor Akbar and Birbal, one of his worthiest courtier stayed in a village on a *shikar*. In the late night the Emperor while still awake observed that a woman mysteriously entered a house and after some time came out of it. Then she again mysteriously disappeared. Somewhat puzzled at this, the Emperor next morning asked, as to what she was. He was told that a child had been in that house and so the *baimata* must have come to write down the 'Fate' of the boy. Curious, he enquired as what 'Fate' had been ordained for the boy. The wise man of the village was then sent for and after a careful examination he said that this boy would be killed by a tiger in his sixteenth year, at the time of his marriage, just before going to the *bhammwar* or round before the fire. The details were noted to check the truth of prophecy.

In the sixteenth year when the lad was to be married, the Emperor who was invited, posted his troops all over to see that no tiger could possibly come anywhere near. As the boy was sitting for the marriage, onlookers observed that the security arrangements were fool-proof and pitied the sooth-sayer whose life was endangered if nothing happened. As the boy got up for *bhammwar*, holding his sword, which had an embossed tiger head on the handle, a full grown tiger leaped out of the handle of the sword and before any body could bestir himself, the youth was torn to pieces. "The Fate is not to be denied — for whatever will be, will be; — *Que Sera Sera.*"

## Post Natal

Post-natal care begins with the mother having been removed to a cot. Each day a little massage with sweet oil in which a little *ajwayn*, thymole added, is carried out. The body of the mother and baby is gently rubbed by one of the ladies who attends to at the delivery time. For about the first twenty-four hours nothing is given to the mother but the baby is allowed breast feeding. The nursing mother is next given a decoction called *cheru ka pani*. It is prepared in the following manner: in water the following are added — *beri ki jad* (*Zizyphus jujuba*) root from a wild plum tree, bark of the *khair* tree (*Acacia catechu*) and *mulethi* a bark which has quite a few medicinal properties. The water is now boiled till only half remains and this mixture is ready for consumption. This is also known as *adhonta* meaning boiled to almost half concentration. The decoction is supposed to possess strength giving qualities and is given for about 3/4 days, three times a day. Apart from this *laddus* are given for eating. These *laddus* are made from dates, monkey-nuts, almonds, *chironji*, *sonth* mixed in jaggery and if one can afford then ghee is put into it. This is given to all nursing mothers even by the poorest of the poor who normally spend about Rs. 8.00 to 12.00 over this item, depending on resources more

and better quality of *laddus* are prepared. The *laddus* are given for almost a fortnight. The woman in the meantime is regarded as unclean. No other food are given, the quantity of these however is steadily increased.

## Rejoicing

As may be expected the rejoicing at the time of birth of a boy is far greater than at the time of girl. On the day birth takes place, there is little to be done. The women of the household, the father's sisters, mother and other relatives sit over a *dholak* and sing a few songs. Excepting this singing there is no other function and no sweets are distributed. On the 7th day after birth celebrations commence. There is no rigidity about the seventh day, it could as well be the sixth or eighth, if a Tuesday or Saturday intervenes, for these two days are not regarded as auspicious for the ceremony. The house is cleaned for the occasion. On the seventh day all the Saheriyas of the village (males and females) are invited and the women sing songs and men sit and chat for while. The nursing mother is brought outside for the first time since her confinement. She now puts on clean clothes. After singing is over *gur*-jaggery is distributed and the day ends.

## Pandit

On the day the child is born the father of the baby visits the Pandit either in Sonthi or in the temple near the village. He is paid about 12 p. minimum and the maximum is about 1.50 P. In the case of boy the payment is nearer the maximum range. The purpose of this visit is only to ascertain if the birth was under the good circumstances or if there is anything adverse then the Pandit gives the warning. If the Pandit says that birth has taken place under *mool* or *'Man padi'* then adequate precautions have to be taken and this task has to be carried out by the father.

## Mool or Man

If a child is born under *mool* or *man* it may bring ill luck and so evil effects must be warded off. The nursing mother for twenty-seven days must not look at the moon. If she has to come out of the room it could be done only after the sunrise or before the sun-set The father must not shave or cut his hair or see the child. On the twenty-seventh day a *joshi*[41] is called in the morning and he is given some clothing (old or new) a little juar or grain, one pointed instrument of iron, a brass utensil and Rs. 4.00 or 5.00. He only receives this as a gift or *dan*. *Joshi* is called from Guna and he always ranks below a Brahmin.

The evil effects are supposed to warded off merely by giving these alms to the *joshi* and he is not required to do anything. Thereafter a Brahmin is called and he performs a small puja, the holy fire is lit and the sacred texts are recited. The Brahmin is given some money as gift or *dan* upto Rs. 10.00 for the services. When the fire is lit the husband and wife sit together and the ceremony comes to a close. The Brahmin is given the rations to cook his meals. He cooks the meals and departs. This completes the process of warding off the evil effects.

During the first fortnight after birth the relatives of the mother from her father's side come to visit her and leave a few ornaments *'Choora* and *Khangwari'* for the infant and after staying for a couple of days in which there is plenty of singing and merry making they leave.

After about three or four months and sometimes upto 3/4 years the *nam* or name is given. A Brahmin is called and paid Rs. 1.25. For the first time the hair of the infant are cut by the sister of the father. A small ceremony is gone through. The father's sister or elder sister of the infant or such near relative seats the boy or girl in their lap, and clips off the hair on the head. The hair on the whole head is thus clipped off. On this occasion it is essential to see that hair do not fall on the ground. The person who cuts these hair is given a set of dress (*loongda, lehnga* and *blouse*, whole thing is called *savaka* and costs about Rs. 15-20). These hairs are carefully collected and are tied up in a piece of cloth and thrown in a river or tank or even a well. The first hair of a child are very important and should be so cast away that they do not fall in somebody else's hands. The hair are considered very useful for making *talismans*, or effecting changes by magic, so if they fall into other hands the child may come to harm. Lately the Saheriyas have started taking them to Mathura, or

41. Joshi: A caste of village priests and astrologer. He is nearly a Brahmin, but now have developed into separate castes and marry among themselves. The Joshi selects auspicious names for children according to nakshatra or consultation of moon under which they are born and points out the auspicious time of mahurat for all such ceremonies and for the commencement of agricultural operations. To this caste also belongs Bhadri. "The Bhadris are a class of Joshis who wander about and live by begging, telling fortunes and giving omens". The Castes & Tribes of the C. P. of India, R. V. Russel & Hiralal, Vol. III; pp. 255-56.

Guna or to near about river and immerse them in these rivers. If any other persons from the village happens to go for immersing ashes, then they may be requested to throw these into the river. In case it is not possible, then the hair may even be thrown into a nearby lake or well. The important thing is to save from falling into other people's hands.

## Suckling and Child Rearing Practices

The child is fed at the breasts. Other milk is generally not used but when the mother runs short of milk then either the child may be fed at some one else's breasts, if available, or goat's or cow's milk is given. Usually a child is suckled for about two years by which time the mother becomes pregnant again. They do not establish any relationship between lactation period and pregnancy. There are a couple of cases where the mothers are known to be feeding two children at the same time, one being one year four months and the other infant, at the breasts. The general practice however is that when a woman becomes pregnant, she tries to wean away the child from her breasts although it may be of very tender age. Liquid food is given to the child by the time he reaches the age of ten months. A gruel called *lapsi*, described earlier is given along with milk. There are no regular feeding hours. As and when the child is pleased to cry, it would be fed. The boy is neither given a bath or massaged, after the initial post-natal care bestowed on him. At about the age of six months, water is given to him. The child lives, sleeps with the mother upto the age of six or seven years if no other child is born earlier.

## Contraceptives

The villagers know nothing about contraceptives. They do not even believe in the efficacy of these. Pregnancy is ordained and nothing can prevent it. They do not seem to regard even the possibility of using these as a useful thing. The Saheriyas regard more children as a blessing. Persons having few children are often ridiculed.

## Abortions

Generally it is not considered proper to resort to abortions. In a lawful wedlock an abortion is unthinkable. Where a widow is pregnant from some one, she generally goes to live with him. Where an unmarried girl becomes pregnant she goes over to the lover or where this is not possible, she is quickly married. Though a stigma attaches to such woman, but the Saheriyas accept her in marriage. In other castes the fact is kept secret and the girl is married.

Sometimes where a widow owns some property, she may not want to go into her lover's family and so she may cause an abortion. Generally the recipe is, jaggery (*gur*) which is 3/4 years old along with herb locally called *berra* (found in jungle) is mixed and boiled in water. When the concoction becomes highly concentrated, it is drunk. This terminates pregnancies upto three months. An old woman who knows about this recipe, is sometimes consulted. Two other recipes which can cause abortion were given out. (1) dried and hardened seeds of carrots mixed with flour and eaten as *chappaties* causes a miscarriage; (2) A few hot cloves are added to water and it is put to boil. After a while a liquid of heavy concentration is obtained this, when drunk would cause a miscarriage. Abortion however is resorted to in very few cases.

## Other Beliefs and Practices

*Dor Dena* or Giving a String

This is a small ceremony performed any time after the male child has attained the age of two years. The father of the boy selects a day, any day which is suitable for this ceremony observed for the boys only. The function is exclusively for women. The host's women folk prepare *poories* and *sheera* (sweet) and invite all Saheriya women of the village. Two freshly filled new *matkas* red in colour are brought along turmeric, rice and *gur*. A black *dor* or thread which has the thickness of twine is taken and all the women go out of the village to any place within short walking distance, since all children also go along with them. The women settle themselves down and begin singing. Then the child is taken to a small bush or covering by the mother and father's sister. At the spot fire is lit up and turmeric and rice are applied on the forehead of the boys by the father's sister. A small piece of *poori* is then put into the mouth and the black thread is tied across the back which in the front comes up to a little above the naval. Water is sprinkled around the bush and one pot is placed at the spot where the thread tying took place. A small earthen lamp is lit up and flame kept alive. In the meanwhile the group of women keeps occupied with singing. Thereafter the women are given the food which had been brought. The Saheriyas are unable to account for the significance of this ceremony. They are not aware of any hygenic or medical grounds and the boys keep wearing this string upto the age of 5/6 years. Among some castes (not the Saheriyas) this is done to save the child from abdominal injury particularly hernia.

*Nazar utarna* or Removing effects of 'Evil Eye'.

The sickness of children is invariably interpreted as due to the 'evil eye' or *nazar lagna*. No medicines are required under these cases and a housewife's cure for *nazar* known as *nazar utarna* is undertaken; if even after this he does not improve, the village tribal doctors are called, who then brush out the effect of 'Evil Eye'. This is known as *nazar jhadna*. The mother will get up at about 04.00 or 05.00 hours when nobody is awake and take some ash and chillies. At some common path crossing she will make three small heaps of ash and place on it a chilly and utter her prayers, which in effect would be "Oh Lord, may the effect of 'Evil Eye' be transferred from my child to some one else and may he recover". This done she returns home. The other villagers do not take exception to this; because they could do it themselves when necessary. The belief held is that any one who passes by would get the disease and the child would be safe. This is locally called *tona* or it would be said that "She has done *tona*".

## Nazar Jhadna

This requires specialists treatment and so Suraj or Nathu is called. The 'doctor' will examine the patient, feel the pulse and confirm that the boy suffers from effects of 'Evil Eye' saying *Nazar Lag Gai Hai*. Then he would ask for a clean *lota* to be filled with water and a broom. Then with the broom he would wave it from the face downwards and touch the ground three or four times, uttering some cures. After this he would give the patient a drink from the *lota* and the cure is complete.

## Other Castes — Rajputs and Jats

Pregnancy is discovered by the cessation of menstruation. There is no celebration to mark the pregnancy. During the pregnancy, only after the sixth month, heavier work from her is taken away. No special diet is given. No other ceremonies before the delivery take place. Since the first seven to ten days are taken up at the hospital, the ceremonies only commence after the mother has come back to her home. Before leaving the hospital the sweepers, nurses and other hospital staff is given some presents about Re. 1.00 or so provided a son has been born.

When the child has come home and if it be a male child celebration on a big scale follow. A good day is selected by the family themselves, it is not necessary to consult a Pandit. On this day, clean clothes are worn, the house is cleaned and thereafter the mother goes to the well and draws a small *lota* of water which symbolises her return to normalcy and henceforth she is permitted to move about. The ceremony known as *ghat pujan* or *baher nikalna* usually takes place after 15 days or so after the birth. If the health of the woman does not permit then she would only perform the ritual symbolically, but in actual practice may move out after two months or more. In the evenings sweets are distributed.

On the day of the birth Pandit is consulted as described earlier and if the stars at the time of birth were inauspicious or *mool*, then a 27 days ritual is observed. For 27 days the father will not see the child nor shave the hair and on 27th day the ceremony to ward off evil effects, will take place. *Joshi* is called for, house is cleaned up and gift or *dan* consisting of seven types of grains and pulse would be given to him along with sweet oil, iron goods and clothes. This is known as *tula dan* or gift as per weighment. It signifies that the boy's weight be gifted away in grains. After this a small utensil containing sweet oil is brought. The father looks into it and after seeing his reflection in it, presents the oil to the *Joshi*. Besides this the *Joshi* may also be given Rs. 4.00 to 5.00. Then the Brahmin is called for *havan* or performing purification by lighting up the sacred fire. On this occasion a calf is presented to the Brahmin.

A child is fed on mother's milk upto 2 to 3 years. Food is given after 11 months; in the beginning gruel called *daliya* mixed in milk is given. Cow's milk is also given from the second or third month. In illness medicines brought from Guna are given when the house treatment fails.

## Naming Ceremony

On the first day when the Pandit is visited, the father would enquire the *rashi*[42] name of the child. The Pandit usually advises that the *rashi* name works out at a particular letter of the alphabet. On the letter suggested by the Pandit the name will be given. No other ceremony is performed.

## Other Particulars: Generally

It is only in the past few years that the Saheriyas have adopted some of the ceremonies described earlier. What exactly made them do it is not very clear. One

42. Rashi:— Hindi word a sign of the zodiac.
Rashi Nam:— The name given to a child according to the sign of zodiac in which he or she was born.

thing, however, of which we are reasonably certain, is that there was no organised attempt at imposing or incorporating these rituals. It appears they came to be adopted gradually by imitating other castes and these customs appeared somewhat persuasive. Perhaps added to this is their economic growth and impact of living habits and conduct of other castes with whom they came into contact. Yet another feature appears to be that comparatively the Saheriyas are no longer a cut off caste living in splendid isolation amidst inpenetrable jungles. They have come more in contact with other castes the change was only to be expected.

## IX

## BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH MARRIAGE

### Marriage

The general approach towards marriage appears deeply religious. It is enjoined upon man and woman to marry and procreate, for this is the way of World. Apart from this marriage is also necessary for social and economic reasons. In society it ensures continuity of life in the village. It clothes a man with a 'status' denied to unmarried one. The expression *ghar grahisti*[43] or *bal bachhe wala*[44] or *ghar bandha ke rah raha*[45] all indicate the respect which goes with a married man, who among other things is expected to conduct himself respectably, feel himself responsible for he has a family to support. In the eyes of the villagers these are important aspects. Again a wife is an economic asset for she lends a helping hand in the field operations and at home. A childless man is almost doomed to wander about after the death. A son alone would ensure the smooth passage of the soul to the heavens. Therefore for a completeness in life marriage is an essential factor.

### Betrothal

Betrothal ceremony in a society depends upon the general age of marriage. In Gadher it was observed that marriages among Saheriyas are mostly post-puberty types, but few pre-puberty marriages may be termed as marginal puberty ones, for within a year or two of the marriages the parties attain puberty. Among the Rajputs and Jats marriages take place between ages 9 to 13 in case of females and 12 to 16 in case of males. Betrothal is common in all castes.

### Preliminaries to Betrothal (All castes)

Betrothal ceremony virtually settles the marriage The marriages are settled through the good offices of near relations usually the mother's brother, father's sister and the like. The parents of the boy or girl are anxious to find a suitable match for their ward and remain on the look out for one from the ages of 8 and 10 years respectively. They sound their relations or very near friends about it. They do not have any idea of their requirements in this, but are mostly guided by two main factors (1) the rules of clan exogamy (2) the status of the parties. If (1) is permissible and (2) agreeable then there is a little to probe further and the marriage is soon settled. To achieve an agreement, however careful negotiations are necessary. The girls parents who have been on look out ascertain from their relations and close friends about eligible boys. On getting clear and good reports about the boy from these sources, he decides to approach the father of the boy. An approach by the girl's father generally presumes acceptance by him of the boy after preliminary enquiry. In rare cases however it may not be so. Generally the first hand is played from the girl's side. He usually arranges through some close relation or friend to send a message to the groom's father, inviting them to come to him, to approve of the girl and settle the matter. This is only possible after the mediator has sounded the other party about the girl and the other party approves of the proposal. With these preliminaries over the date is fixed and the boy's father visits the girl's place. If the parties are known to each other then these formalitise are not necessary.

The boy's father visits the home of the girl and there he is met by the latter's father and other men. They sit down to a chat and is hospitably entertained. In many families the girl is not shown to the boy's father, but in some a glimpse of her may be seen by a cleverly manupulated devise. The idea in such a devise appears to be saving the girl from embarrassment which may follow from a feeling of self consciousness. If the distinguished visitor does not approve he returns to his place; no further questions are asked and the matter ends. If he approves, a new chapter begins. The girl's father would be asked as to when may they come for filling in the lap: *god bharna* ceremony. The Saheriyas these days have taken to it and a time is fixed. *Pandit* is not necessary so far. The girl's father if he is not satisfied about boy may suggest that he

43. 'Ghar Grahisti' : Possessing a house and household having a family.

44. 'Bal Bachhewala': One who has children.

45. 'Ghar bandha ke rah raha': One who builds a house and lives (indicating fixity).

would like to see the boy before finalising the talks. In the latter case somebody, father or uncle from the girl's side would go to see the boy and if approved then a rupee would be given to the boy and would invite the boy's people for *god bharna*.

## God Bharna or Filling the Lap

*God bharna* sets the seal of the completion of successful negotiations and is often treated as half marriage. The boy's father goes to the girl's place accompanied by four or five men with presents. The presents are (1) *kakai* or a wooden comb, (2) *chhata* a small necklace of coral stone, (3) a *narial* — a cocoanut, (4) *batasa* — sponge sugar cakes, and (5) Re. 1.00. These persons would stay there for about 2/3 days. The girl is then called and as she sits, these are placed in her lap. Among the Jats clothes are also presented by the boy's father to the girl. She is required to wear these clothes at the time of ceremony. In the evening this is followed by singing and distribution of sweets. The girl's father would try to re-imburse the expenditure that may have been incurred by the party and so he pays them about Re. 1.00 or so to each member and more to the father of the boy. This above ceremony is not a must, but in many castes it prevails. Among Jats it is optional and as far as Saheriyas are concerned they have only recently started it.

## Betrothal and Thereafter

Practically in all cases marriage follows in the course after betrothal, but instances are not wanting where marriages have been cancelled. Among Saheriyas marriage takes place after about a year of betrothal but amongst the other castes it could be as many as even five years after. The Saheriyas claim that a contingency in which marriage did not take place after the betrothal has not arises. The Jats, however, are not so emphatic about it. Such an event generally does not lead to quarrel but a few cases run counter to the assumption.

In one case[46] 'X' a boy 18 years was engaged to 'Y'. Betrothal ceremony had been completed and marriage was fixed. In the meanwhile 'Y's father learnt that 'X' was a drunkard and generally did not conduct himself well. So he decided to break the marriage. He sent a word to 'X's father who was annoyed and hurt. He then began to demand compensation for (1) breaking off the marriage, (2) defaming the boy. The ingredients sound almost middle-class-urban in character, but the fact that damages were claimed marks a distinct change in the mentality of the villagers. Heretofore compensatory damages for such a break were never claimed; there used to be a lot of fretting and fuming over the whole incident, but it rarely assumed such a perspective. The other party did not pay any damages and no suit was filed. The resentment is strongly voiced, private remedy was not sought perhaps legal one may follow.

In yet another case[47] a boy's father broke off the engagement on learning that girl was of sickly disposition. The matter ended there. Engagements are also called off when (1) a party may be cast out of the caste by Caste Panchayat, (2) subsequent discovery of faults in either party, (3) some mistakes committed by mediator, (4) successful slandering by opponents, (5) scandal involving either party. The after effect of breaking off of an engagement is a depreciation of the "marriage value" of the party. The stocks decline if the party was involved in a scandal and only persons of a lower class will condescend to marry him/her. The 'depreciation' of marriage-value is invariably directly in proportion to the established or suspected guilt or blame of the parties concerned. The gifts received at the time of betrothal are however not returned, rarely are they destroyed in anger, but often kept.

## Age of Marriage

Broadly speaking the Saheriyas marriages may be termed as from commencement of, to the post-puberty ones, while the Rajputs and Jats marriages as — a little before to the start of puberty ones; or in other words it may be described as Saheriyas having a slightly higher age for marriages than other castes. Among the Saheriyas females are usually married between 12-15 years of age and among other castes between 10-14. The Saheriya boys however are married between 14-18 while in other castes 13 to 18 is the average age of marriage. Among the Jats and Rajputs if the boys and girls are not married within the age groups referred, then a suspicion grows linking the party to some shortcoming or defect or even a scandal.

Among the Jats and Rajputs child marriages were in vogue once. Today an age of 5 years for females and 7/8 for males is considered sufficient for a betrothal. This is considered necessary for a few reasons. The caste in the district is essentially a cultivating one and so the boy for cultivation becomes fully useful by the time he reaches the age of 12-14. He has little

46. The incident relates to a nearby village. The characteristics revealed being important, it is narrated here.
47. A case reported from the another Jat village.

fortune except as a cultivator; so he does not have to go out to earn a livelihood and establish himself. The elders in the house have all along nourished a hope that the son or the grandson may settle down early in life, during their life-time and since the marriage is the best way of making him settled, it is performed early. Initially an engagement *sagai* or betrothal may be agreed upon, much earlier — say at the age of 5 or 7 years, the marriage is performed by the time he reaches the age of 12 to 16. Every parent is anxious to fix up a betrothal for as time runs away the chances of getting a good match recede. They say that since the boy is not likely to enter any service, why delay the marriage? He is ready for it and so let him learn to settle down.

## Clan Exogamy

The Jats in the village claim to be of *deswari* clan in origin. On the subject Crooke[48] writes: "Deswali is a comprehensive name for all Jats tribes dwelling in the Hariyana or Des of Hissar and Rohtak. All these tribes were probably as closely connected with Rajputana as one the present Bagris, but the connection is more remote and less well remembered. The Deswal, Dallal and Man Jats are also said to be related closely, being descended from one Dhanna Rao of *Silanhanti* in Rohtak, by a *Bargujar* Rajput woman, who had three sons, Dille, Desal and Man who gave their names to the three tribes of Dalla, Deswal and Man Jats".

The local Jats call themselves *deswari* from '*des*' or country from which they came. In Bundelkhand — Malwa side 'r' is often used in local dialects for 'l' and because the descriptions given by Jats tally with what has been described in Crooke one is inclined to regard this as *deswali*. The Jats claim that their relatives in Agra and Bharatpur are also known as *deswali, deswari*. It appears that the word is pronounced somewhat differently otherwise the material particulars remain the same.

Among Jats polygamy is permissible but considered socially degrading. Polyandry is considered abominable, and though Crooke suspected that it existed in some form in Rohtak and cited the Settlement Report in support, in this region it is not practised. A man is not permitted to take a wife either from his own section or that of his mother or his grandmother nor from the husband of his father's sister called *bhua*. Thus within four degrees of the prohibition marriage cannot take place. It may be represented as

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mother's Gotra. | Cannot marry in any one of these categories. | Father's mother's gotra |
| Father's sister's husband's gotra | | Father's gotra |

The children of father's sister are regarded as brother and sister, therefore marriage would not be permissible. They would prefer to marry outside the village if possible, for if the bride's house is a little far, then the nuisance value from her is less.

Among the Jats levirate is permitted. A widow could be married to the younger brother of the deceased husband; the elder brother cannot keep her. Since widow re-marriage is permissible, it is not obligatory for the widow to marry the younger brother and a preference for an outside husband is discernible. When the wife dies it is not necessary for the husband to marry her younger sister. A man may also not marry the younger sister of his wife during the later's life time.

The conception of Jats about marriage appears to be that it can take place once. The re-marriage is merely a permissive one, allowing widow to share a home, hearth and bed with a man. In view of this no ceremony marking a widow re-marriage takes place. It is usually arranged by the relations and barber. On the day fixed the bridegroom along with a few friends goes to the house of widow and in some cases spends the night with her and in others returns with her. From the next day the woman begins to wear ornaments which are customarily worn by married females. These are the gifts which have been made over by the bridegroom. In some cases and these are on the increase each day, the widow's father or father-in-law take some money from the prospective husband and release the woman only after payment. Usually the party receiving money takes the widow and hands her over to the "buyer". In the Jat community the women are out-numbered by men; therefore there is always a shortage of females. This means that quite a few Jats will have to remain unmarried; therefore woman becomes a useful economic commodity. The greed and covetousness being great, such practices are not uncommon.

There are some cases where the clever manouvring of the parties have set at nought the money making schemes of the parents. What is usually done in such

48. The Tribes and Castes of North Western Provinces and Oudh, by W. Crooke, Vol. III, pp. 33-4, 1896 Edition.

cases is that the widow and her lover (for it is only in those cases that such an arrangement is possible) agree upon a tryst and then elope. They do not return to the village for the next month or two and then by the time the whole thing has been forgotten, they return to resume life. In some cases quarrels arise and then feuds are frequent.

Where an unmarried man marries a widow, he has to undergo a ceremony since he has never been married earlier. He is required to put on the clothes of a bridegroom and made to go around a *peepal* tree or around decorated earthen pots *matkas*. Seven times in imitation of circumambulation around the fire. The woman is not included in the ceremony.

## MARRIAGE AMONG JATS

### Age of Marriage

These days boys are married between the ages of 16-20 and girls between 12 to 16 years. About 10/15 years ago the boys were married between 10 to 15 and girls between 8 to 12.

### Bride Price

Bride price is paid in somewhat rare and peculiar circumstances. In marriage between well matched parties of equal status it is generally never stipulated. In a marriage where the male suffers from some physical handicap like, being one eyed, or lame or becomes over-age for the marriage then he may be required to pay some bride price. The acceptance of bride price by the father of the girl is generally looked down upon and the money is accepted in complete secrecy. Often in such cases the father of the girl is almost driven in sheer desperation to accept the bride price. Either he may be very poor and finds it hard to marry his daughter specially when there are many daughters; he may give away his daughter in marriage for some stipulated amount. A widower in need of a bride is almost invariably required to pay a bride price, even though he may marry another widow, for the widow's relations will demand money. The amount of money that has to be paid depends upon individual cases. It may start from Rs. 250.00 but does not exceed Rs. 1,000.00 in any case. So far we have dealt with cases where the faults lie primarily with bridegroom, but there may be some cases in which the fault would lie with neither.

In one case a well-to-do Jat decided to marry his son to another Jat who was not so well off. The latter could not incur the expenditure to entertain the *barat* party or give sufficient gifts in keeping with the status of the boy's parents. Therefore the former advanced some money where with the latter could make adequate arrangements and enough gifts worthy of the occasion. In this case the former gave the ornaments to the latter to be presented back on the occasion of wedding.

### Divorce

There is no ceremony or ritual associated with divorce, although it has been an accepted usage. The woman leaves the house never to return or the husband may turn her out. There are no reported cases in or around the village of divorce. A divorcee may choose to live with anyone she likes, but that person will be required to pay compensation to her previous husband if the woman has run away, but not, if she has been driven away. The children, if of tender age, will remain with the mother otherwise retained by the father's family.

### Caste Rules Re: Marriage

If a Jat marries into other caste then he is thrown out of the caste, and no Jat would eat, drink, visit or marry in the former's family. In a case where a Jat married a Brahmin woman, he was segregated from the caste and he found it extremely hard to marry his children — one daughter and two sons. With great difficulty he managed to marry his daughter to one, whose father was a Jat and mother a Punjabi Khatri. The sons were married in Sagar district to daughters from Jat father and non-Jat mother. In another case a Jat girl ran away and married a Brahmin. She was segregated but her father and brothers were not. The segregation observed is complete and the members of the community would not even visit the segregated households or even on *holi* festivals. Such marriages are held in contempt as would be obvious from:

*ma dhoban aur bap kasai,*
*vaishya ghar me byahi aii;*
*moosar leke Dinu nache,*
*bhali kari mere bhaii.*

meaning:— The mother was a *dhoban* (washer-woman) and father a butcher *kasai*, the son brought home a prostitute-*vaishya*-as his bride and now Dinu is dancing with a thick stick *moosal* exclaiming "well done brother". The person who has thus defaulted will not be admitted back in the caste. It may be that after two or three generations some poor Jat families may marry their sons/daughters to this family, but otherwise he is completely secluded.

## Extra-Marital Relationship

Since marriages are celebrated just before puberty or immediately after it, cases of extra-marital relations are few. This is looked down upon where married females enter into extra-marital relationships, the husband drives her out and more often then not such cases lead to feuds and bloody fights. If the husband develops intimate relationships then no action against him would be contemplated. Such acts are however looked upon with general disfavour.

## Marriage Ceremonies among Jats

The main ceremonies for a marriage start with *binauri*.

On the day when the marriage party or *barat* is due to leave for the bride's place, the groom is seated on the horse or in a palanquin and along with other relatives he visits the houses of all such persons in the village with whom they have contacts or *buhar* (corrupted from Hindi *vyavhar*). The bridegroom would go to every house, whose members visit his family irrespective of caste and there he would be given a small present and sweet to eat and/or a rupee. A careful account is kept of all money received on this occasion because when similar offering will have to be made in return. On this occasion, even a Chamar household, with whom the family has some contacts is visited. The groom keeps sitting on horse back during this ceremony. These days the bridegrooms move on horses and palanquins are becoming out of dates, not because they are less attractive, but because it is not easy to get Kahars to lift them. The change has taken place in the last fifteen years.

While visiting all these persons, all village Gods and deities are also visited and their blessings invoked. Even if a particular deity is worshipped by a non-Jat caste only, yet on this occasion, it would be visited and respects paid. This done he returns home but he is not supposed to enter the house. His aunt i.e. his father's sister or his own sister receives him and performs what is know as *nekchar*. This consists in waving a lighted *thali* and garlands around his face and is supposed to keep the boy safe from evil influences. The mother of the boy then suckles him at her breasts, which he takes in the mouth and the wedding party starts immediately. This is known as *anchal dena* or giving the breast. In case the mother is dead, then the boy's aunt, or father's brother's wife, or elder brother's wife *bhabhi* could officiate for her. The lady doing so is regarded like mother.

Among the Jats marriages are an expensive affair and celebrated with great gusto and pomp. The less well-to-do among them however have to contend with whatever they can manage to spend conveniently or inconveniently for on this occasion he would not hesitate to borrow without considering his capacity to return the loan.

## The Wedding Party or Barat

There are no prior conditions fixing the strength of *barat*. Among the poorest types 15-20 persons at least could be expected. There have been as many as 300 to 500 persons in a wedding party. Distances upto 60-70 miles are covered in bullock carts, which is the most favoured made of transport. Since most of the participants bring their own bullock carts transportation of the party becomes cheap and presents least botheration. Where distances are greater bus journeys are preferred. In a bus journey the cost has to be borne by the father of the groom and so bullock cart though slow is more economical, hence preferable. A bullock cart is loaded with six to eight persons and their baggage. Two bullock carts are made available for band players dancing girl/s and the party.

## The Nautch Girls

In *barats* of Jats of good status *nautch* girls are a necessary accompaniment and their presence in a *barat* resounds to his credit and status. They are procured from Guna and most of them are Muslims. Among their class they are deemed "respectable" for they are unlike others locally known as *bednis* and *kanjadis* who are coarse in their manners; trade in flesh and are regarded very low.

These *nautch* girls are procured on a specific understanding that they would be required to dance and sing only and that no harm would befall them. Further they come only at instance of some one who is mutually known and assures that the party calling the girl/s is at least a 'decent' one. Thus a surety introduces and settles terms in the matter. They are invariably chaperoned by their mother's, aunts or some other male relations and accompanied by two or even three musicians. The terms of business are agreed to earlier. Usually an amount is stipulated, say Rs. 200.00 or so: or the girl may agree to collect whatever her luck may bring. A cart is placed at her disposal and her party occupies it. Only the cartman, from her employer's side sits in the cart.

The *barat* is supposed to reach at an agreed time.

The time for marriage is usually the 'dusk' or a little before dawn and so the *barat* would reach either in early hours of morning or in afternoon. The party on reaching the village is received by the barber or one or two members of the household of the bride and shown the place for their stay. It is called *janwasa*. The barber invites the party for next ceremony of *agwani*.

## Agwani: Reception

The members of the marriage party dress up and form a procession led by the band followed by the dancing girl and her party — the bridegroom on a horse back or palanquin and others in the rear. The procession moves with the band playing all sorts of film tunes, the dancing girl dancing gaily to the accompaniment of her orchestral party and as and when she swirls around deftly, admirers from the *barat* or outside spectators shower money over her. Of this payment an account is kept by some members or even the *pandit* may be asked to keep all accounts. As the festive atmosphere spreads out, the band and dancing get more vigorous. The dancing girl knows that this is just her opportunity and if she has come without contract, for a fixed amount, then she is rarely slow in seizing it. She however sings catchy cinema songs or cheap Urdu *ghazals*. Her orchestral accompaniment consists of harmonium, *tabla* and sometime flute or *sarangi*.

When the procession stops near the bride's place opposite to them stand the bride's relations. Here at this moment the dancing continues between the two groups. If the girl's people have also arranged for a dancing girl then she also performs here and between the two performances the bystanders regale with casual talk and merriment. This done the *barat* moves in and all greeted by girl's people. They embrace each other and are seated. The bridegroom still on the horse is taken near the decorated door of the house and the *pandit* performs pooja. At this time all gifts including all cash that is proposed to be given, is shown to the groom's people and an inventory furnished to them. He is now assisted off the *palki* or horse. During all these ceremonies the groom is accompanied by his father's sister's husband or sister's husband who acts as his aide known as *savasa*. Then he touches with his sword a small wooden bracket built above the door. This is known as *toran marna*. He now enters the canopy or *mandap* which is the spot where all ceremonies would be conducted. The *barat* returns to *janwasa*. The aide of the boy is very handsomely rewarded by the father. He may get a gift or cash which may even go upto Rs. 100.00 among richer Jats.

## Ganayana

The *barat* is now invited for *ganayana* ceremony which consists in presenting the ornaments and clothing to the bride. Three or four members of the marriage, excluding the groom, go there and on this occasion the bride is seated under the *mandap* and her lap is filled with *batashas*. The members who have come are entertained to soft drinks or tea or *pan-supari* etc.

## *Pangti* or the General Feast

This is the main feast during a marriage and among the well-to-do types the entire village is invited. The bridegroom sits under the *mandap* and hesitates to eat and only does so after some persuasion and a promise of a present which the boy may request, he begins to eat. In one case a bicycle was given and in another a a new bullock cart laden with 15 maunds of grain and a pair of bullocks was given. Only after the bridegroom is satisfied would the others touch the food. Vegetarian food consisting of *pooris*, vegetable, sweets cooked in *ghee* is served. The Jats eat non-vegetarian food but on this occasion, only the vegetarian food is served. If some members of the party desire non-vegetarian food then arrangements to serve the same are made at some friend's place. In the general dinner these will not be served, because on this occasion, members of other castes also join and this may not be approved by them. The residents of the village are invited to this feast by an intimation locally called *choolha ka nyota* signifying that the entire family is invited. The feast is usually over by about 8 P.M. to 10 P.M. as the case may be. After the feast the *barat* returns to *janwasa*.

From the bridegroom's side three or four persons go to the potter to obtain a few well decorated earthen vessels. They present the Kumhar with a rupee. The Jats aver that by this ceremony the bridegroom is endeared to the village and then he may regard himself as one of the villagers. These vessels are placed near the *mandap*.

*Bhamar*: Circumambulation around the Fire:—

This is the main ceremony. The girl is attired in clothes selected for her by bridegroom's people and she wears a long veil *ghoonghat*. She puts on a silken *sari* with a golden brocade and a blouse. Over all these is wrapped a loose sheet. The boy wears tight pyjamas

a long coat *sherwani*, a turban (but this is being given up steadily) and a leaf crown called *mohar*. The bride and the bridegroom seat around the canopy and the pandit recites the sacred texts. Thereafter the two exchange marriage vows. Pandits from both the sides attend the ceremony but the groom's pandit usually has greater say in these matters. Thereafter they rise and go round the sacred fire seven times. This is followed by *pav pakhariya* or touching the feet in which all the relations of the bride along with their wives touch the feet of the couple and give presents. These presents are usually in cash. After this the boy goes in where the ladies in the house give him sweets to eat. Since the bridegroom is always attended by a helper, an aide referred to a *savasa*, if the latter also ventures to go in then he is likely to receive a generous amount of beating.

On the next morning after the break-fast has been served, the bride's people return the visit. Since most of the ceremonial part of the marriage is over it is time for small pleasantries. All the guests and hosts mix with each other freely with music and dance to add to the jollity. The dancing girl, flits and glides from one to another sits near one, smiles at the second, winks at the third and sings a couplet or shuffles across with her eyes moving meaningfully from one to another and the spectators feel mighty pleased — out comes money to be gratefully accepted by her chaperon. As the dancing gains more in tempo the happy listeners part with more and more money. She also sings and dances to listener's choice for she obliges by singing favourite film songs and even devotional songs. It becomes a *farmaishi* programme: for some elderly types prefer to hear *bhajans* and so she obliges. It is a dance hour, but again the accounts are carefully kept. When the session is over and the members of the bride's household have gone away a check of the dance money is made. In case her earnings fall short of contract amount it is made good, in case it exceeds although, she can be asked to refund the excess but this is rarely done. If the more money has to be paid to her, then the outlookers may ask her to keep singing and dancing, with more songs and dances she may be able to make good her expected earnings. The dancer would be free after this and could return or accompany the wedding party back to village.

This is followed by *palka* or sitting on the bed: where the couple sits on the bed and other relations go around sprinkling small wheat leaves. This is followed by *kangana khulana* or opening of the bracelet. Since two bracelets are worn, one of them is opened at this time. This is followed by departure of the *barat* or *bidai*. Among the rich the entire marriage party is called for this is an expensive ceremony. Alternately only three or four persons from the party may be called. On this occasion a small gift which may even go upto Rs. 100 to 200 is given in small bag to the bridegroom and a rupee or two to each member of the wedding party. Thereafter the *barat* returns.

## Back at Home

On return the couple does not straightway enter the house but usually stops at a neighbour's or relative's place. The women of the house then come singing songs and the couple is taken to all village deities where money and cocoanuts are offered. This done the couple is brought home to the spot from where the *barat* went (at the spot where the mother suckled the boy). Here a *teeka* is made on the forehead of the couple in goat's blood and then they are allowed in. A goat would be sacrificed if there are meat eaters in the family, else a symbolic sacrifice in which a goat is bled from the ear, takes place. When any portion of the ear has been cut, the same is carefully buried at the spot. In the house the couple seated and the second *kangana* is untied.

The bride is then taken in by the ladies. She sleeps with her mother-in-law and returns to her home after a couple of days. In many cases the person who takes her back accompanies the wedding party.

## Reception of the Bride

The Jats and Thakurs have a more elaborate arrangements for receiving the bride. When the party reaches the village, the couple for a short while stays at neighbour's place or near relative. In the meanwhile the ladies at home get all things ready and invite the couple. At the entrance the women receive the couple by singing and an *arti*[49]. It is an occasion for great happiness. When this is over arrangements are made for a feast and all the guests are fed; with this the day comes to an end. On this day the bride sleeps along with other women. On the next day the couple goes out to worship the deities of the village, important among them being *mata*. In the afternoon the bride/bridegroom untie the *khoont* of the *kangana* worn on the wrist by bridegroom and bride respectively. In a pre-puberty marriage, the bride stays for about 3/4 days

49. A ceremony performed for Gods by moving a lighted lamp or camphor in a circular way.

at her husband's place before returning to her house. In the post-puberty ones she hardly stays for a couple of days. Sex relationship should commence only after the *gauna*. When the bride returns she puts her hand marks in turmeric on the walls of the main gate.

### Gauna

A marriage among Jats and Thakurs is only complete when the *gauna* ceremony has been gone through. It is performed after one year of the marriage or in 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th etc. years. A date is fixed by the Pandit. If it is decided to have it on *akshay teej* then no fixing of date is necessary.

The boy along with 5/7 persons goes to the girl's place and stays there for about 4/5 days or longer if requested. Here they are well treated. The father of the bride gives clothes, ornaments and utensils to her. The boy is also given suitable presents and some sweets are also sent to the boy's family along with them. In addition grains and pulses may also be given. On the day when the party has to leave the bride is attired in her best clothes and a *teeka* is drawn across: money paid to the boy and the whole party leaves for their home.

When they return they are received with songs by the women. A small *pujan* or worshipping takes place and a big bed which has been supplied and furnished by the bride's father is placed for them. Near at hand a cocoanut is also placed which the couple is supposed to break. The giving of presents do not end here for very often the bride asks for one. The husband worn out but taut agrees to give her a present: the thoughtful parents have perhaps already made a provision for this contingency and already given a present to the boy for onward transmission. This over, the sequence of presents comes to a close. It has been a long sequence too. Thereafter commences the intimate relationship.

## MARRIAGE CUSTOMS — SAHERIYAS.

### Clan Exogamy

A man may not get a bride from (1) his father's gotra, (2) his mother's gotra, (3) his father's mother's gotra. Beyond this prohibition marriage may take place. Working these out, these restrictions cancel themselves by the fourth generation. Polygamy is permissible and no stigma is attached. In the village there are 19 persons with more than one wife. In one case there are three wives staying with a husband. Polyandry is not noticed. The Saheriyas deny its existence among them. Since there never has been any shortage of females such practice never prevailed.

Levirate is permissible. The deceased brother's wife may be taken by the younger brother. A widow would not be forced to live with her deceased husband's brother and only on mutual agreements this is allowed. It is not permissible to marry two sisters at the same time: but if one of them dies then the widower may marry the sister if unmarried, remarry if widowed; bring her with the intention of staying with her, if she is married but otherwise agreeable. In the last case he may have to pay compensation money later on to the husband.

### Widow Re-Marriage

Widow re-marriage is permissible. No ceremonies are observed. The widow goes over to the person prepared to take her and starts living with him, where the widow is living independently of any relatives on her or her husband's side. Among the Saheriyas the women are less dependent on their relations, than in other castes. Thus a widow feels free to live with anyone whom she may happen to choose. This is so because in many cases Saheriyas live independently of their parents and so on the husband's death widow is virtually the master. Marriage ceremony however takes place where a widow is married to an unmarried person. In this case a ceremony is gone thus . A pole called *khema* is fixed in the court yard. Women's clothes are put on this *khema*. The widow remains seated inside the house. The bridegroom goes round the *khema* seven times alone. He wears good clothes and is smeared with turmeric. The women sing songs and sweets are distributed. No pandit officiates at the ceremony a member of the house departures. In other cases where the couple agrees to live together, the man comes to the widow and takes her along with him. He then gives her some ornaments which the woman wears. She takes all her belongings. In some cases, very few of course, where the woman is firmly settled, she may invite her future husband to stay with her. In such cases the husband is either a widowed who does not possess much of a home or if married comes away under the temptation of acquiring more property of the widow and then persuading her to return. It is reported that in some cases the husbands even disposed of their belongings and came to stay with the women.

Where the widow was living with her relations,

father-in-law or husband's brothers the latter may put a demand against her stating that the deceased's shares be given to them. A panchayat is called for adjudication and the matter is decided. The deceased's husband's portion of property which includes cash, and other jewellery or lands are made over to the brothers. If the widow's new husband is of aggressive type and is able to terrorise the relatives then he manages to keep the lands to himself. The matter is not referred to any court. The children by the previous husband are left in the custody of the deceased's family, but infants go with the woman and return only when they are sufficiently grown. If the deceased's husband family does not object, then she may keep the children with her.

Generally speaking the women feel very independent in these matters. It is not infrequent for the widows to pursue their quarry until subdued and intrigues are common. The commonest approach is via. sex relationship. Some elderly Saheriyas are of the view that sex relationship precedes a widow re-marriage. In the former days such a thing was not looked with favour. According to him, then the match was settled by talks or negotiations and living together followed. These days he claims. that intimacy starts and a *fait accompli* living together follows. In those days according to him it was not uncommon for women having illegitimate connection to be given a good beating by being tied to a tree. The "olden days" referred to above refers to 20-30 years ago.

## Extra Marital Relations

Extra-marital relations are fairly common. Among the unmarried girls these are comparatively few, because the girl is married by the time she reaches puberty. In cases where such relationships are discovered and if the persons could be married then they are soon married. The tribe generally does not permit big boys and girls to roam about or mix freely. Where such relations exist and parties cannot be married the girl is given a sound beating, severely reprimanded and then married off in the nearby village where her shady past is not known. After the marriage if the husband discovers the past, he may try to wreak vengeance on her and after cursing abusing and beating her may marry another girl. Relegated to a secondary position in the house harassed, and uncared she may elope with somebody or court another man. Thus the cycle commences.

Among the married ones, such practice is not uncommon, for the Saheriyas are fond of having many wives: often this leads to quarrels and divorce and in many cases to adultery and extra marital relations. They have a local saying:

*kisan garraye to do kuva khudaye,*
*aur Saheriya garraye to do lugai laye.*

If a cultivator (kisan) is well off (garraye) he would dig two wells. And if a Saheriya is well off he would bring two wives (lugai) which gives some indication of Saheriya fondness for more wives than one. Running away with a lover is quite common. An aggrieved husband may call the caste panchayat who generally imposes a small fine over the offender. In the last few years even the hold of panchayat appears to be diminishing. A few case histories are given.

'Z' a Saheriya, developed intimate relations with 'Y' wife of 'X' another Saheriya. 'Z' a rather well-to-do type, a clever talker and an influential person, already has two wives. 'X' came to know about it and complained to 'Z' asking him to stop his advances. 'Z' annoyed told him that 'Y' was his wife and that 'X' may mind his own business. 'X' thereupon called a panchayat. 'Y' was called in the panchayat. She professed her desire to stay with 'Z' and caught 'Z's' hand in presence of every body. 'X' thereafter requested the panchayat that he may be awarded some compensations. The panchayat directed 'Z' to pay some money and the latter agreed but he has not yet paid the amount and does not seem hopeful of getting the money.

In another case a non-Saheriya took away a Saheriya woman and kept her with him for a couple of days releasing her on the third day. The husband when he came to know about it complained to the panchayat who decided to contact the person accused of abductions. This man refused point blank, and threatened everybody with direst consequences. The matter was dropped.

The cases suggest and the villagers admit readily that the hold of the panchayats has diminished considerably.

'X' about 22 years of age was married to 'Y'. She had a former lover 'Z'. Sometimes after the marriage she refused to go to 'X'. The father 'A' discovered the reasons and decided to send her to 'Z', a widower. So 'A' just put her 'X' into 'Z's' house. No compensation was paid or demanded. Later the father made out that 'Y' was immoral and hence he did not want the daughter to go to him.

## Divorce

Divorce is an accepted custom. There are no

formalities about a divorce. Either the husband may drive the wife away by asking her to go away or failing that by harassing her in such a way that she leaves him. The woman on the other hand would run away herself. There are no grounds for divorce; but it often takes the shape of cruelty of either parties, mostly by males or infidelity of any of the two. Sometimes the husband brings a second wife and though this is an accepted practice but it leads to domestic quarrels. As a result of these domestic quarrels and continuous bickerings, for the two wives, rarely get on well, the husband gets tired and finally orders one away. If she leaves well and good, otherwise she would be harassed so much that ultimately she is obliged to leave. She just runs away to the nearest friend, she may have, or may cultivate male friendship. It is easier that way for there is always something to fall back upon. There have been some cases where the husbands have beaten wives after a bout of drinks and they ran away. There is no ceremony marking a divorce. The woman leaves the house and that is the end.

### Dispute Money

Money by way of compensation is paid by the new husband to the former one under a few circumstances only. When the wife has been driven away by her husband no compensation is payable. When wife runs away to a lover, the aggrieved husband may request the panchayat for being compensated for the loss of his wife. The panchayat assembles and after hearing the sides fixes a compensation to be paid to the former husband. The amount is then paid and the woman passes on completely to the new husband. The calling of a panchayat is a normal feature in such cases. The aggrieved husband may also claim compensation for the ornaments, household effects and clothes that his former wife might have taken along with her. The panchayat on some occasions may instead of compensating the aggrieved, required the new husband to entertain the caste or the panchas to a dinner. Sometimes it may levy a fine and then appropriate the proceeds to itself. The panchayat decisions are usually obeyed although some may not do so. Where an erring wife is brought back to the fold of her husband by the panchayat, or where she is handed back to the husband from the clutches of seducer, the panchayat levies a *dand* or a fine and entertains itself to a feast or use the amount themselves.

Adultery is looked upon with disfavour. When discovered the husband in a rage would beat the wife and also quarrel with the lover. A fight between the two may ensure and at first lathis are often used. An occasional act of adultery need not lead to divorce, but if discovered in compromising position, then anything from turning her away to beating, fighting and a final divorce may follow. The husband may generally be a little indulgent towards an erring wife and may choose to act when the proverbial last straw is put on the camel's back: and finding her in compromising position with her paramour certainly breaks the camel's back.

The tribal customs seem to hold sway for never has any complaint against polygamy been ever made. It is doubtful if the women even know that bigamy is an offence. The traditional pattern seems to hold good. The women appear completely suppressed in these matters and in many cases sheer disperation derives them to commit acts. The Saheriyas on the other hand do not make widow remarriage or adultery, an occasion for collecting money. A Saheriya is always sure of getting a girl in his own tribe. The women appear to be very submissive till they decide to leave for they very willingly put up with many of these indignities.

## MARRIAGE CEREMONIES IN THE VILLAGE

The following marriage ceremonies are gone through in the village. (1) *lagoon* fixing the date of marriage, (2) *rat jaga* or keeping awake at nights (among Jats and Rajputs only), (3) application of oil and turmeric to the bride and bridegroom, (4) *mandap*, (5) departure of *barat* marriage party to the bride's place, (6) *agwani* or reception of the bridegroom, (7) *bhammar* or going round the sacred fire, (8) *bidai* or sending off to the bride (Jats and Thakurs only), (9) reception of the bride, (10) *puja* performed by the couple, (11) community dinner, (12) *gauna*. The details of the ceremonies among various castes differ slightly; the broad pattern remains the same. The reasons for the variance is to be found in (i) economic cases, (ii) different tribal/caste customs.

### The Marriage Session

Only in the last 15-20 years have the Saheriyas started thinking about a time for marriage. Formerly marriages took place any time from *deo uthani ekadashi* in the month of Agrahanya which falls some time in November/December, after Dewali. Legend has it that the Gods on this day wake up from their slumber and it is known as *deo uthani* meaning on which the *devtas* get up. All castes observe this restriction for no

marriages are performed when the *devtas* are asleep and they go to sleep in *ashad* corresponding to June/ July each year. A pandit is always consulted for fixing the date; usually the father of the bride goes to the pandit and gets a favourable date. The other party concurs in this arrangement for it is the bride's people who have to make more arrangements and so are allowed the option of choosing the date. Earlier, a general agreement of the probable time of the marriage is agreed upon and the pandit fixes up the final date. For this service he gets Rs. 1.25 from the Saheriyas and more from the Jats who pay upto Rs. 3.00 to 4.00.

## The Lagoon or Peeli Chitthi or Yellow Letter

This is called the 'Yellow letter' because the paper on which it is written is smeared with turmeric giving it a yellow tinge. It is written by the pandit and notifies the date fixed for the marriage. This custom has only recently been adopted by them about 10-15 years ago. The Saheriyas in interior regions are not known to do it. All Saheriyas do not follow it but some have started it. The girl's father arranges to send it to the boy's parents before 10-15 days of the actual marriage. The date is already communicated earlier informally but this is the formal mode. Among the Jats and Rajputs, this letter is taken by a barber *nai* and a *teeka* of an amount between Rs. 5.00 to 101.00 is sent along. The barber stays at the boy's place for a couple of days enjoying the hospitality. He should stay there at least for a day and eat a meal. The Saheriyas however send this *lagoon* with one of their own men who after delivering the letter returns forthwith. Only Re. 1.00 is sent with the messenger, who comes back in many cases the same day. The messenger returns home without any gifts or cash payments from the boy's place. In the meantime arrangements for the marriage go ahead in full swing. A few details of these may be summarised as, arranging for clothes, ornaments gifts to the bride and groom, rations for the assembly, decorations, conveyance, band and the *nautch girls*. The richer a party the greater are the number of items under which arrangements are to be made: the poorer the party, the greater hardship.

## Rat Jaga or Keeping Awaking At The Night

Two days before the *mandap*, the women assembled for the marriage at the boys and girl's place, keep awake at the night singing marriage songs on *dholak* and a *manjira*. The whole day is occupied in giving finishing touches to the various arrangements for the marriage and the children too cling to their mothers, clamouring to be with them in a crowded house; at night when they are asleep, and the day's work done the jovial mood finds its expression in singing and dancing. As women sing and dance during the night, to a "women only crowd" the festivities begin. The above however is confined to the Jats and Thakurs only. The Saheriyas do not have any such occasions. They sing whenever they wish to, at any time e. g. when flour is being ground or when they sit to do some marriage job.

## The Annointing

A day before the *mandap* is held the bride and bridegroom in their houses are annointed with oil. In the village, the women of the caste are invited. The boy or girl is seated on a small stool and he/she wears very brief clothing. The boy would wear a *kachha* or *angochha* across the waist upto the knees and the girl wears the *ghagra*. This is only a woman's function. The bride/bridegroom is then completely annointed with turmeric lotion. This gives a yellow shade to the skin. When the face of the boy/girl has been so smeared the mother removes the paint by wiping the face with her *saree*. This honour is granted to the mother only, failing her to the sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) or an elderly lady. After turmeric has been applied he/she is annointed with oil starting from feet upwards. Oil is applied on the feet, knees, arms and forehead. This is done to the accompaniment of songs and music: the other women take up the *dholak* and commence singing. The bride and bridegroom are then suitably "made up" for their ordeal. Black soot (lampblack) is applied to the eyes and red myrtle on the hands. This is followed by distribution of sweet *batashas* to all the guests and the ceremony ends a little before night. Among the Saheriyas this ceremony is considerably modified. There is no singing on the occasion, no sweets are distributed and the gathering is very small and many dispense with it.

## The Mandap

Mandap is a canopy built for ceremonial purposes. Under this canopy are carried out practically all marriage ceremonies. At the boy's place it is erected one day before the departure of the marriage party. This is also erected at the girl's place a day before the marriage party is scheduled to arrive and at this spot is conducted the most important ceremony of the marriage, viz. the *bhammars*. At both these places a wooden pillar having four arms towards the top, standing about 5' to 6' is erected of *salar* wood. The construction of a

mandap is supposed to be the duty of the husband of the sister of the boy or girl and he is given a present of Re. 1.00 or more. Arrangements for seating are made and the whole thing is neatly decorated with mango leaves and other decorative articles.

During the afternoon, the boy or the girl is called and seated under the canopy. A pandit is present among the Jats but not in Saheriyas. In few cases however the Saheriyas have been known to engage pandits. The pandit or another Saheriya then ties a red string with betel nut around the wrist of the boy or girl and the women of the house touch the feet of the bride and groom. Turmeric is applied to the boy or girl by the women and the boy puts on a loose yellow garment. This is followed by a feast. The Jats prepare *puris* and *sheera* or *chappaties, dal* and rice, and their invitees are always greater in number. Among the Saheriyas the invitees are few and only *chappatis, kadi* and rice may be made. Whereas the Jat may spend more money over this item but Saheriya compelled by circumstances prefers to be parsimonious.

## The Marriage Dress

Amongst Jats and Thakurs a superfine *dhoti* and silken shirt with a closed collar coat is worn, over the coat, a thin loose cloth, yellow in colour is loosely put around the shoulders. On the head he wears a decorative crown made from gold braid. Across the neck garlands of flower or silver braid are hung around. He may be seen putting a watch, a golden chain and gold buttons. He is given a scimitar or sword (generally a rusted one) in the hand or across the shoulder, dangling on one side. The more modern bridegrooms however are known to be using trousers and coats, silken or nylon socks and Bata shoes. The head wear and other embellishments however remain the same. The wearing apparel costs anything between Rs. 75.00 to Rs. 150.00.

The Saheriya puts on a dhoti and a cotton shirt and a loose flowing gown which is often borrowed. He uses a locally made shoes and a turban. The whole thing costs about Rs. 25/40. His headwear is of palms leaves.

## Bride

The bride puts on a good quality silken *lehnga* of 10 yards of green, red or yellow colour: black is tabooed. She puts on a silken blouse covering the stomach as well, covered by a heavy *loongda* with golden brocade work. A good quality chappal and a small *mohri* or headwear purchased from the bazar is used. Over the clothes is wrapped a yellow *chaddar* and the bride is always covered in a big veil. The whole thing costs about Rs. 125.00 to Rs. 200.00.

The dresses of the Saheriya while remaining the same is of poor quality clothes, hence much less expensive: They cost about Rs. 40 to 50.

## The Barat

Among the Saheriyas, the bridegroom properly dressed up, along with relatives takes a round of the cluster or the huts on foot and when about to leave, breaks a cocoanut in the name of all 'Gods' saying *devtaon ke nam* for the *devtas*. This done the *barat* moves on. The Saheriyas move in the bullock carts but if those are not available then the movement is on foot. If the distance is great then they may carry some food with them. The bridegroom gets the honoured place during these days. Thus in the festive atmosphere the party moves on. The *barat* is suitably received by the bride's people. No presents are given and the party is shown its place of stay, usually underneath a tree near a well where a bucket and rope to draw water is provided.

Among the Saheriyas, the party excepting the groom is received at the bride's place and dinner commences without any ceremony. After the dinner the *barat* returns for *teeka* and *toran*. The *teeka* money and other gifts are nominal: very often only a few rupees and no gifts are given. Amongst some a cow or a calf may be given at the *teeka*. This is followed by touching the *toran*. After this the groom goes into the house and is served with food. He would then stay on there till the *bhammars*. The bride remains under *pardah* or veil.

## Bhammars

The bride is dressed in clothes which have been selected for by the groom's side. These clothes are sent to the bride after the arrival of the party. Pandit is summoned for the occasion and he conducts the main ceremony. The bride's mother and father sits together and the father of the groom also appears with the boy. The bride and bridegroom sit under the *mandap* and pandit begins with his recitation of sacred verses. The music is played and this goes on for sometimes. Among the Saheriyas the whole ceremony is over within an hour or so for the pandit, if he has been engaged does not bother to recite the verse at any length. Since he is paid less he makes the whole thing a very brief one.

The recitation of texts is followed by going round the sacred fire seven times. This symbolises the completeness of marriage. When the *bhammars* are about to commence the bride's father and mother leave the place. After they have completed these rounds, their seating places are interchanged. After this ceremony, the relatives make small presents. After this the bridegroom and party return to the *janwasa*.

## Bidai

The party returns with the bride next day but the Jats are known to stay for 2/3 days. If the girl's father is well-to-do then the Saheriya party would be entertained to a lunch next day and then leave with the bride. Their stay would then be for about 24 hours. All gifts that are to be given are now made available. In a well-to-do house cattle or cow, clothes and cash of Rs. 40-50 may be given. Where the father is poor and cannot afford a lunch, he gives what is known as *khurcha roti* or *roti* which may be tied to the turban; what is done is that the bride's father prepares *rotis* from about 5 seers of flour and everybody takes a small piece or so. It is normally not enough as a meal but acts a small snack. The party returns. This system of *khurcha roti* is now rapidly declining. A point which needs some emphasis is that the Saheriyas content themselves on this occasion with whatever is given to them and no demands are made. The bridegroom steps out passes under the *mandap* and pulls a small twig from it, usually dangling from it. If he is relunctant to do so then it would mean that he still wants something. If he really wants anything, then yet another gift, an animal this time is given to him. Thereafter he is seated in the palanquin along with the bride and the party returns home.

In a Saheriya marriage the couple on return is taken into the house after the women at house have received them at the door. The members of the marriage party then disperse. The couple is allowed to sleep together, a corner of the house is allotted for their exclusive use. On the next day the bride does the cooking for all relations who dine at the house. This is known as *akha ki roti*. Akha[50] is approximately equal to five seers of flour. She cooks food—*rotis* and the same is eaten by all who are invited (about 8 to 10 persons only are invited and these are near relations). When they eat the food, a present of Re. 1.00 is given to the bride in appreciation of her culinary art. This ceremony is meant for all brides (for pre and post puberty marriages), one *akha* flour is given to father's sister or husband's sister. Among Saheriyas a bride may remain for as many as 10/15 days depending upon the persons who come to fetch her. While departing she also leaves the impressions of her hands on the main door. In the pre-puberty marriage the bride sleeps along with her mother-in-law. In the Saheriyas *gauna* does not seem to occupy any important place. All that happens under these circumstances is that the boy goes to fetch his bride and brings with a few gifts like corn and new clothes.

## General Observations

For Jats and Thakurs, a marriage is an occasion for displaying their status and prestige. This is one item, perhaps the only one, over which they would like to spend money lavishly. A Jat would willingly borrow money even to the extent of incurring hopeless debts, for such occasion. They concede that a Jat would spend all the savings of a life time for the marriages. The Saheriyas on the other hand have little to spend and marriage is no occasion for spending. They seem to accept marriage as a simple ceremony shorn of the glamour of expenditure.

Dowry in general is not stipulated among these upper castes: but since it is a question of 'prestige' or *izzat* enough money is given to the boy on different occasions viz. (1) *lagoon*, (2) *teeka*, (3) *bidai*, (4) *gauna*. It would be a great shame if expectations are belied for the girl's father would become a victim of slander. He may lose his position with the caste. Sometimes the job of obtaining dowry amount is passed on quietly to some intermediaries who by warning the other party pass on the useful hint. Sometimes the bride's father, makes some rough calculations of the expenditure of his opposite member. He may take into consideration the amount spent on dancing girls, bus fares, band etc. and then pay them back in the *thaal* at the time of *bidai*. The conception behind this is that the boy's father should be made to spend as little as possible over the *barat* party. A Jat in the income group Rs. 200 to 250 per month would easily spend about Rs. 7,000 to 8,000 and out of this Rs. 2,000 are given in cash. A Saheriya on the other hand is very parsimonious. No expensive gifts are given, no dowry is stipulated and a Saheriya of income between Rs. 50.00 to 75.00 per month does not spend more than Rs. 250.00 over the marriage. From this it would appear that marriages to Saheriyas are not so expensive as for Jats who

50. Akha : is the area of the lid of the grinding flour and it contains about 5 seers of flour.

spend huge amounts. This perhaps accounts for the fact that among Jats the money to be paid at the time of divorce is very high, whereas in Saheriyas it is almost non-existent. Whereas Jats observe all ceremonies of caste Hindus, the Saheriyas have only recently started copying some of those, and the ceremonies are few in number. Another notable feature in Saheriyas is that since they have practically no expectation of dowry, the relations between the two parties at the time of marriage are more easy and devoid of any tension. Among Jats there is more formality and expectations being highly placed, the slightest disappointment causes tension, bickering unhappiness and even recrimination. In Saheriya marriage eating or taking *khurcha ki roti* indicates the humility of the members of the marriage party. In Jats and Rajputs the marriage party is anything but humble for never is there another such opportunity for being treated as VIPs. The bridegroom has ample chances to ask for the "moon", should he desire so. Some of them have been known to ask for it and there has been much trouble afterwards. It appears that Saheriyas are more rooted to the earth and have a very realistic appraisal of each other's limitations.

A Jat may get dowry and may pay a bride price too. When the boy crosses the marriageable age or is otherwise condemned he can get a bride only after paying some bride price. A widower cannot hope to get married without bride price. It suggests the creeping materialism in matrimonial matters.

The Saheriya marriage is dreadfully limited by his economic condition and a Jat marriage goes out of all proportion because of it.

There are two other observations regarding Jat marriages:

(1) Negi, (2) Ban on Vegetable Oil.

### Negi

During various ceremonies, the barber, the pandit and other menial staff attending the marriage has to be paid some tips. These tips are known as *negi*. At the time of settling the marriage an understanding is reached as to who (either bride's or bridegroom's father) would bear these expenses. If the bride's father agrees to bear them then he would undertake payments. The expenditure incurred varies, and it is seldom less than Rs. 25.00. There are cases when it is reached Rs. 500.00. When the bride's father agrees to bear this, then a small saving to the boy's side is affected.

### Ban on Dalda

The Jat Panchayat in some parts of the district have banned the use of *dalda* a vegetable oil product, for cooking purposes. All cooking must be done in pure ghee. Punishments have been prescribed for violation of the rule. The caste would be prepared to eat less number of sweets prepared of ghee rather than taste vegetable oil. So far no cases of violation were reported.

## X

## BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH DEATHS

### Belief concerning death

"The Lord gave,
and the Lord hath taken away."
Job. I. 21.

Life and death are in God's hands. What is written in one's 'Fate' will happen, no matter how hard one may try to avert it. The *baimata* carved out the 'destiny' earlier, has also timed the death and as the time draws near, the death rides to its tryst with the individual, who must surrender, for nothing can alter it. The *baimata's* had weaved the pattern of life and like the 'Moving Finger' it ' writes and having writ Moves on.'

Death is also connected to the law of *karma*. When a man dies after a great suffering, it is presumed that because he committed evil acts or omitted to do good ones he has suffered. These acts could be spread over to the present life or to some past life in which the man behaved ill. An easy death, in which the pain or suffering is less is considered to indicate the virtuous character of the person. If the children die before the parents, then the suffering is due to the misdeeds of the parents. *Karma* assumes a vicarious responsibility for the "fore fathers" have eaten the fruit and the sons have the toothache. Again a person for his misdeeds of past life may be childless and there are few sorrows which can be so damning as this, for even after death the person may not get peace.

This also emphasises their belief in the transmigration of souls. There has been a life in the past and there shall be another in future. Persons dying an unnatural death, be it an accidental or an intended one, often assumes the shape of ghosts and demons and then they pursue their enemies tenanciously. For good deeds of this life, chances of a better future, at the re-birth are greater.

The Jats and Thakurs in the village believe that death is a natural phenomenon and governed by unintelligible rules. It is the Gods who control it, They believe in the *karma* and transmigration of souls. One's deeds in the present life, govern his future as the past has governed the present, and Evil Spirits and Demons arise from accidental deaths or unfulfilled desires at the time of death.

Although death will come at the fixed time, yet the Saheriyas try their utmost by home treatment to save the life, for no one knows which illness may prove fatal and therefore an illness has to be combated. A doctor is never consulted and treatment at the hospital is out of question, because they have more faith in their own treatment. Only in cases of great physical injuries, they think of taking a person to the hospital. If necessary, a *devta* may be invoked. The *devta* may speak out like the 'Oracle' about the chances of saving the sick man. The scene near the dying man is very typical of good intentioned well wishers, paving the way to a "hell" for the patient, almost everybody surrounds him, there is hardly any space left even for the fresh air in the room, for the whole village has by now known about the illness and are anxious to find out and help. Most of these well wishers now become 'physicians' and offer advice regards more medicines that could be given to the patient, for in some previous illness, they proved very useful. The poor patient is given all sorts of medicines. His well wishers argue that if his fate requires him to die then nothing that they are doing, or even those that a doctor may do would save the man, but otherwise their treatment is bound to be effective.

The patient lies on a bed, when his condition worsens and all hope of a subsequent recovery is lost, he is laid on the ground: on earth; or rather on the 'Mother Earth', for from Dust to Dust is the inevitable cycle, the cosmic law.

In the meantime all the relatives of the patient begin assembling near the bed-side. At this stage no medicines are given for the patient has passed the stage of taking medicines. Sometimes weeping and wailing begins even before the patient dies. The villagers believe that the person should not be allowed to die while he is suspended on the cot for cot is no resting place.

When a person dies arrangements for cremating the body are made. Excepting children upto the age of 2/3 years, who are buried, all dead are cremated, irrespective of their mode of death. The Saheriyas do not wash the body but Jats and Rajputs do so and decorate the body and apply *teeka* from sandal-wood. A bier of wooden frame and grass is made and the body is put supine over it. The Saheriyas then wrap the body in a white sheet for all males, and use red one for all females, without observing any distinction for the married and unmarried ones. The bier is carefully tied up . The preparation for taking out the body is made by the neighbourers and other villagers including other relatives. The main mourners are too much afflicted by the sorrow. When a woman dies all her ornaments except *bichhuvas* which she wears on her toes are removed for safe custody. When the bier is ready, it is lifted on the shoulders by the relatives, friends. The chief mourner holds a small earthen pot in which there is a burning cow-dung cake for fire purposes and a little ghee. The procession slowly makes its way to the burning *ghat*. At the *ghat* or the cremation ground, the bier is put on the ground and a few remain with it. Others go about in the search of fuel wood and collect from near about. Everybody brings some fire-wood. With the help of this fire-wood, a pyre is prepared and the bier is loosened before being placed on the pyre. The chief mourner is the eldest son who ignites the pyre and others silently watch the proceedings. After the fire has been properly lighted the chief mourner takes one stick, touches the forehead of the deceased with it and consigns to the burning pyre. This is known as *taini chhuana* or touching with a twig. *Taini* is from hindi word *tehni* meaning twig. This is an old practice with the Saheriyas although they do not remember its significance.

After the fire has started burning the bier, they come away to the river or nullah for a bath. Here a barber is called who shaves off the beard, moustaches and hair of the head for a payment of Re. 1.25. Only the blood relations offer themselves for this shave. The occasion when this is done is when father, elder brother, mother, or father's brother, and their wives die. A watch is kept of the burning funeral pyre which may require more fuel. When the body is consumed with flames, a bath in the river, well or tank is taken. For cutting fire wood a pick-axe *kulhadi* is brought. The wooden handle of this is left at the burning *ghat*. The iron blade is removed and when bath is taken, every man puts a few drops of water over it. Some grass is also placed over it. Two persons again go to see the burning pyre before bathing. After everybody has bathed they would go to the temple where the pujari would sprinkle some water over them. A bucketful of water is carried by them from the river where

they bathed. This would be given to the woman, who would sprinkle it over themselves. The widow of the deceased or the nearest relation sprinkles the water. The men disperse after this. The women go for a bath on the next day. No food is cooked that day. Neighbours supply cooked food.

The Jats and Thakurs have their separate burning *ghats*. For aged and rich persons a *viman* or a small palanquin in which the deceased is made to sit is constructed. Among the well-to-do types when the body is being taken a little money may be thrown in front of it so that beggers may collect the same. Sandal wood is used for burning the body. After the body has been consigned to fire and consumed they go to the river or nullah for a bath. When returning they would visit the temple. Hair are not shaved on that day but on the third day and only when elder person dies e.g. elder brother, uncle, mother, father, etc. No food is cooked. The other ceremonies are more or less common, but among them it is a fairly common practice to consult a doctor or take the patient to the hospital. The next important ceremony takes place on the third day of the death. The mourners visit the burning *ghat* and scan the heap of ashes for bones, nails, teeth which remained uncalcined. These are carefully collected in a small bundle. The Jats and Thakurs after collecting these proceed to some sacred river (usually village Sorro on the river Ganga in Bulandshahr U.P.) and scatter them there returning before the thirteenth day. The Saheriya however is in no position to do so just then. Shortage of money is the main cause. He has to collect money before he can do so and this may take a fairly long time, so he ties up the bundle and hangs on a high branch of a tree where it is safe. The Saheriya may go to holy river after a year or when he has collected some money. In case he is not able to do so then at the end of the year he may scatter them in a nearby tank or some other holy river. This secondary disposal completes the process of the disposal of the body. This is locally known as *chharu sirana*.

## Period: Mourning and Pollution

Among the Saheriyas, when the remains of the deceased have been collected on the third day and kept safely or sent for disposal to the holy river, the cleaning up of the house commences. The house is cleaned by spreading out cow-dung. The bed clothes of deceased are washed or given to a washerman; the earthen pots used for eating and storing water are kept aside. They are not to be used from now on and replaced. The women also change their set of clothes. Among the Rajputs and Jats this ceremony is gone through on the fourth day morning i.e. the next day, after collecting the remains. When the house has been cleaned, the period of pollution comes to an end. During this period it is not considered proper to move out of the house. The period of three days is commonly observed for all relatives who are cremated. This naturally excludes the children for whom generally one day's pollution period is observed.

On the demise, all relatives are informed. They are expected to pay a condolence visit. They start coming in as soon as they can but in any case they should pay their visit before the thirteenth day. The daughters and sisters who are usually married in the nearby villages begin to come. It is customary for them to begin crying from about 100 yards or so when they approach the deceased's house. The same process is repeated when they return and even in their own village they enter crying. When they reach the deceased's house women there also join in weeping. A few neighbourers now come out to console them and advise against weaping. The relations often stay upto the thirteenth day and return after the ceremonies are over.

## Tervi or the Thirteenth Day

The thirteenth day after the death is an important one when final ceremonies are performed. Among Jats and Thakurs these ceremonies take place on twelfth day for women and thirteenth day for men. The Saheriyas observe the converse of this. Among Jats and Thakurs a great feast is prepared on thirteenth day; twelfth if deceased is a woman. Before the cooking commences a little raw foodstuff is taken out and placed in a *thaal* near the hearth. It is placed in the memory of the departed. Thereafter *mal-puha, shirra, laddu* are made. In a *thaal* or a *dauna* leaf plate, cooked meal for the deceased is placed near the hearth. After this thirteen persons, which must include at least two Brahmins are feasted first. When they have finished the others are requested to eat. The others include relations, members of one's own caste and other villagers. This is fairly expensive item and often leads people to incur debts, but because it is deemed a religious duty there is no escape.

Among the Saheriyas the ceremony is not so elaborate. This is due to their poor finances. On the twelfth day, after keeping the food separate for the deceased twelve persons dine first and the rest thereafter. Two prominent things among the Saheriyas strike. They are (1) absence of Brahmins, (2) absence of other castes. The food prepared consists of *puris* and *shira* (sweet).

Thereafter all the invitees and relations who had gathered disperse. The members of the household where a death has occured in the village would not go to any other house on a festival day. Where a death occured before *holi* the inmates of the house would not go along with others in the celebration. The others will visit the house and sprinkle a little colour the women would weep in the meanwhile. The custom is that the deceased's family does not move out on the first festival after the death. Deewali is an exception.

## The Shradh

*Shradh* is known as an act of devotion or offering of food and water for the deceased. In the Hindu Calender in the month of *kuar* there is a fortnight popularly known as *shradh-paksha* in which offering of food and water to one's ancestors is made. All castes observe *shradhs* in the village. During this fortnight, water is offered to the deceased ancestors while bathing in the river or at the well. The man faces east and offers water. This is done by the eldest or the youngest son. The Jats and Rajputs during this period invite a Brahmin and feed him. He is fed with *puris, kheer* and other delectable vegetarian preparations. The Saheriyas do not invite any Brahmin and no food is served by them to any one. They only offer water in their honour.

## Patta or the Third Year Feast

On the third anniversary of death this ceremony takes place mostly among Jats and Rajputs. A Brahmin is called and fed as this is a *shradh* day. Very few Saheriyas are known to observe it.

## CHAPTER III

# THE VILLAGE ECONOMY

### Economic Resources

The main economic resources of the village are (1) The Land and (2) The Forest. Table below gives details regarding land.

## TABLE B-1

TABLE SHOWING CLASSIFICATION OF LAND OF VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA — 1961.

| Total land fit for cultivation (acres) | Total land under cultivation (unirrigated) | Area under Irrigation (acres) | Cultivable Fallow (acres) | Grazing land (acres) | Unculturable waste (acres) | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 154.20 | 104.22 | ... | 49.98 | 192.26 | 1,649.84 | 1,996.30 Total land (acres) |

From the above it is obvious that there is little land under cultivation. The chances of more land being brought under cultivation are not particularly bright either since the land capable of being cultivated is 49.98 acres only. The quality of soil is generally poor hence the prospect of a profitable yield from agriculture are remote. The acreage under irrigation is nil and the chances of any irrigation bleak. Land under cultivation is owned mostly by Jats and Rajputs. Saheriyas' holdings are very small and mostly fragmented ones. Table-B-2 shows castewise distributions of land.

## TABLE B-2

TABLE SHOWING CASTEWISE DISTRIBUTION (%) OF LAND OF VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA, 1961.

| Castes | Land in acres | Percentage to the total under cultivation. | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Jats | 34.76 | 22.54 | |
| 2. Chamars | 2.47 | 1.60 | |
| 3. Saheriyas | 84.65 | 54.90 | |
| 4. Rajputs | 32.32 | 20.96 | |
| Total | 154.20 | | |

Saheriyas although numerically the biggest group possess very meagre holdings. Table B-3 gives the holdings per family.

## TABLE B-3

TABLE SHOWING CULTIVATION LANDS HELD BY FAMILIES IN VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA, 1961.

| Castes | Total No. of families in the village | No. of families possessing land | Total area with each caste (acres) | Size of holding per-family (acres) | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. Saheriyas | 56 | 24 | 84.65 | 1.51 | |
| 2. Jats | 2 | 2 | 34.76 | 17.38 | |
| 3. Rajputs | 1 | 1 | 32.32 | 32.32 | |
| 4. Chamars | 1 | 1 | 2.47 | 2.47 | |
| Total | 60 | 28 | 154.20 | | |

It follows that the Rajputs and Jats are the more affluent types among the villagers. The 1961 Census return of 56 persons — 32 males, 24 females — engaged in cultivation seems to be borne out. The economy of the village however is a very mixed one. Excepting for the Jat families who rely solely on agriculture, the others have some secondary occupations. As would be somewhat obvious from the fact that the holdings are small, the villagers have to fall back on some other occupation. There are only two persons who have been returned as agricultural labourers in the census return. As many as 25 males and 17 females have been returned under 'other services'. These workers undertake all types of service; although construction of work, road building and other manual work forms a bulk of

their occupation. Yet they also work in field and perform other services of a personal nature. The labour force is thus very elastic and moves from one occupation to another. To this labour force we may also add 48 persons — 31 males, 17 females classified under 'Trade and Commerce'. The usual trade is cutting and selling timber. This does not engage them throughout the year, so whenever there is a lull in the felling of timber, they move on to general labour and do not hesitate to go from place to place. Thus the labour force is elastic and mobile. Leaving three persons, two engaged in Forest Department and one with the P.W.D., the rest constitute this mobile and elastic working force.

The village being situated on the fringe of the forest and near the slope of the hill the quality of soil is generally poor and pebbles and gravel is found in it. The fallow land totalling 1,649.84 acres is uncultivable waste. It is stony, inaccessible on the sloping line and is afforested. Culturable fallow stands at 49.98 acres and the same would be allotted in due course. The land earmarked for grazing is more than sufficient for the needs of the village. No facilities exist for irrigating land. Except one well, the water of which could be used for irrigation there are no other sources. Therefore situated as Gadher is, its inhabitants can hardly hope for being sustained by cultivation only. Hence economic activity must find other channels of work.

## Forests

But for Jats who do not make much use of the forest except for getting timber and fodder for their use, the dependence of the rest of the village on the forest is very great. The Saheriya's dependence on forest is immense and in many cases forest is the main prop of their economy. The economy of Thakur household leans only slightly on the forest wealth. The forest is used in the following manner by these different castes. (a) The Saheriyas use forest for personal consumption i.e. hunting animals for food, eat the *bers* (Zizyphus jujuba), *mahua* (Bassia latifolia), and *khirni* (Mimusops kauli); (b) they sell the products like hay, timber for fuel etc. and (c) they work with the contractor for collecting forest produce as his paid labourers. Their method of work and other details are discussed later in the chapter. The Rajput household cuts the timber and when a cart load is ready sells it in Guna where the price is fairly high being about Rs. 12-15 per cart containing about 15-20 maunds of fuel. The other exploitation by him is limited to obtaining his supplies of grass and timber.

## Forest Location

Hardly two hundred yards to the east, north-east and south-east the forest is spread out extending to 14.21 sq. miles. It consists of the following types:—

(a) Reserved Forest — 10.43 sq. miles,
(b) Protected „ — 3.78 sq. miles,

and is known as Gadher Reserve Forest.

The forest consists of:—

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) sagwan | Tectona grandis |
| (b) khair | Acacia catechu |
| (c) tendu | Diosypyros melanoxylon |
| (d) dhokar | Anogeissus latifolia |
| (e) kardhai | Anogeissus pendula |
| (f) sitaphal | Annona squamosa |
| (g) khirni | Mimusops kauli |
| (h) amla | Emblica off eicianalis |
| (i) karonda | Carrisa spinareum |
| (j) makor | Zizyphus oenoplia |
| (k) saal | Boswelia serrata |
| (l) palash | Butea frondosa |

Apart from the above trees grass of bigger variety locally called *gunhar* (Themeda quaelrwalvis) is also found. The Forest Department marks the coupes for felling the timber. In Gadher forest very few coupes have been marked therefore it is easy for the villagers to obtain timber. Besides the above, the villagers also make use of ber, tendu, mahua fruit, karonda, for eating. Whenever black berries jamun and sitaphal fruit is available, the same is greatly relished. Sometimes the hide of a sambhar killed in shikar is sold in the market. Meat of the animals killed is however not sold, but generally consumed.

## Livestock

Bullocks, cows and buffaloes are the main livestock. Table B-4 below indicates the livestock heads owned by different communities:—

## TABLE B-4

TABLE SHOWING LIVESTOCK OWNED BY DIFFERENT CASTES OF VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA — 1961.

| Castes | Total families | Families possessing Livestock | Livestock | | | Average per family | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Cows | Bullocks | Buffaloes | Cows | Bullocks | Buffaloes |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 1. Saheriyas | 56 | 35 | 39 | 79 | — | 1.12 | 2.26 | ... |
| 2. Jats | 2 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 4.5 | 2.5 | 1.5 |
| 3. Rajputs | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | — | 2 | 2 | — |
| 4. Chamars | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 60 | 39 | 50 | 86 | 3 | 7.62 | 6.76 | 1.5 |

Excepting one Jat household which was selling some milk no other villager sells any such product. Cattle therefore is used almost entirely for agricultural operations and for transportation. Transportation consists chiefly in carrying forest produce to the market. Cow-dung is used for fuel and manuring. Dung-cakes locally called *kandas* are not sold. The Jat used to sell milk in Guna, conveying the same by bicycle. He used to sell the milk to a sweet-meat vendor at a rate varying between 60 P to 75 P per seer. In summer months May to July it is sold to 75 P. The Jat has stopped the trade about a year ago because the milk is not available in sufficient quantity. He was paid on monthly basis.

### Other Resources

The other economic activity of the villagers mostly consists in working as general labourers. They work as agricultural labourer at the time of cutting of rabi crop from March to May or as general unskilled labourers under the P.W.D. or with the forest contractor usually from December to June each year or at any place where they may be able to secure some work.

### Factors influencing economic life in the village

The important changes in the ownership of land comprised in the village date back to 1946-47. Prior to this period 75 acres of holdings were with Muslim Zamindar living in Miyana village about 15 miles away. A little before the partition of the country he decided to migrate to Pakistan. His holdings, however, were purchased by the Hindu Jagirdar of Dharnavda a big village, which is also a railway station. Even to-day the Thakur is entered as cultivator in respect of the above mentioned holdings. The Jats of the village, who hold the lands do so from the Thakur of Dharnavda on an unregistered lease.

The Saheriyas do not remember since when they have been in possession of holdings. They claim that long ago they had brought some land under cultivation and it was eventually settled with them. About three years ago, some more land was allotted to the Saheriyas, but they do not seem to know anything about it. All that they remember is that a function was held about three years ago and they were told that lands situated in Borkheda and Hilagana were allotted to them. They have not been placed in possession of these lands as yet nor do they know where these are located. They vividly remember that some important person had come from Bhopal in the function which had been organised. There was a lot of fan fare and publicity on that occasion but as they aver there was no gain whatsoever.

Legislative reforms do not seem to have conferred any benefit to the local population. Such benefits accrued to those persons who were occupying lands as sub-tenants, before the abolition of Zamindaris and Jagirs. In the present village it appears that the Saheriyas in the earlier stages did not take cultivation seriously.

### Land Improvement

Efforts at improving the land and consequently increasing the produce have so far not borne any spectacular results. Taccavi loans were advanced to a few cultivators as per list given below. The loans were advanced under The Land Improvement Loans Act and when the purpose for which they were advanced has been achieved, a subsidy of one-fourth of the amount is given. This is adjusted against the loan to be re-paid and thus in actual practice only three-fourths of the loan is repaid, along with the interest.

The statement shows that in case of persons at serial Nos. 1, 2 and 4 the purpose for which loan was made has been accomplished. A spot inspection however reveals that very little work actually has been done. It is perhaps probable that the amount of loan has been used for other purposes than land improvement. In case of serial No. 3 very little digging has been done so far although more than four years have elapsed since the loan was given. Serial No. 5, 7 and 8 have still to commence the work. Serial No. 6 has commenced the work. In case of serial Nos. 10 and 11 the work has still to begin.

## TABLE B-5

TABLE SHOWING TACCAVI LOANS OBTAINED BY THE VILLAGERS OF VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA FROM N. E. S. BLOCK GUNA.

| S. No. | Name of Borrower | Amount Rs. nP. | Purpose | Date of obtaining Loan | Application of Loan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nirpat — Duliya | 1,000.00 | New Well | March 1958 | Only digging work has been done. |
| 2. | Mohansingh-Kamarlal | 900.00 | ,, ,, | June 1959 | Work has been started. |
| 3. | Sukka s/o Kammoda | 850.00 | ,, ,, | ,, ,, | No work has been started. |
| 4. | Kanna s/o Duliya | 650.00 | ,, ,, | ,, ,, | Work started. |
| 5. | Jaikishan-Bhoora | 650.00 | ,, ,, | ,, ,, | No work. |
| 6. | Hukumchand-Jwarya | 230.00 | Field Embankment | March 1958 | Completed. |
| 7. | Chhotesingh-Pyarelal | 200.00 | ,, ,, | 27-2-1962 | ,, |
| 8. | Preetam-Kanhaiyalal | 170.00 | ,, ,, | 31-3-1961 | ,, |
| 9. | Gangola s/o Ratna | 109.00 | ,, ,, | March 1957 | ,, |
| 10. | Lalchand-Roopsingh | 150.00 | ,, ,, | ,, ,, | ,, |
| 11. | Mokam-Ganga | 150.00 | Bullocks | 19-6-1961 | Purchased. |
| | TOTAL | 5,059.00 | | | |

The villagers confess that they often mis-apply the loans and spend a bulk of it over marriages or death ceremonies. Table B-6 below gives the details of loans obtained from the tahsil. The loans obtained for wells have not been utilised. The main reason appears to be the lack of will to work and dig the wells. It is true that the soil being stony, makes digging difficult, but what is important is that no sincere efforts were made by the villagers to put the loan to its proper use. The Tahsildar is finding it hard to recover the amounts due despite the fact that official machinery to recover the loans has been put into effect.

The efforts made by N.E.S. Block agency appear impressive, at least on paper, but has left the villagers almost untouched. Seed distribution figures are given below at Table B-7.

## TABLE B-6

SHOWING TACCAVI LOANS OBTAINED FROM TAHSIL GUNA

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | Name of Borrower | Amount | Purpose | Date of obtaining loan | Application of loan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1. | Jat | Kamarlal s/o Hargovind | 400.00 | Well | 1953 | |
| 2. | Jat | Kamarlal s/o Hargovind | 175.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 3. | Saheriya | Juvarya s/o Rupchand | 123.31 | Bullocks | 1954 | |
| 4 | ,, | Mauji s/o Phunda | 75.00 | Bullocks | 1949 | |
| 5. | ,, | Kisna s/o Ramsingh | 63.31 | Bullocks | 1954 | |
| 6. | ,, | Phunda s/o Ramlal | 63.56 | Bullocks | 1954 | |
| 7. | ,, | Bhamra s/o Nanda | 150.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 8. | ,, | Mutia s/o Baldeva | 130.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 9. | ,, | Gangola s/o Ratna | 200.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 10. | ,, | Nattha s/o Kalla | 75.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 11. | ,, | Soma s/o Ratna | 120.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 12. | ,, | Daula s/o Amrya | 60.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 13. | ,, | Hukma s/o Javarya | 80.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| 14. | ,, | Lakhchanda s/o Ramsingh | 53.00 | Bullocks | 1958 | |
| | | Total | 1,768.18 | | | |

## TABLE B-7

TABLE SHOWING THE SEED DISTRIBUTION AT VILLAGE GADHER, DISTRICT GUNA, 1956-1963

| Name of the Seed | | Quantity of seed distributed | | | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grain | Pulse | Mds. | Srs. | Chtks. | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Wheat | — | 20 | — | — | |
| Jwar | — | 16 | 24 | — | |
| Gram | — | 8 | — | — | |
| Moong | — | — | 35 | — | |
| Urda | — | — | 10 | — | |
| Ground-nut | — | — | 22 | — | |
| Jute | — | 12 | — | — | |

The villagers admit that seeds distributed by the Block agency were not necessarily sown. They were used for eating. Saheriyas rarely sowed these, but Jats and Thakurs did sow them and appeared satisfied. The Saheriyas complained that seeds were not distributed in time for sowing. They obtained these seeds not because they needed them for sowing but because it could feed them for a while.

Other improvements effected as per N.E.S. Blocks are at table B-8.

## TABLE B-8

STATEMENT SHOWING IMPROVEMENTS EFFECTED BY N. E. S. BLOCK, DISTRICT GUNA (FROM 1-4-1956 TO 30-7-1963).

| Particulars | Details | Kinds of seeds distributed | Quantity/Area/Number | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Agriculture | 1. Improved Seed distribution | 1. Jwar | 16 Mds. 24 Seers | |
| | | 2. Urad | 1/4 Mds. | |
| | | 3. Mung | 35 Seers | |
| | | 4. Flax | 12 Mds. | |
| | | 5. Ground-nut | 22 Seers | |
| | | 6. Wheat | 20 Mds. | |
| | | 7. Gram | 8 Mds. | |
| | 2. Fertiliser distribution | | 6 Mds. | |
| | 3. Green Manure . | | Flax Seeds 12 Acres | |
| | | | Butea frondosa leaves | |
| | | | 42 Acres | |
| | 4. Sowing in line | | 40 Acres | |
| | 5. Vegetables | | 1½ Acres | |
| | 6. Fruit trees | | 28 trees | |
| | 7. Boundaries | | 1½ Acres | |
| | 8. Compost pits | | 30 pits | |
| | 9. Fallow land brought under cultivation | | 45 Acres | |
| Animal Husbandry | 1. Soakage pits | | 1 pit | |
| | 2. Bulls Castrated | | 38 | |
| | 3. Animals Treated | | 30 | |
| Construction | 1. Recreation-cum-school building | | 1 | |
| | 2. Approach Roads | | 1 | |

The villagers specially the Saheriyas appeared somewhat surprised at the list. They do sot subscribe to the "improvement". According to them some of them were never effected.

The statistics in tables B-5 & 6, pertaining to the loans obtained by the villagers reveal that there is a tendency to obtain a loan and then mis-apply it. There are very few cases where the whole amount that was borrowed, was applied properly. There are quite many cases where the amount was partly properly utilised and partly mis-applied and finally there are very many cases where the entire amount has been mis-applied. The Saheriyas admit that it is very difficult to obtain money and so when an opportunity arises for obtaining some money, they grab it. Surprisingly enough they are not at all bothered at the prospect of returning the loan. Naively they would say that they do not have any money and are unable to return it. Persons who possess money, also take the cue and do not repay the loans, for they argue, "let us wait and see; if nothing happens to those who do not pay, then why must we pay? If something happens to them, then we would pay back. If we pay and others do not, and if they get away with it, then we would have been very foolish to have paid." As this feeling grows, recovery naturally shrinks. So far very little has been made. Despite the efforts of the N.E.S. Block, other agencies and all loans advanced, no visible improvement in land management has been brought about.

There is no industry nor is there any possibility of one being founded. The communications are generally good. Since Guna supplies almost all their needs, further improvement is unlikely. Since long the villagers have been going to Guna for selling mostly the jungle produce. There has not been any noticeable change. There has been no expansion of marketting facilities.

### Sources of Finance

The Guna Central Co-operative Bank is one of the main sources for financing the village. It works through "Gramin Sewa Sahkari Samiti" Hilagana, a larged sized Co-operative Society which was registered on 14-10-59. Its main aim is to promote agricultural production by offering financial help to its members. It has 81 members out of which 25 are from Gadher. Prior to this Gadher had an "Adivasi Krishi Sahkari Samiti" registered in October 1958 and merged with the above society in 1959. The Adivasi Samiti was a Primary Agricultural Society and was merged into large sized co-operative society.

The villagers of Gadher owe the Society Rs. 7,121.00 out of which Rs. 5,859.00 is short term loan and Rs. 1,262.00 medium term loan. Table B-9 giving details is presented below.

## TABLE B-9

SHOWING LOANS ON 30-6-1963.

| S. No. | Name | Loan Over-due. |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Mardu s/o Dulia Saheriya | 255.00 |
| 2. | Shankar s/o Dulia ,, | 258.00 |
| 3. | Kanna s/o Dulia ,, | 250.00 |
| 4. | Kasya s/o Dulia ,, | 351.00 |
| 5. | Gajia s/o Kamrya ,, | 225.00 |
| 6. | Nirpat s/o Dulia ,, | 500.00 |
| 7. | Narayan s/o Fundi ,, | 290.00 |
| 8. | Hira s/o Gulji ,, | 538.00 |
| 9. | Valla s/o Nandua ,, | 389.00 |
| 10. | Ramratan s/o Haria ,, | 320.00 |
| 11. | Gangola s/o Ratna ,, | 425.00 |
| 12. | Pritam s/o Kanhaiya ,, | 200.00 |
| 13. | Pramu s/o Fundi ,, | 399.00 |
| 14. | Soma s/o Lalchand ,, | 180.00 |
| 15. | Bhamra s/o Fundi ,, | 245.00 |
| 16. | Hukmu s/o Javara ,, | 160.00 |
| 17. | Imarat s/o Kisna ,, | 180.00 |
| 18. | Ghasita s/o Bhamra ,, | 150.00 |
| 19. | Kamarlal s/o Hargovind Jat | 525.00 |
| 20. | Sukka s/o Kamoda Saheriya | 215.00 |
| 21. | Shoma s/o Ratna ,, | 180.00 |
| 22. | Jaikisan s/o Bhura ,, | 200.00 |
| 23. | Bhabhuti s/o Chatua ,, | 150.00 |
| 24. | Mohansingh s/o Kamarlal Jat | 300.00 |
| 25. | Soma s/o Shankar Saheriya | 236.00 |
| | TOTAL | 7,121.00 |

All the twenty-five members are Saheriyas and none of them has repaid the loan. Their standing with the society is obviously poor. So far the Bank has not been able to take action against them. It was however desired to issue notices to them. Another result of their default is that in this year's annual election for executive body of the society, none from Gadher has been elected. The members of the society were heard saying that the defaulting persons bring discredit to the society and reduce their credit worthiness. In a way this is a healthy feeling for with growth of such sentiments co-operative societies will take roots more firmly. The Jat is no longer a member of the credit society. He resigned for personal reasons. The Rajput had never been a member and at present does not appear to be in mood for becoming one.

The local moneylender, a goldsmith of Guna does not extend any credit facilities, because the Saheriyas have very poor credit worthiness. He in the past advanced sums of money, after keeping ornaments as security. He advanced only about 2/3 value of the ornament mortgaged. The evaluation was also made by him. Interest was charged at the rate of Rs. 24% annually or 2% per month. The debtor could redeem the ornament after paying the principal and interest, even though latter may have exceeded the former. Since the Saheriyas are able to obtain loans at less interest and without being required to pledge ornaments they too have reduced borrowing from the moneylender and so funnily enough the reluctance of the borrower coupled with shyness of the moneylender, has reduced the incidence of borrowing.

Another source of financing of the economic activity has been the loans advanced from the NES Block and the tahsil, although only a part of the loan was applied to the purpose for which it was obtained. Their own savings are non-existent. Even the well-to-do types viz. Thakurs and Jats have no savings.

Nearness to Guna has brought 'urban' influences with it. The villagers very frequently visit Guna and spend some money in eating houses and wine shops there. Another feature is that they have been seeking government employment. As far as the tribals are concerned the influence of Guna city has been very noticeable. Gadher is perhaps one of the very few villages with predominant Saheriya population so near an urban centre. In Gadher a Saheriya appears more carefree and does not seem to take his work very seriously. He explains by saying that food at or near Gadher is more easily available. If he has no work in the village, then he can walk upto Guna where some sort of casual work could be readily available. He could work as a labourer, do some work with the contractor or get some work as an unskilled mason. Some other avenues of work are carrying loads, working on private or P.W.D. construction work or sawing wood for fuel etc. He may collect some fuel from the village, take a head load of it and sell it at Guna and with some money buy himself food or even wine if there is a little to spare.

In an interior village this would hardly have been possible. The avenues for work are very limited and

he would not get an opportunity to earn so easily. His dependence on family would be great and this would act as a brake preventing him from any adventurous economic pursuit. Another impact has been that their wants too have increased and have also developed some 'business sense'. This 'business sense' arises in the following manner.

A Saheriya may carry with him to Guna wood for fuel or forest produce like *achar*, *karonda*, *sitaphal*, or agricultural produce viz. *juar*, maize and take it to shop keeper. They keep themselves posted with prevailing prices and then ask the shop keeper as to what amount would he pay for the articles. They would bargain with the merchant and if conditions suit them would ask as to how many rupees would these commodities fetch? Once this is known to them then they may agree. In the same breath they would ask for the rates of their needs and obtain their requirements against the value of their produce. The feature to be noticed is that the first evaluation is made in terms of cash and later required articles are received in exchange. In cases where the money to be received is greater than the amount to be paid, the balance is received in cash. Saheriyas would buy grains, cereals, jaggery and salt from the grocer, snacks from hotelier and liquor from the wine vendor by the above method. The urban influence has made him more money conscious. He would also visit a cinema, circus or watch other acrobatic performers.

In some ways the urban influences have adversely effected their economy. Some of the village elders are of the view that nearness to urban area has increased their wants and made them more spend thrift, a luxury they can ill afford. To substantiate their arguments they cite cases of such persons who visit the city hotels or eating houses, liquor shops or cinemas and waste the hard earned money. This elderly type was of the view that nearness to urban area increases temptations and since the Saheriyas hardly have any resistance, they almost invariably succumb.

## III

## LIVELIHOOD CLASSES.

This is being dealt under three points of time.

(1) During the survey (September 62 — June 63)
(2) At the time of Enumeration (1st March 1961)
(3) As per last Census, 1951.

### A.

Before attempting any comparison it would be useful to present the background of mobility of occupations. Except for persons engaged in agriculture who follow a set and somewhat settled occupation, the others move from one occupation to another. During the spring — say — from February to the middle of April, when cutting of wheat is in full swing, they work as agricultural labourers; later when the work in forest commences, they labour in the forest; if in the meanwhile any construction or repairs of any work is started by the P.W.D. they go in for it. During this period if time permits, then, they would cut wood and sell it at Guna. Thus occupational mobility is fairly great. The above generalisation applies mostly to Saheriyas who have not yet taken to agriculture. As far as Jats and Rajputs are concerned, they are primarily agriculturists. Table B-10 indicates the changes in occupational pattern between March 61 to June 63.

Out of 305 persons as many as 159 or 54.73% were workers. Cultivation claims the greatest number of workers followed closely by persons engaged in 'Trade and Commerce' and 'Other Services'. The above pattern has changed somewhat and the important changes are that 35 persons have returned themselves as engaged in hunting or collection of forest produce. The summer months are occupied in collection of forest produce hence the increase in numbers. Disposal of above produce keeps some more persons engaged and thus we have 45 persons under the 'Trade and Commerce' head. The only trade is the selling of timber by bullock carts or headloads, and sale of other forest produce like, *tendu*, *achar*, *jamun*, and honey. There is no organised manner for the disposal. 'Other Services' claim 31 persons. These are mostly persons working as unskilled labourers and getting employment wherever they possibly can. They may generally be classified as workers who perform simple manual tasks of routine nature requiring physical strength and are engaged in lifting stones, carrying morter, making roads and digging holes.

A castewise break-up of the above is given in table B-10.

# TABLE B-10

TABLE—SHOWING CASTEWISE OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF GADHER VILLAGE, DISTRICT GUNA, M. P.

| Year | Castes | As Cultivators | | | As Agricultural labourer | | | In Mining, Quarrying, Live Stock Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Plantations, Orchards & allied activities | | | At Household Industry. | | | In Manufacturing other than House-hold Industry. | | | In Construction. | | | In Trade and Commerce. | | | In Transport and Communication | | | In other services. | | | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | | | 4 | | | 5 | | | 6 | | | 7 | | | 8 | | | 9 | | | 10 | | | 11 | | | 12 | | |
| | | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F |
| 1961 | Saheriya | 51 | 27 | 24 | 2 | 2 | — | 3 | 3 | — | 2 | — | 2 | — | — | — | 3 | 3 | — | 48 | 31 | 17 | 1 | 1 | — | 41 | 24 | 17 | 151 | 91 | 60 |
| | Jat | 3 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | 4 | 4 | — |
| | Rajput | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — |
| | Chamar | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — |
| | Total. | 56 | 32 | 24 | 2 | 2 | — | 3 | 3 | — | 4 | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | 3 | 3 | — | 48 | 31 | 17 | 1 | 1 | — | 42 | 25 | 17 | 159 | 99 | 60 |
| 1963 | Saheriya | 68 | 38 | 30 | 2 | 2 | — | 35 | 11 | 24 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 9 | 8 | 1 | 45 | 26 | 19 | 1 | 1 | — | 30 | 13 | 17 | 190 | 99 | 91 |
| Survey Period | Jat | 3 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | 4 | 4 | — |
| | Rajput | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — |
| | Chamar | | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 | — |
| | Total | 73 | 43 | 30 | 2 | 2 | — | 35 | 11 | 24 | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | 9 | 8 | 1 | 45 | 26 | 19 | 1 | 1 | — | 31 | 14 | 17 | 198 | 107 | 91 |

It is obvious that among the Saheriyas the mobility of occupation is greatest and Jats and Rajputs follow more or less settled occupations. The Saheriyas themselves say that much of their occupation is uncertain, because it depends upon undetermined factors. They have to be on the look out for seeking occupations and wherever they find it, they go in for it.

## Cultivation

Cultivation is not the sole occupation for Saheriyas. It is only one of the many followed by them. As many as 24 families are cultivators primarily. At the time of rains, maize and juar are sown but in winter only wheat or gram may be sown. Their methods have not yet been improved in as much little or manuring is done, nor are newer implements like iron plough employed. So far they have not made particularly good cultivators.

## Labourers

It is, however, as labourers that they earn a substantial portion of their livelihood. During the agricultural season (June to October) and (January to April), they find ready employment as agricultural labourers and many of them move out at the time of harvesting to nearby villages, as Hilagana, Sonthi, Rothai, Panj, Guna and a few of them are also known to go as far as Fatehgarh about 15 miles. Payment at the time of harvesting is in kind. For every twenty stacks of wheat cut and tied by them, they are allowed to carry home 2 stacks or *poolas* of the same size. A *poola* would weigh about one seer and a labourer is able to earn about five or six *poolas* a day or about 4 kgs of wheat. A labourer gets about 25-30 working days during the season and is thus able to earn about 100 kgs of wheat. Besides the wheat husk is used as a fodder and the same could also be sold.

During the rains, labour is often employed for cleaning up weeds and in other undergrowth. This is on daily wages basis the rate being 50-65 P. for women and 75 P. for men. Women and children of age group (11 to 15 years) generally go in this type of work, which is not particularly strenuous. If a plough has to be driven then payment would vary between Rs. 1.00 to 1.25 for males. There are no agriculture labourers working on permanent basis.

## As Seasonal Labourers

It is as seasonal labourers that the Saheriyas make their living. The cycle goes like this. In the summer months there is plenty of work. There may be the local construction works under the departments of the government: the National Highway may be under repairs: in the nearby village/s private construction work may be going on like the repairs or construction of a building or digging of a well etc. : or the forest contractor may be busy in collecting some forest produce. The Saheriyas work for the contractor. The contractor pays in cash, Re. 1.00 per day, or also in kind. For collecting one seer of gum the payment is Rs. 0.80 or 2 seers of juar. Usually one and quarter seer of gum is collected by a worker in a day. For collection of *tendu* leaves the payment is at the rate of 0.02 P. for two small stacks, the season lasting for 20 days. Each stack consists of 100 leaves. Similarly for collecting honey and wax the payment is Rs. 0.75 to 1.00 per seer and Rs. 1.50 to 2.00 respectively. The whole season is spread over 7 to 8 months.

Sometimes the Saheriyas work for P.W.D. on piecemeal contract. In fact they are sub-contractors required to supply to contractors earth and road building metal. For 100 cft. (10′ x 10′ x 1′) of earth they get Rs. 5.00 and for road metal Rs. 12.00 to 15.00. The P.W.D. schedule however is at Rs. 20.00 and tenders upto 30% above are accepted at prevailing rates. Thus a contractor may hope to get Rs. 26.00 and pay about Rs. 12.00 to 15.00. The P.W.D. rate for payment of unskilled workers was Rs. 1.50 for women and Rs. 2.00 for men per day. The Saheriyas said that to collect 100 cft. of earth took two persons two days and thus daily earning comes to about Rs. 1.25 and to break 100 cft. of metal it took two persons six days giving them Re. 1.00 per day. While they may be exaggerating but it cannot be denied that there is considerable exploitation.

Besides this the Saheriyas are also known to take up work of any general nature requiring no skill. Recently two or three persons have taken to grazing other people's cattle. A few cattle owners of Guna gave the Saheriyas a herd of cattle, which he was required to graze in exchange for Re. 1.00 per day. This occupation is again seasonal lasting for about a month, in the period when there was scarcity of fodder in Guna.

## Cutting Fodder & Timber

The Saheriyas cut fodder and timber (1) on their own, (2) on contract basis.

(1) *On their own*:— They may cut grass after obtaining a permit from the Forest Department. The facilities

afforded by the department are dealt with under the appropriate head.

## In Other Services

In this category are shown unskilled workers in the P.W.D., general labourers (discussed earlier) and three adult males working as Forest Guard and in the P.W.D. as regular government servants. Excepting for these three persons whose vocation is of a 'fixed nature' the rest belong to category of "mobile labourers".

## The Occupational Pattern in 1951

In 1951 the workers and their dependants were clubbed together and so it is not possible to obtain the number of workers separately. It is however possible to trace the dependency on a particular occupation which naturally included all workers therein. Table B-11 gives the details and the 1961 figures on page 63.

Some notable features are that 41 males and 50 females are shown under commerce in 1951. As compared to the total population of 159 persons, this was indeed very high. This however emphasises the fact that the Saheriyas were mostly obtaining and selling forest produce. This pattern has undergone a change. When we look at the figures of 11 persons (including dependents) for those engaged in cultivation either as owners or lesees or sub-tenants in 1951, and compare it with the latest ones 56 persons excluding dependents for 1961 census and 73 persons excluding dependents for 1963 survey, the shift and change stand out conspiciously. More and more persons have taken to agriculture during the decade. As more and more persons took to agriculture there has been a little fall in the number of persons engaged in trade and commerce which is 48 (excluding the dependents). A change is also noticeable for greater number of persons now engaged in other services. In 1951 including dependents their number was 23 as against 42 persons in 1961. During the decade none has taken to the manufacture of any other products. The occupational change may be summed up by stating that during the decade more persons have taken to cultivation and other occupation.

# TABLE B-11

TABLE — SHOWING OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF GADHER VILLAGE, DISTRICT GUNA, M. P. (1961 CENSUS)

| Year | As Cultivators. | | | As Agricultural Labourers. | | | In Mining, Quarrying, Live Stock Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Plantations, Orchards & allied activities | | | At Household Industry. | | | In Manufacturing other than Household Industry. | | | In Construction. | | | In Trade and Commerce. | | | In Transport and Communication. | | | In other services. | | | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I | | | II | | | III | | | IV | | | V | | | VI | | | VII | | | VIII | | | IX | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | | | 3 | | | 4 | | | 5 | | | 6 | | | 7 | | | 8 | | | 9 | | | 10 | | | 11 | | |
| | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F |
| 1961 | 56 | 32 | 24 | 2 | 2 | — | 3 | 3 | — | 4 | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | 3 | 3 | — | 48 | 31 | 17 | 1 | 1 | — | 42 | 25 | 17 | 159 | 99 | 60 |
| 1963 Survey period | 73 | 43 | 30 | 2 | 2 | — | 35 | 11 | 24 | 2 | 2 | — | — | — | — | 9 | 8 | 1 | 45 | 26 | 19 | 1 | 1 | — | 31 | 14 | 17 | 198 | 107 | 91 |

| Year | Agricultural Classes | | | | | | | | | | | | Non-agricultural Classes | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | Persons (including dependants) who derive their principal means of livelihood from | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependants. | | | Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned & their dependants. | | | Cultivating land owners and their dependants. | | | Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers & their dependants. | | | Production other than cultivation. | | | Commerce. | | | Transport. | | | Other services and miscellaneous sources. | | |
| | (I) | | | (II) | | | (III) | | | (IV) | | | (V) | | | (VI) | | | (VII) | | | (VIII) | | |
| | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F | P | M | F |
| 1951 | — | — | — | 11 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 5 | — | — | — | 25 | 18 | 7 | 91 | 41 | 50 | 1 | 1 | — | 23 | 15 | 8 |

P = Persons, M = Males, F = Females.

## IV

## OWNERSHIP OF THE ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Twenty-nine out of sixty families and three families from Dharnavda own lands in the village. These lands are spread out in the village itself and Borkheda an adjoining village. Table B-12 below gives the detailed break-up.

### TABLE B-12

TABLE SHOWING HOLDINGS OWNED BY DIFFERENT CASTES OF GADHER

| Caste | Land held in Acres | | | | Population | | | Children | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. of families | Total | Owned | Batai | P | M | F | below 9 yrs. | Remarks. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Saheriya | 26 | 143.60 | 134.60 | 9.00 | 139 | 69 | 70 | 39 | Based on Household Schedules. |
| Jat | 1 | 15.85 | 15.85 | 20.00* | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | *Spot enquiry. |
| Rajput | 1 | 9.85 | 9.85 | — | 9 | 5 | 4 | 1 | |
| Chamar | 1 | 2.25 | 2.25 | — | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | Land held by Rajput families from Dharnavda 26.06 acres. |
| TOTAL | 29 | 171.55 | 162.55 | 29.55 | 160 | 81 | 79 | 43 | |

Ownership of various size-groups of land is given below in table-13.

### TABLE B-13

SHOWING CASTEWISE OWNERSHIP OF TOTAL IN LAND BY SIZE-GROUP

| Caste/Tribe | Total No. of families in the village | Total No. of Agricultural families in the village | Total No. of cultivators in the village | Land held in the village. | | Land held in another village | | Land held in this village by persons of another village | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Cultivators | Land in acres | Cultivators | Land in acres | Cultivators | Land in acres |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Saheriyas | 56 | 24 | 47 | 32 | 89.74 | 15 | 124.78 | — | — |
| Jats | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 27.27 | — | — | — | — |
| Rajputs | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 11.91 | — | — | 3 | 26.06 |
| Chamars | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2.34 | — | — | — | — |
| TOTAL | 60 | 28 | 53 | 38 | 131.26 | 15 | 124.78 | 3 | 26.06 |

Remarks :— Total land owned by villagers in and outside the village in acres — 256.04.
Total land owned by three Rajputs of another village in this village in acres — 26.06.

Whereas Jats and three Saheriyas own over 10 acres, the rest all hold small parcels of land. The Rajput household has some more land on 'batai' in Borkheda village. The land is unirrigated and hence mere subsistence is all that the cultivator may hope for.

The figures of lands held in the past render comparison difficulty, for these figures have been maintained in respect of each land-holder. One fact which it very clearly revealed is that whereas in 1950-51 only 20 Saheriyas held lands, in 1962-63 the number rose to 33. Since land records papers are the only available documents which give the previous figures, the progress made by the Saheriyas is fairly good. The Saheriyas have been allotted lands by the Government in course of the time for allotting land to the landless, which among other things gave preference to the scheduled castes and tribes. Sixteen Saheriyas during the last six years have been allotted lands by the government.

The lands situate in the village of Gadher are owned by the local inhabitants and three other cultivators from Dharnavda a village about 13-14 miles to the west. They are Rajputs and own 26.06 acres in the village. However the Rajput owners do not cultivate the lands personally but have leased it out to the local Jats on payment basis. For one season the lessee will only pay Rs. 150.00 in lieu of all produce. Such practice may not have legal sanctity but is commonly observed in many villages.

In addition to the above lands families possess another few acres in Borkheda village. Their castewise break-up is as follows:—

TABLE B-14

SHOWING LANDS HELD IN BORKHEDA VILLAGE

| Caste/Tribe | Land held in acres. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Owned | Batai |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Saheriya | 128.74 | 128.74 | — |
| Jat | — | — | — |
| Rajput | — | — | — |
| Chamar | — | — | — |

There are hardly any other economic resources owned by the villagers, for the balance of their economic activity in the villages depend upon forests and employment. Although sale of some forest produce brings in some money but the means are hardly owned by them.

## V

## PRIMARY AND SECONDARY OCCUPATIONS

In the 1961 census the conception of primary occupation was the occupation over which one spent greater time irrespective of his economic earnings. However during the later part an assessment of the earnings is also made. Since agricultural activities occupy more of the time, agriculture has been returned as the primary occupation in the Census Returns but in many cases this may not be so: for economically they depend more on other occupation.

The occupational pattern is of very mixed nature. Mobility of occupation is very great specially among the Saheriyas who form a bulk of the population. Excepting three Saheriyas, one Jat and one Rajput families whose primary occupation is cultivation, the others are occupationally very diversified. The table B-15 gives the castewise primary and secondary occupations.

It will be thus seen that more than half of the families work as general labourers (31) and another (16) families rely on forest produce. Excepting one Jat family whose sole occupation is cultivation, all other families have more than one occupation. The fluctuation in secondary occupation is of very uncertain nature. If employment as a labour is not available then they would fall back on selling forest produce which is the last means for earning a livelihood.

### Changes in Traditional Occupation

The Saheriyas were essentially forest dwellers and are not known to have had any traditional occupation, except that they made best possible use of what was available to them in the jungles. They mostly cut wood or took to agricultural labour. Very few of them had taken to cultivation. Writing about Saheriyas of Lalitpur sub-division in Jhansi district of United Provinces N. B. Bonarjee said,

"In the forest the Saheriya's occupations are wood cutting and casual labour. In the non-jungle areas wood cutting is naturally impossible and Saheriya usually falls back on casual labour as his method of subsistence." [51]

Lalitpur sub-division is contiguous to Guna and so the conditions are fairly similar to some extent. Even to-day the most of the Saheriyas depend on the forest for their livelihood. In view of these facts we are inclined to accept that their traditional occupation was determined by the forest and casual labour.

The Saheriya to-day is moving out of the forest into open lands — rather into cultivable lands. In the village itself about 10 years ago there were 20 Saheriya land-owners in the patwari records: to-day they are 33. The reasons are (i) increasing contacts with other castes; (ii) clearing of forests which has deprived them the opportunity of exploiting the same and pushed them to (i); (iii) availability of employment; (iv) allotment of cultivable lands in accordance with the government policy; (v) availability of loans on lands; (vi) auction of forests.

Analysing these factors further, in the district, reclamation work has been done by Central Tractor Unit and the State Government. In some cases areas under forests were re-claimed. This drove them from their sequestered abode and they came more and more in contact with others. When they came out they sought employment and it was often available. They were mostly employed as agricultural labourers or as unskilled labourers. In the past 8-10 years the government has been allotting lands to Scheduled Tribes on a preferential basis. Quite a few persons have benefited from this and yet another added attraction has

51. Census of India, 1931, United Provinces of Agra & Oudh, Vol. XVIII, Part I, Report, A. C. Turner; (Based on a note by N. B. Bonarjee, ICS), p. 598.

# TABLE B-15

SHOWING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY OCCUPATIONS

| Caste/ Tribe | Primary Occupation | | | | | | | | Secondary Occupation | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cultivation | | General labour | | Forest produce | | Other services | | Cultivation | | General labour | | Forest produce | | Other services | |
| | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) | Families | Persons (workers) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Saheriyas | 3 | 14 | 31 | 87 | 16 | 46 | 6 | 18 | 21 | 46 | 11 | 38 | 12 | 42 | 12 | 39 |
| Jats | 1 | 7 | — | — | — | — | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Rajputs | 1 | 4 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 4 | — | — |
| Chamars | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| TOTAL | 5 | 25 | 31 | 87 | 16 | 46 | 8 | 23 | 23 | 51 | 11 | 38 | 13 | 46 | 12 | 39 |

been the facility of granting loans. The Co-operative Society, Government agencies have advanced loans for improvement of lands or purchase of agricultural implements. The loan while extremely handy for a multifarious purposes, is only partly utilised for the intended purpose. The Saheriyas appear to welcome the change since they feel that the jungle may not satisfy their wants.

### Change in Jats

Although Jats were traditionally cultivators and service types but in this village they did not start as such. Settled in Panj, the Jats started by selling milk and cattle and it is only the last twenty years or so that they have taken to agriculture. The Jats appear happy at the change.

### Rajputs

The Rajput came as a police-man, a part of the administration and now remains as a cultivator. He appears quite keen on agriculture.

### Chamars

Chamar still plies his trade of mending and making shoes besides cultivation. He does not flay or tan the hides but continues the traditional occupation. Cultivation appears a good relief and change. He is taking to it.

## VI

## PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH AGRICULTURE

The Saheriyas and Rajputs do not observe any ritual, whatsoever regarding the commencement of agricultural operations. Although for the Saheriyas this may be fairly natural but it is rather unusual in the case of Rajput. The Rajput however is not able to give any reasons as to why he does not observe a ritual. The Jat on the other hand goes through a small ritual on the *akha teej* day which falls in the month *baisakha* or April/May in the summer months. On this day, new earthen pots are first filled in and placed on the hearth. Festive food is cooked and the bullocks are fed on it. A *teeka* is applied on the fore-head of the bullocks. A handful of juar is scattered around the house, but it is not necessary to go to the field.

The villagers have not attained any particular proficiency at cultivation and their general approach and methods are almost elementary. To begin with juar, maize, wheat and gram are all sown. Before going into details of the crops grown it might be a useful to consider their agricultural calender.

After the *akha teej*, the fields are ploughed and levelled by *bukhur*. The soil is upturned and allowed to lie exposed to the sun. The monsoons arrive by the end of June but sowing commences only by the middle of July for it is by that time that the ground becomes fairly wet for seeds to sprout. The Jats perform a small ritual before sowing. Some cooked food is carefully saved from the *akha teej* day and this is given to the bullocks, *teeka* is also applied to the bullocks and persons who take them out for sowing. Juar and maize seeds are broadcast over the field and the field is ploughed. This process puts them into the soil and ensures better germination. The other castes follow no ritual.

Sowing is usually over by the end of July. When juar is about 6" to 8" high, a weeding operation locally known as *kurap karna* is undertaken. Maize is also weeded. Thus unwanted wild growth is removed. These operations go on in the August and September. By the end of September monsoons come to an end and the fields are prepared for the winter crops. Maize is cut after about 9 weeks but juar does not become ready so easily. By the end of October or middle of November (*kartik*) the sowing of wheat and gram takes place. Wheat is sown by *nari* which is hollow cylindrical piece of wood which goes into the ground about 3" deep. Seeds are thus deposited and germination takes place in about a weeks time. In the village there is no double cropping. By December end or early January the juar crop is ready for being cut. It is cut by a sickle, the cob of corn is known as *bhutta* and the stack is used as fodder. Grams are also sown like wheat and cut by the end of March, a little before wheat, which is cut mostly in April.

### Produce and Yield per acre

The soil is of poor quality. There are no irrigation facilities, fertilisers are not used hence the produce per acre is on the poorer side. The following table based on the villager's estimate gives the yield rate.

**TABLE B-16**

SHOWING YIELD RATE OF CROPS IN MAUNDS.

| Name of the Crop. | Yield per acre in Maunds. (Village estimate) | District average. |
|---|---|---|
| Juar | 3/4 | 4 |
| Maize | 5 | x |
| Gram | 6 | 7 |
| Wheat | 6 | 11.4 |

The table below gives the area of land under cultivation during the last ten years.

## TABLE B-17

SHOWING DETAILS OF AREA UNDER VARIOUS CROPS — VILLAGE GADHER, TAHSIL GUNA, DISTRICT GUNA.

| Crop year | Cultivable area (in acre) | Area under cultivation (in acre) | Area under main crop (in acre) | | | | Irrigated (in acre) | Total Kharif (in acre) | Total Rabi (in acre) | Demand of land Revenue | Recoveries |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Juar | Bajra | Wheat | Gram | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1951-52 | 105 | 105 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 203.41 | 203.41 |
| 1952-53 | 105 | 105 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 203.41 | 203.41 |
| 1953-54 | 105 | 105 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 203.41 | 203.41 |
| 1954-55 | 105 | 105 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 203.41 | 203.41 |
| 1955-56 | 105 | 105 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 203.41 | 203.41 |
| 1956-57 | 106 | 106 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 178.75 | 178.75 |
| 1957-58 | 107 | 107 | — | — | 20 | 23 | — | 17 | 50 | 180.00 | 180.00 |
| 1958-59 | 107 | 107 | — | — | 46 | 11 | — | 27 | 58 | 216.43 | 216.43 |
| 1959-60 | 137 | 137 | 9 | — | 28 | 18 | — | 33 | 56 | 212.91 | 212.88 |
| 1960-61 | 154 | 154 | — | — | 40 | 5 | — | 30 | 50 | 224.78 | 215.61 |
| TOTAL | 1,136 | 1,136 | 9 | — | 254 | 195 | — | 209 | 514 | 2,029.92 | 2,020.72 |

Although the area under cultivation has shown an upward trend but it is obvious that nearly half of the land is not utilised. There are various reasons for it. A few fields have not yet been brought under cultivation. They are covered with *kans* (*Saccharum spontareum*) a weed which renders cultivation extremely difficult. Two Saheriyas complained that although on paper they have been allotted lands, they have never been shown the lands by the patwari, some also maintain that they lack means which would enable them to bring lands under cultivation e.g. they lack bullocks and other implements and lastly the Saheriyas do not appear enthusiastic in pursuing the agriculture as a profession. A Saheriya put the matter rather bluntly when he said "How can we wait for 2-3 months for the crop to ripen? We need food-stuff daily, each day we need some money to buy our necessities, food etc. It will be hard to wait for three months without it. We just do not have any means." He went on, "How can you expect us to clean up the *kans*, when there are no bullocks and implements? It may be true that so called 'prosperity' may only be three months away, but we must survive for those three months." In another two cases the Saheriyas gave up cultivation in the very first season. They had no patience to wait for the crops to ripen and bring in returns. All this leaves behind an impression that some Saheriyas lack the determination to persevere with agriculture: reaping profits from agriculture takes time, it is an almost painstaking process and to a Saheriya, whose daily labour alone ensures his evening food, waiting may be hard. It was about this trait that Bonarjee wrote:—

"When the Saheriyas can find sufficient employment of this sort (as agricultural labourer) they rarely take to cultivation in the real sense of the word. In the southern parganas through which the Vindhya range runs, only two Saheriya tenants were found. Two cases of Saheriyas possessing small shares of *zamindari* were met with, but in neither case could the man explain how the property had originally come into his family. Such cases are however of great rarity." [52]

### Tools and Equipments

**Plough:**— A wooden plough of the conventional type is used. It digs upto about 6" to 8", it is made locally by a carpenter who visits the village or is called by the villagers. The villager provides the wood viz. *babul* (Acacia arabica); sometimes *khair* (Acacia catechu), is also used. The wood is cut from the jungle. The carpenter is paid Rs. 1.50 in cash; and he lives in a village Sonthi about two miles away.

### Bukhur or Kura

This is used for levelling the ground and removing

52. Ibid.

weeds. It is made by the carpenter referred to earlier, who is paid Rs. 1.50 for labour charges only; the material being supplied by the cultivator himself.

## Bullock Cart

There are in all 40 bullock carts in the village. The carts are used for all purposes and men and material are transported by it. There are no separate carts for the transport of men or materials. A cart is made by the same carpenter and he is paid between Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 30.00 depending upon the type of the cart that is to be made. The villagers themselves provide the wood required for the purpose. *Babul* (Acacia arabica) is popularly used. Some villagers help the carpenter in making the cart. Payment is invariably in cash, although in a few cases the carpenter permits credit facilities, provided the total amount that he has to receive does not exceed rupees five. This carpenter is nearest to the village hence has an exclusive monopoly.

The other tools are the usual smaller ones like:—

(1) *Phawada* — A spade,
(2) *Kudali* — A pickaxe,
(3) *Hasiya* — Sickle,
(4) *Kulhadi* — A hatchet, an axe

These are available at Guna. Usually the iron blade is purchased and wooden handle fitted. Heavier tools or other machines are not used.

## Organisation of Man Power

The village is not short of man power but possesses it in surplus, which in turn is made available for other villages. The available man-power is fairly well organised, in as much as, the husband, the wife and where children are above 6 years of age, all contribute in the general task. In cultivation the man-power needs depend upon the nature of activity. While the crop is being cut, more labourers for casual work are required and usually the inmates of a household are not in a position to cope up with the work. For all other tasks, a holding of 5 acres could be well looked after by one man whose wife and child also render a little support every now and then. This would mainly consist in the wife cleaning up the weeds, helping the husband while sowing and performing other tasks. When it comes to cutting juar or wheat, the husband would be obliged to hire more labourers. These are available from the village itself for there is no cultivator having lands in excess of his working capacity. In fact almost all of them after devoting time to their cultivation become available for other work.

Male labourers are available for Re. 1.00 at the time of sowing or Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 1.50 at the time of cutting the crop and no corn is given. Corn is given as part of wages when they go to other villages for cutting the crop. Sometimes this work is done without payment also; but this is on mutual aid basis. It often happens that crop in X's field are ripe for cutting but in Z's field they are likely to take some time; so X and Z would agree to help each other in cutting their crops and no payment is made. In case X fails to honour his promise then he may pay the wages and the matter would end there.

Persons who do not possess cultivable lands move out for cutting the crops in the adjoining villages. Those who have lands do so after they have cut their crops. Since this process does not take a long time, most of them are away in spring for cutting the crops.

## Expenditure and Financing

Jat and Rajput families have their own resources and therefore are nearly always in a position to finance their expenses. With the Saheriyas however this is not the case and moreover their reputation in repaying loans is so poor that none would like to advance any money to them. The Saheriyas have very small holdings and provide seeds from their own savings. No manures are purchased or used and no money is spent on introducing any newer techniques. The Saheriya only believes in the natural fertility of the *dharti-mata* — mother earth and so he sows the seeds and hopes for the best. They have no wells or irrigation facilities hence, with very few wants and no finesse, the problem of financing the agricultural operations is not so difficult. This mutual co-operation among the Saheriyas further helps in minimising this difficulty, for it is often observed that in various field operations they help each other on mutual aid, as for example, when a Saheriya is without a bullock, another would plough his field in return for the later's help in cutting the crops. There are cases where seeds and implements have been loaned by members of the tribe to each other.

Despite all this the Saheriyas are indebted to the Co-operative Society, the only source which permits credit to them. All the debts (discussed under head 'Indebtedness') relate to the period when efforts were made to persuade them to take to agriculture. They mostly pertain to loans advanced for purchase of bullocks and other agricultural implements. The

Saheriyas have however squandered much of these loans in non-agricultural uses.

## Produce — Its Utilisation

The Saheriyas use all their produce for home consumption. Jats alone are known to sell some portion of their produce in Guna. They take the grain to the Mandi at Guna and sell it to the local traders. Jats keep back 25% of their produce. Sometimes when they run short of grains they buy it locally.

## Animal Husbandry

All animals are utilised in cultivation. The cows and buffaloes supply the needs for the milk which is consumed. No milk is sold. No poultry is reared. The animals graze in the nearby jungle; there are about 192.96 acres included in the village boundary and the rest in the reserved forest in which the cattle move out for grazing.

There are 50 cows in the village but their milk yield is very poor. It ranges between 1 to 3 seers per day. Not much care seems to be devoted to the feeding of the cattle. Oil cakes are rarely given. The cattle feeds itself by browsing whatever little grass it can come across. Even the buffaloes do not yield much milk: their yield being about 2 to 3 seers per day. The bullocks are of local breed popularly called *malwi* and are obtained from cattle fairs which are held from time to time in the nearby villages. The local inhabitants obtain their requirements from the fair at Guna in January or from Bajrangarh near Dushera time.

The Saheriyas have purchased bullocks mostly from the loans that were made available to them from the Co-operative Society or the tahsil. The Rajput has not received any loan nor is he anxious to obtain any. The villagers do not appear to care much for animals.

# VIII

## Fishing

The villagers do not fish, as there are no big rivers or tanks where this can be done. During the monsoons children however spread cloth and catch small fishes which are fried in oil and eaten.

# IX

## Forestry

The total area of Gadher Forest is 14.21 square miles and the important trees, shrubs and grasses found are given below:

| Local Name | Botanical Name | Use |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | **TREES** | |
| Achar | Buchanania latifolia | Fruits eaten. |
| Aiwar (Chindya) | Albizzia odoratissima | |
| Am | Mangifera indica | Fruits eaten, timber used in building. |
| Amaltas | Cassia fistula | |
| Aonla | Emblica officinalis | Fruits eaten. |
| Babul | Acacia arabica | Timber used for agricultural implements and building. |
| Bahera | Terminilia belerica | Fruits used in medicine. |
| Bargad (Bar) | Ficus bengalensis | Fruits eaten. |
| Bel | Aegle marmelos | Fruits eaten. |
| Ber | Zizyphus jujuba | Fruits eaten. |
| Bersenda | Grewia serophylla | |
| Chandan | Santalum album | Costly wood used as incense. |
| Chhola | Butea frondosa | Timber used as fuel; leaves used in roof. |
| Dhaman | Grewia tiliaefolia | |
| Dhaban | Dalbergia paniculata | |
| Dho (Dhau) | Anogeissus latifolia | Used in building; fuel. |
| Gular (Umor) | Ficus glomerata | Fruits eaten. |
| Gunj (Gurjan) | Lannae gravdis | |
| Gurar | Albizziz procera | |
| Harra | Terminalia chebula | |
| Hardon | Soymida febrifuga | Used in agricultural implements. |
| Hingot | Balanites roxburghii | |
| Imli | Tamarindus indica | Fruits eaten. |
| Indrajo | Holerrhena antidysenterica | |
| Jamrasi | Elaeodendron glaucum | |
| Jamun (Bari) | Eugenia jambolana | Fruits eaten. |
| Kachnar | Bauhinia variegata | |
| Kaim | Mitragyara pervifolia | |
| Kardhai | Anogeissus pendula | Used as fence and roof. |
| Khair | Acacia catechu | Timber used for charcoal. |
| Khirni | Mimusops hexandra | Fruits eaten. |
| Labera | Cordia myxa | |
| Mahua | Madhuca indica | Fruits eaten, liquor made. |
| Neem | Melia indica | Used in medicine and building. |
| Paras | Ficus arnottiana | |
| Pipal | Ficus religiosa | Tree worshipped; fodder for goats. |
| Reonjha | Acacia leucophlea | Wood used for posts. |
| Sagon (Sog) | Tectono grandis | Timber used in building. |
| Saler (Salai) | Boswellia serratta | Timber used in building. |
| Semal | Bombax malabaricum | Used for building. |
| Shisham | Dalbergia sissu | Used for building. |
| Seja | Lagerstromia pervifolia | |
| Tendu | Diospyros melonoxylon | Leaves used for making bidis. |
| Tinsa (Tinach) | Ougenia dalbergioides | Fruits eaten. |

| Local Name | Botanical Name | Use |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | **SHRUBS.** | |
| Aval (Tarwar) | Cassia auriculata | |
| Gangren | Rendia teresperma | |
| Karannda | Carissa spinarum | |
| Meno (Menphal) | Rendia dumetorum | |
| Neel | Indigofera tinctorea | |
| Nirgun | Vitex nigundo | |
| Ratanjot | Jatropha curcas | |
| Sitaphal | Annona squamosa | Fruits eaten. |
| Thuar | Euphorabia nivalia | |
| | **CLIMBERS.** | |
| Dudhai | Valaria heynei | |
| Dudhi (Bambore) | Ichnocarpus frusteceus | |
| Geloy | Tinocpora malabarica | Medicinal use. |
| Gudmar | Gymnema sylvesta | |
| Golhar | Milletia auriculata | |
| Phang | Rivea hyporteriformus | |
| Silawar | Asparagus racemosus | |
| Hadjuri | Cissampelos pareira | |
| | **GRASSES.** | |
| Dub | Cynodon dactylon | |
| Guner | Authisteria ciliata | |
| Kans | Saccharum spontareum | |
| Khas | Veteirria zizanioddes | |
| Lapusri | Hetropogan contortus | |
| Sain | Ischaeumum laxum | |
| Seran | Elionerus hirsutas | |
| Surbala | Andropogan contertus | |
| Underi | Anthraxon lanceolatus | |

As per table B-15, there are 16 families among Saheriya whose primary occupation is based upon forest produce. To this may be added another 13 families (12 Saheriya and 1 Rajput) whose subsidiary occupation is connected with forest produce. The main occupations are (1) felling of timber and sale, (2) sale of grass, (3) working as labourers under a contractor.

The Forest Department offers the following facilities to the cultivators including agricultural labourers, and other agricultural craftsmen like carpenter, blacksmith etc. These rights are known as *nishtar* and are:- (i) In the reserve and protected forests *nishtar* coupes have been earmarked and departmentally felled timber for building, fuel is available at fixed rates. There are 12 such depots in the district. The villagers however come under the *Beesbhuja* depot.

The depot remains open from 15th January each year upto 30th June, and a cultivator on filling a form and obtaining its verification from the Kendra Panchayat would be required to deposit the amount with the Ranger's offices, Sub-Ranger or Forester and obtain a licence. On the strength of this licence he would be given the timber.

(ii) The Forest Department opens a few *nishtar* depots in which timber for buildings is sold at fixed rates. These are available on the same conditions as described above. The depot of the village is in Bairkhedi.

(iii) In the Ex-zamindari and Jagirdari protected forests a few coupes were reserved in which the cultivators were permitted to cut the timber. The trees were marked and could only be cut in the presence of the Forest Department official. The procedure for obtaining timber would remain the same as described earlier.

### (iv) Other facilities

A cultivator on payment of Re. 0.50 per plough could obtain from the government forest:—

(a) dried and fallen timber for fuel.
(b) dried bamboos 20 pieces;
(c) grass by head loads or upto 4 carts.

Free grazing rights were granted for one pair of bullocks, one buffalo for every 10 acres of unirrigated land with cultivator subject to a maximum of 4 buffaloes and 4 pair of bullocks.

A cultivator could also avail of the following forest produce free of cost, for his personal use.

(1) (a) thorn bushwood; (b) *karonda;* (c) *palas* leaves; (d) horns, bones and nails; (e) boulders; (f) lime; (g) sand and clay; (h) *khajoor;* (i) ownerless hides; (j) *koli kanda;* (k) *achar;* (i) cowdung; (m) *khirni,* mangoes, *sitaphal, jaman;* (n) *mahua* flower and fruit.

(2) **Dead, dry and fallen wood:**— This could be obtained without any charge by the cultivators.

(3) **Bamboos:**— Bamboos could be cut at the rate of Rs. 4.75 for 100 pieces after obtaining the licence. Members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes could get these bamboos at half cost provided they need them for homesteads.

(4) **Fodder:**— Grass could be collected free of cost provided carried as head-load. A fee of 0.50 P is chargeable for every cart load of grass.

(5) In the case of fire or flood sufferers the Forest Department arranges to give timber for building houses, without any cost, on the recommendation of the Collector.

These concessions are generally given for using

the material personally. Exchange or transfer of the goods purchased under these concessions, is forbidden and the goods so transferred or exchanged could be confiscated. This provision is seldom applied although abuses are not uncommon. During a year a cultivator can purchase these materials upto a maximum limit of Rs. 75.00.

## The Forest Produce

The chief forest products are (1) wood, (2) grass, (3) gum, (4) honey and (5) *tendu* leaves. Wood and grass is cut and sold. Gum, honey and *tendu* leaves are collected on behalf of the contractor by the villagers for payment in cash.

## Wood

As stated earlier the cultivators are allowed to pick up the dead and dry wood which may be lying in the jungle. The Saheriyas in particular collect this in form of head-loads and then sell it for about Rs. 0.75 or 1.00. A head-load contains about 30 kgs. of wood. Those who possess a cart bring it in cart. They are required to obtain a licence costing Re. 1.00 and if there are no other workers then two labourers are hired. These are locally available and paid Re. 1.00 each. Selling timber in the above manner is an all the year round occupation.

## Malpractices

The rules envisage that only dead and dry wood should be collected, but often the villagers cut the wood, leave it to dry and pick it up later. The Forest Guards are sometimes won over and so the 'Trade' is carried on as long as the mutual "good will" lasts. Even during the rains the villagers are able to obtain 'dry' wood quite easily. This is fairly simple, for dried wood is collected or cut in summer and stacked near the road side, the interior of the jungle being cut off. Although nishtar depots have been established near the village but some villagers do not buy their timber wants and prefer to cut the wood by 'arranging' it with the Forest Guards.

## Grass

The cutting of grass starts in late October and is completed by November end. Head-loads of grass could be brought from Protected Forests without any payment. Saheriyas also work on contract while cutting grass. Grass land locally called *bir* is auctioned by the Forest Department and the contractor hires labourers to cut the grass. An employee is paid Re. 1.00 per day or Rs. 10.00 for cutting a cart-load of hay, if the employment is on contract basis. During this period all Saheriyas will be seen cutting grass. The Jat and Rajput cut grass only for their own use.

Apart from the above Saheriyas have lately taken to selling grass in a more organised ways. Some Saheriyas last year undertook to supply dry grass to a few cultivators at Guna at the rate of Rs. 15.00 a cart. A cart normally requires 2000-2500 stacks (*poolas*) for filling it and the popular variety in demand is locally known as *sain* (Ischaeumum laxum). The party gave an advance of Rs. 15.00 and the Saheriyas stacked the grass for the party who collected the same from the spot. The buyer was hesitant in giving more money because he was not sure as to whether the Saheriyas would supply the grass. Incidentally this is yet another instance where the credit worthiness of the Saheriyas does little credit to them.

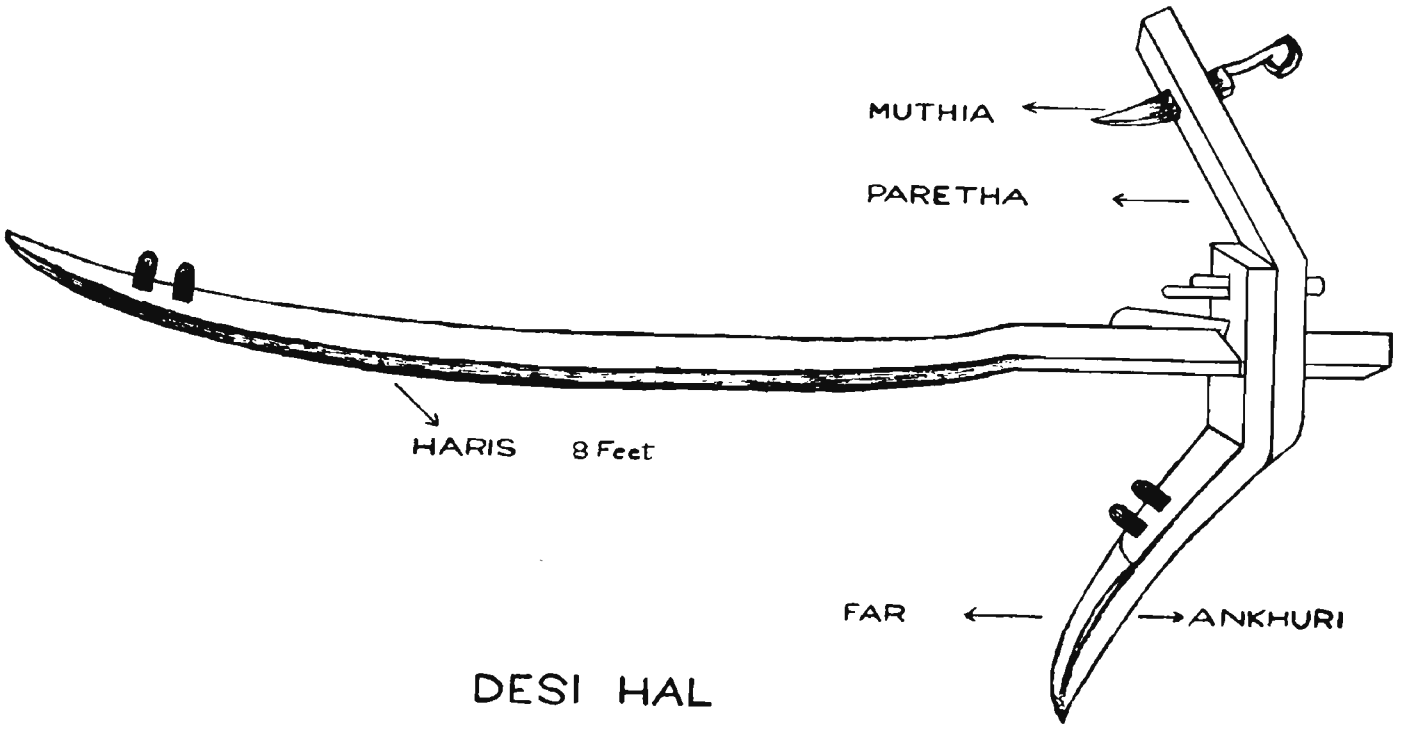
A few Saheriyas bring head-loads of grass and collect the same. They build up a sizeable stock and then sell it later specially during the summer when there is fodder scarcity and better prices are available. In summer 30 to 40 stacks of hay sell for a rupee (c.f. with Rs. 15.00 for about 2000 stacks). During a day a labourer can cut and tie up about 400 stack bundles. Cutting of grass lasts for about six weeks. Sickle is the only tool that is used.

## Gum Collecting

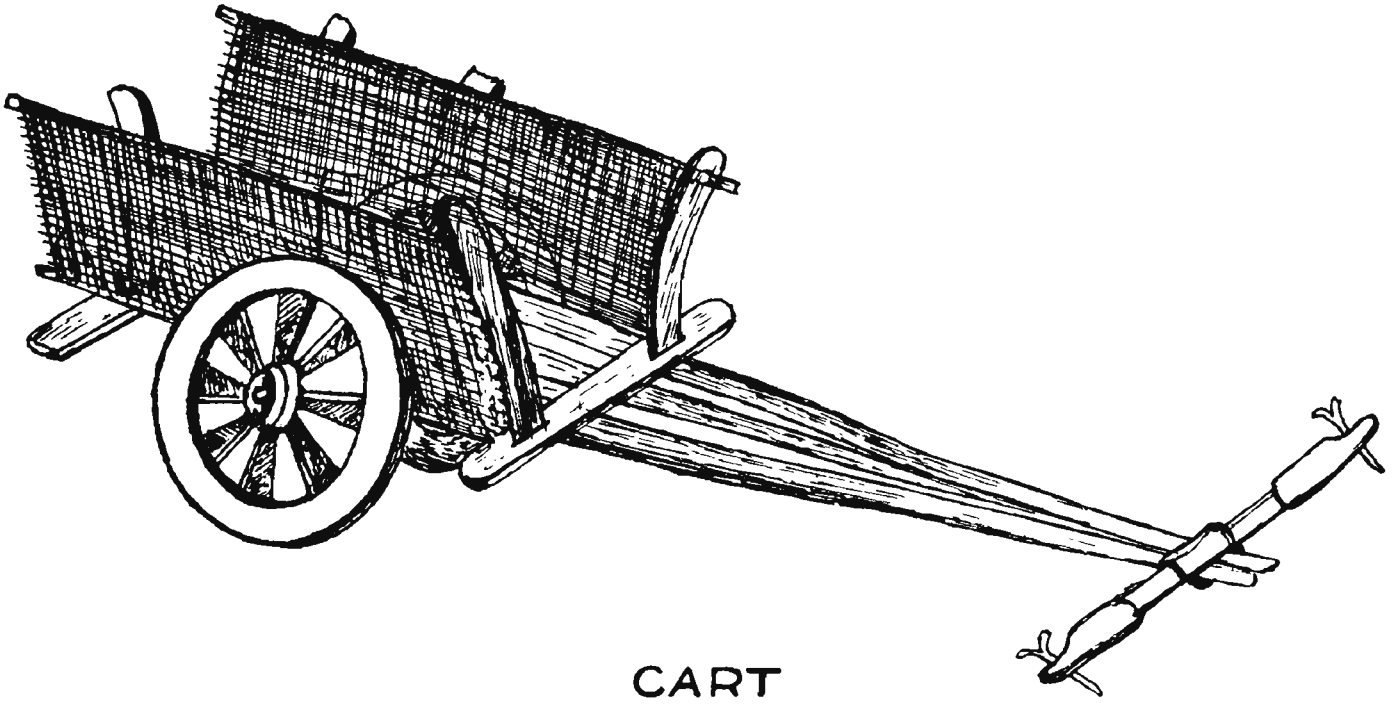
The Forest Department usually auctions the areas where gum is to be collected. The villagers work for the contractor to collect gum. The collection of gum commences from November or December and goes on till about April/May each year. The Saheriya families are occupied in collection of gum during this period. It would not be very accurate to assess as to how many persons collect gum, but at some time or the other during the season, all families are known to collect the same.

The payment is mostly made in kind by the contractor; for collecting one seer of gum, 1½ seer of wheat or 2 seers of juar are paid. The Saheriyas often use delaying tactics for better payment. They would stop giving gum to the contractor, since he has no other persons to work for him, he would be coerced to enhance the rate of payment: or for a few days they give no gum, then two or three persons offer their collection at the rate of 2 to 2½ seers of wheat

# PLATE XXXI

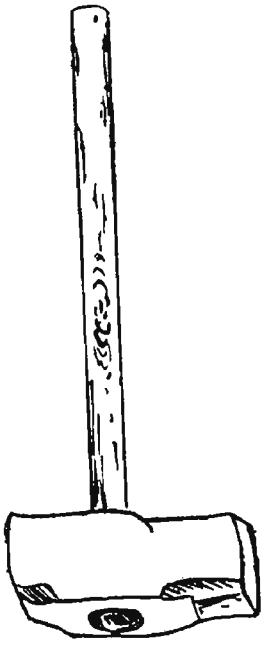



DESI HAL



CART

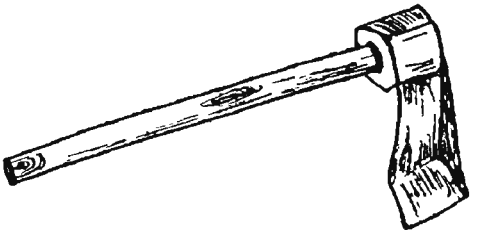
# PLATE XXXII



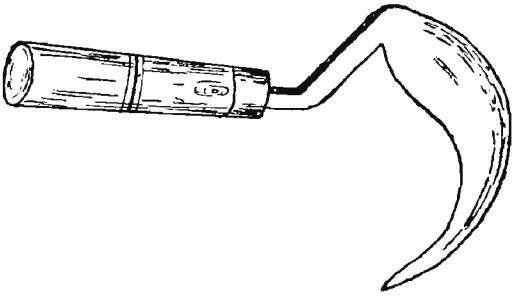
GHAN



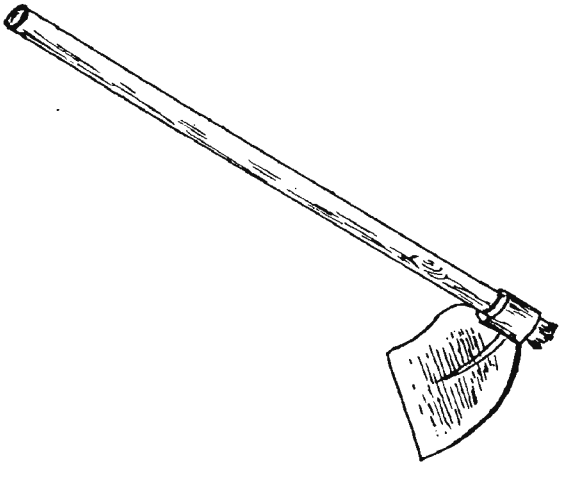
NIYANI



BASULA



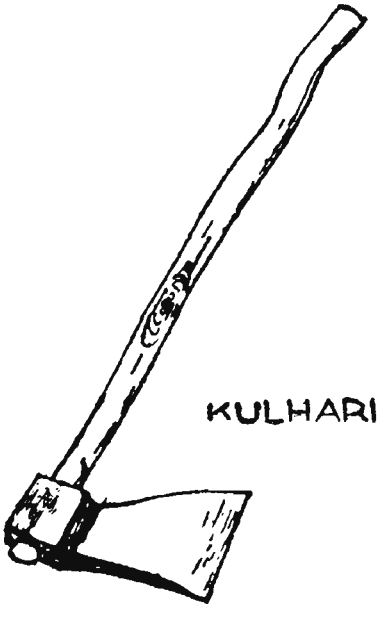
HANSIYA



PHAWRA



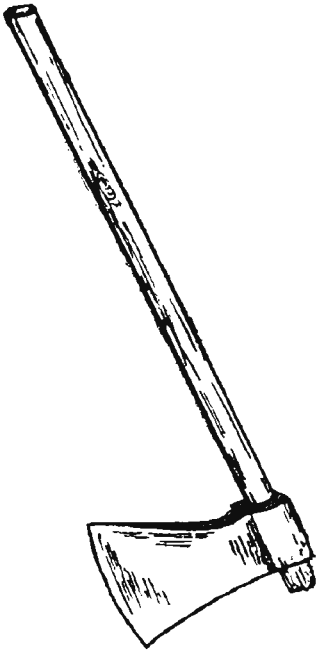
CHHERI



KULHARI



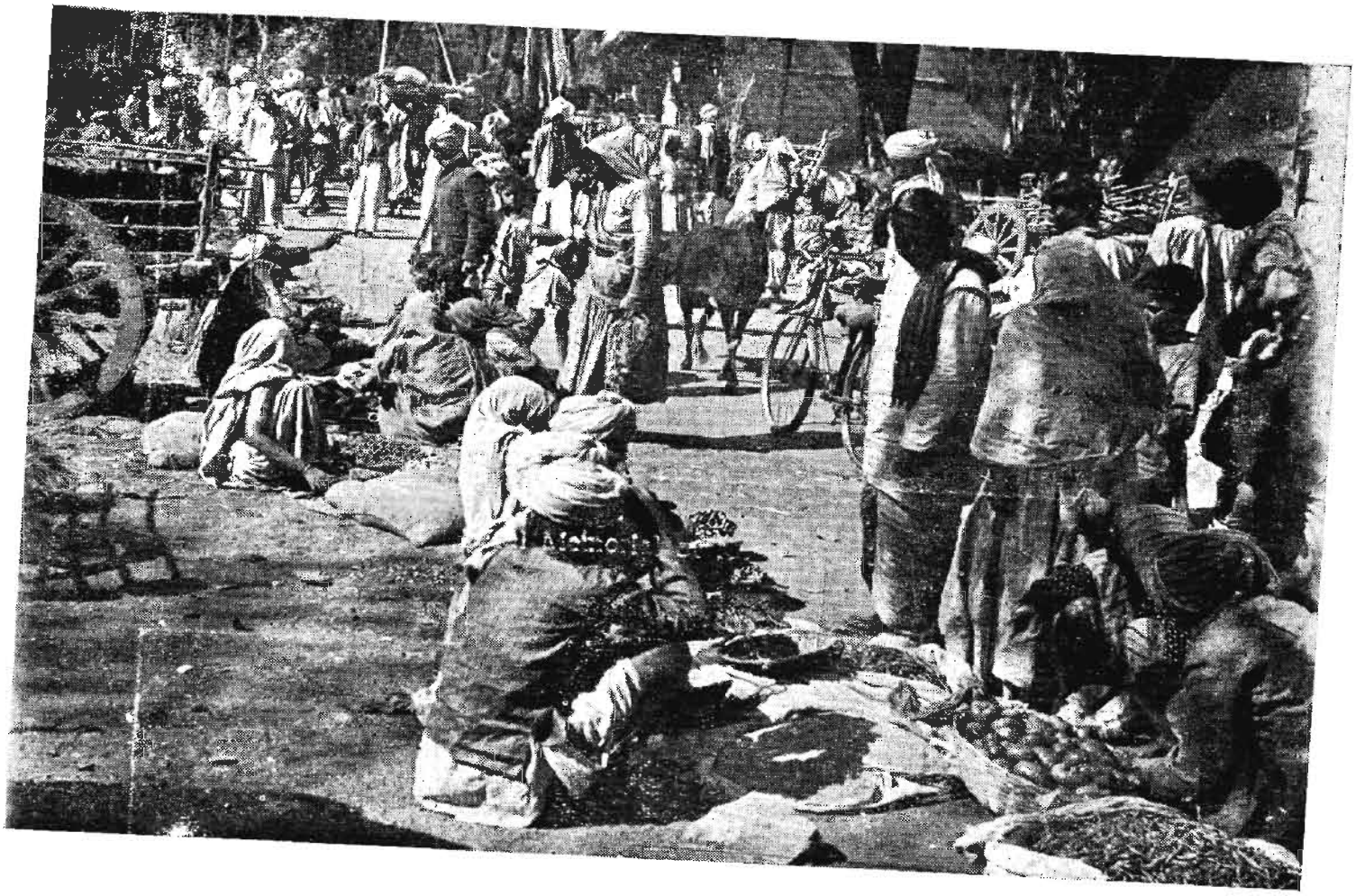
HATHORA



KULHARI

Small Agricultural Implements

# PLATE XXXIII



The Weekly Market at Guna

for one seer of gum; when the contractor accepts the terms, others would also come out and sell off their products.

Gum is obtained from following trees *dhow* (Anogeissus latifolia), *khair* (Acacia catechu), *babul* (Acacia arabica). The tools used are sickle and a pickaxe.

## Honey and Wax

Right to collect honey and wax from forest are auctioned and the Saheriyas collect these products as employees of the contractor. The season lasts from January to April each year. The method of collection remains primitive.

In the forest the bigger types of bees are found. The Saheriyas cover themselves by a blanket or thick cloth of dark shade. A smoke screen is created underneath the tree and a fire is lighted. This scares away the bees. The branch which contains the bee-hive is then cut and it falls to the ground. In the fall, a little wax or honey may be wasted, the balance, however, is collected and slowly heated. Honey and wax are separated and collected. Sometimes they mix liquid brown jaggery called *chasni* with honey and sell it to the contractor who pays them Rs. 2.00 for a seer of honey. It is not possible to assess the daily earning or even an average earning per hive.

## Tendu

*Tendu* (Diospyros melanoxylon) leaves are used for making *biris* and hence are commercially valuable. *Tendu* leaves are collected by the Saheriyas and made over to the contractor, who pays at the rate of 0.10 P for about 500 leaves. The earnings do not exceed 0.50 P for a day and the season lasts hardly for three weeks. These leaves are made into small rolls containing 100 leaves each to facilitate calculation of wages. Since counting these leaves involves a lot of labour and a cent per cent verification is rarely attempted the Saheriyas roll up 70-80 leaves into a stack and hand it to the contractor who generally accepts them. Cheating is, therefore, very popular.

## Minor Forest Produce

The use of *mahua, achar, tamarind, tendu, karaundi, ber, sitaphal* fruits is free to the villagers for their personal consumption. Sometimes they sell these products although the earnings are not much. Often they exchange these things for food grains sold by the dealers at weekly market place.

Occupation in the forest is seasonal and is divisible into two parts viz. (1) independent work, (2) work undertaken for the contractor. Wood and grass cutting belongs to the first category and collection of gum, honey and *tendu* leaves to the other. If wood is to be cut and brought by cart then two additional hands are required to do the job. Normally these are grown up males and where such are not available in the family, casual labourers are employed on payment of Re. 1.00 only. The marketing would, however, be done by him alone. Where only head-loads have to be brought the women would also go into the forest and get the same. A woman is normally capable of carrying one maund of fuel as head-load. For cutting the grass men, women and adult children (over 11-12 years of age) go for the work. In collection and tying of *tendu* leaves children above the age of 6/8 years also work. In the collection of honey children over 8/9 years of age help. Women do not join in the task; but help in the collection of the gum. For selling other minor produce the women generally go to the market.

## Marketing

Guna is the nearest market where all the produce is sold. On each sunday, the weekly market is held and all produce meant to be disposed is sold here. Wood, and grass is nearly always sold for cash. Articles like gum, honey, *tendu* leaves when sold to the contractor are sold for cash or kind as described earlier. Fruits obtained from jungle are also sold for cash or kind. There is no organised marketting system so far nor have any efforts been made to organise one. Wood which is green or raw however cannot be cut or sold. The produce that may be collected by them is not subjected to any scrutiny but forest department officials exercise supervision and often check the produce.

All these items do not require any investment. When grass has to be cut through the labourers, sometimes money is advanced to the Saheriyas and they meet the expenditure. Advance payments are generally not made. The contractor would never be sure of getting adequate returns for the advance that he may make; hence he is rather shy in giving any advance.

During the rainy season the Forest Department stops the grant of licences for collecting fuel. This deprives them of an avenue of work and causes discomfiture. They desire that even in these months they should be permitted to collect fuel. They also

wish for less interference from the forest department officials. They alleged that very often they were harassed: on the other hand the forest officials explained that Saheriyas were ruthless in cutting wood and destroyed the forest wealth.

## X

## VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

There are no industries in the village.

## XI

## COMMERCE

The Saheriyas sell (i) wood, (ii) grass and other forest produce and the Jat is known to sell about 15-20 maunds of wheat each year. The activities of Saheriyas have already been described at length. The Jat sells wheat in Guna market. Only the quantity in excess of his personal requirements, is sold. During the years when crops do not give a favourable yield, the quantity sold is much less. He sells it to the grain dealer at Guna for cash and was paid last year (1962-63) @ Rs. 12.00 per maund.

### Storage

Timber for fuel is never stored. The head-load or the cart-load is taken to the market to be sold. A cart fetches Rs. 12.00 to 15.00 and contains 15 to 18 maunds of fuel. The collection charges amount to Rs. 3.00 only. Sometimes grass may be stored by placing one stack upon another and making a small heap locally called *ganji*. It is not covered for protection against rains. It is only neatly arranged so that it occupies little space and can be very conveniently removed. Honey is stored in earthen vessels, similar to those in which water is stored. *Mahua* is dried and eaten later. Other minor forest produce like, *achar*, *ber*, etc. is sold at the market.

All transactions are by either cash payment or barter or against advance payment. Grass may be sold against advance payment. Timber is sold for cash and the contractor makes cash or barter payments. When minor produce like *achar*, *ber* etc. is sold in the market it is often adjusted by barter payments. It may be paid for by grain, kerosene or salt or other necessities of life. The sale of fuel wood goes on throughout the year. Grass is sold by December and if retained in the hope of getting better price, then it is sold in April/May. It has been retained only once so far. It is very seasonal in nature. In the winter months (November to January) they are mostly occupied with the minor forest produce. This covers up practically all of their commercial activity. Since the commercial activities are on a very limited scale there is hardly much of a problem; they however do feel that the contractor does not pay them as much as they should be paid.

## OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Except for 4 families who occasionally make brooms (*jharu*) and mats (*chatai*) from palms, *khajoor* leaves and sell them in the weekly market, there does not seem any other occupation in the village. A broom sells for 0.10 P. and mat 6'x 3' for about 0.35 P. This is done during May to July; for during these days the leaves are firm and more easily available. Generally old women who cannot undertake out-door work sit at home and do this work. The annual sales do not extend beyond 25-30 brooms and 20 mats. It brings about Rs. 10.00 only.

Another casual occupation is weaving rope for cots. It is made from *kans* (Saccharum spontareum). *Kans* is cut in November/December tied in small bundles and placed on the roof for drying. After it has dried it is placed in shade somewhere in the house. In the month of April/May it is soaked in water and spun into rope. This is used as in stringing a bedstead. It is also sold in the market. Strings sufficient for one bed-stead are sold for Rs. 1.50. This is a purely side occupation and left to women who because of very young children at home or who being too old, cannot undertake strenuous out-door work.

An interesting case of side occupation is that of Ramu Saheriya (see photograph) who possessed a muzzle loader gun; and had a licence in his own name. He was known to kill for sport and for selling hide. He sold a rabbit skin with furs for about Rs. 5.00 and he used to shoot it himself. He also shot partridges, boar and other small game. This passion for shooting kept him on the move in the evenings and also sometimes during the night. He therefore agreed to become

a night watch-man for the fields in return for five seers of wheat or juar. It is said that he was paid about 3 maunds of grains for keeping this vigil.

One day Ramu fired at a rabbit and missed. The shot went to hit a villager in the foot. At that time Ramu had not realised as to what happened. Later it was discovered that he had unwittingly wounded one of his friends also staying in the village. The friend was removed to the hospital, where the pellet was extracted and the friend cured. Ramu was prosecuted for criminal negligence; while the case against him was still pending, he died. The gun has been deposited with the Police Station.

## XIII

## INDEBTEDNESS

The villagers are indebted to (1) the Government loans being obtained from (a) Tahsil, (b) N. E. S. Block and (c) Village Co-operative Society Hilagana known as "*Sahkari Samiti*, Hilagana." The over-all village indebtedness is 438.49 per household and only 19 are free from debts. The loans, except for seeds, which were in kind have been given in cash.

### Co-relation of loans to occupational Classes:

Out of the forty one families who are indebted, five are primarily cultivators and are indebted to the tune of 1,055.71 per family. The higher rate of indebtedness is mainly due to loans for wells, field bunding etc. Nineteen families whose primary occupation is forestry are indebted to the tune of Rs. 380.28 per family. The secondary occupation of these persons is cultivation and it is as a cultivator that they were advanced loans for bullocks, seeds, etc. Seventeen families who are primarily general labourers, also have little land against which they have obtained loans. It would be noted that as many as 19 families, — 18 Saheriyas and one Jat are without loans. They are not indebted because, except in case of Jat who does not need loan, the others could not get any loan for their credit worthiness was doubtful; in a few cases some other members who got loans were related to them and hence to that extent their demand was met.

There are two widows who earn their daily livelihood and being heads of the families run the house. They cannot hope to succeed in getting loans. The amounts of loans each year shoot up for they are not known to have returned any amount so far. The table B-18 giving the details of loans is given below—

### TABLE B-18

SHOWING INDEBTEDNESS IN RELATION TO NUMBERS OF FAMILIES AND THEIR OCCUPATION.

| S.No. | Primary Occupation | No. of families | Total No. of Persons | Total debt. | Indebtedness per-family |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Agriculture | 5 | 43 | 5,278.56 | 1,055.71 |
| 2. | Forest | 19 | 111 | 7,224.31 | 380.23 |
| 3. | General Labour | 17 | 82 | 5,475.31 | 322.08 |
| | Total | 41 | 236 | 17,978.18 | 438.49 |

All loans are generally in cash. Seeds however were given actually in form of seeds.

The rate of interest is 7.75% when the loan is obtained from the Tahsil or N.E.S. Block. The loan is sanctioned for a specific purpose e.g. construction of well, purchase of bullocks. The loan was returnable in 3 years or 10 years (as in case of loans for wells), where a well was constructed or a *rahat* purchased, a subsidy to the tune of 1/4 (one fourth) of the amount was granted. In cases where the loan was not returned in time interest at the rate of 9 % was charged. The loans advanced by the bank carried at interest of 9 %. All these loans were formally secured by hypothecating the land of the loanee or by obtaining security jointly or severally. The purpose shown on the paper is always a legitimate one and money is being received as a loan for that, though actually the loan serves multipurposes. It buys food, clothing, liquor, contributes to marriage expenses and of course secures the object for which it was obtained. So far no penel proceedings on misapplication of a loan have been commenced although it is also equally certain that the loans have not completely been utilised, for the purpose for which they were intended.

Application for loans are made in the prescribed forms in which the applicant declares his assets viz. lands and other moveable or immovable properties. This declaration is verified by the Panchayat and the tahsil staff or concerned Block official reports on the merits of the case after which the B.D.O. or Tahsildar sanctions the amount. A security jointly or severally is almost invariably taken. Beyond this no further documentation is necessary. When the loan is sanctioned by Co-operative Bank, the preliminary enquiries are made by the village Co-operative Society. The loans are secured by a formal hypothecation of land of the loanee.

## Repayment

There has been no repayment so far. The Saheriyas say that they would repay when every one would pay: and since 'every one' does not pay they also do not pay. This has been setting a bad example to others and even persons who are otherwise capable of returning the money do not pay back. It appears that some of them have been told that the Government is not likely to recover these amounts, hence they are not unduly worried about it. The Tahsildar at Guna narrated the innumerable difficulties in making taccavi recovered. "Saheriyas" he said, "have never learnt to repay a loan". Regarding land revenue he explained the position has always been better for it is easily recovered.

## The Co-operatives

The first Co-operative Society for the village was registered on 24-10-58 and was known as Primary Agricultural Credit Society, Gadher, but later with effect from 1-1-60 the assets and liabilities of the above society were taken over by the large sized Primary Credit Co-operative Society/Village Co-operative Society, Hilagana.

The aims of the society are to increase the agricultural production in accordance with the principles of co-operation and covers the following villages: (1) Hilagana, (2) Sonthi, (3) Mhow and (4) Gadher. There are 81 members in all out of which 25 are from Gadher. Including a Sarpanch and Treasurer there are eight panchas who constitute the managing committee and out of these none are from Gadher. The villagers of Gadher are defaulters and have not repaid the society. Their short term loan totals Rs. 5,623.00 and Rs. 1,262.00 are due against long term one. Thus Rs. 6,885.00 is owed by the villagers to the society. (A discrepancy of Rs. 236.00 is due to this amount not being included in the list of Society). The society charges 9% interest per annum.

The managing committee consists almost entirely of cultivators from Hilagana (4); Sonthi (2) and Mhow (2). The Treasurer and Sarpanch hail from Hilagana. The Office Secretary is a paid employee from the Guna Central Co-operative Bank, Ltd. on a salary of Rs. 65.00 per month. The 81 members referred to earlier are the shareholders and each share is worth Rs. 10.00 each. A share-holder is permitted to obtain a loan upto ten times his share capital. The 25 villagers of Gadher who are its share-holders, own between them no more than 25 shares which is the bare minimum. All the share-holders are Saheriyas. Apart from the share capital the Guna Central Co-operative Bank finances the society.

Besides the above society another viz. 'Gadher Adiwasi Sahkari Samiti, Ltd., Guna,' was formed and registered on 2-3-56. It was intended as a multipurpose society specially anxious to obtain forest contracts on behalf of the Adiwasis. Share capital was fixed at Rs. 5.00. There were seventy Saheriyas and three non-Adiwasi who were the members of the society. Enquiries in the village, reveal that the villagers do not know anything about this society nor do they remember to have derived any benefit from it: they only remember that they were asked to put their thumb impressions sometime back. They were also promised a *thali* and *lota* which would be purchased from meagre profits, which Society was alleged to have made. The Saheriyas were bitterly critical of this society and had very uncomplimentary words against the Chairman and others associated with the society. The accounts of the society have not been submitted or verified. The matter has been reported to the Police and papers have been seized. It is alleged that the Society had taken a coupe from the Forest Department and that income from its exploitation has been mostly misapplied. Departmental action to supersede the society is now being taken.

It appears that this society has done more harm than good for co-operation. The records of the society having been seized for investigation it was not possible to go further into the details of its working. Available records however show that it made a profit of Rs. 79.00 in 1959-60 and Rs. 3,653.47 in 1960-61 but apparently the profits never reached the share-holders. The Saheriyas fear that they had been exploited by vested interests and this according to their reckoning is only putting things mildly. They are now sceptical of these Co-operative Societies.

## Income and Expenditure

There are 60 families in the village and their monthly income is Rs. 5,752.00 or 95.89 per family. The details of the above are given in Table B-19 below:-

## TABLE B-19

SHOWING TOTAL INCOME OF DIFFERENT CASTES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | No. of House-holds | Total income per month | Sources | | | | | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Culti-vation | Forest products | Labour | Other services | Personal | |
| 1. | Saheriya | 56 | 5,321 | 1,750 | 902 | 1,672 | 157 | 840 | |
| 2. | Jat | 2 | 251 | 186 | ... | ... | 65 | ... | |
| 3. | Rajput | 1 | 110 | 50 | 15 | ... | ... | 45 | |
| 4. | Chamar | 1 | 70 | 40 | 20 | 5 | ... | 5 | |
| | Total | 60 | 5,752 | 2,026 | 937 | 1,677 | 222 | 890 | |

From the above it is obvious that cultivation is the main prop of the economy of the village, followed by working as general labourers which is specially true in the case of Saheriyas. Dependence on forest products and other miscellaneous work follow each other. The table below indicates the percentage-wise break up of income from different sources.

## TABLE B-20

SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF INCOME FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | No. of House-holds | Total income per month | Sources | | | | | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Culti-vation | Forest products | Labour | Other services | Personal | |
| 1. | Saheriya | 56 | 100.00 | 32.09 | 17.0 | 31.4 | 2.9 | 15.8 | |
| 2. | Jat | 2 | 100.00 | 74.1 | ... | ... | 25.9 | ... | |
| 3. | Rajput | 1 | 100.00 | 45.5 | 13.6 | ... | ... | 40.9 | |
| 4. | Chamar | 1 | 100.00 | 57.2 | 28.6 | 7.1 | ... | 7.1 | |
| | Total | 60 | 100.00 | 35.2 | 16.3 | 29.1 | 3.9 | 15.5 | |

The average income per family in the village is Rs. 95.89, but this varies between Rs. 30.00 lowest and Rs. 270.00 highest. The range of income and the number of families in them is given below:—

## TABLE B-21

SHOWING RANGES OF INCOME FOR ALL FAMILIES IN GADHER

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | Total | Income less than Rs. 50 | Between Rs. 51 to Rs. 100 | Between Rs. 101 to Rs. 200 | Above Rs. 201 | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Saheriyas | 56 | 12 | 17 | 25 | 2 | |
| 2. | Jats | 2 | ... | ... | 2 | ... | |
| 3. | Rajput | 1 | ... | ... | 1 | ... | |
| 4. | Chamar | 1 | ... | 1 | ... | ... | |
| | Total | 60 | 12 | 18 | 28 | 2 | |

Only two families have an income of over Rs. 200.00 and they are both Saheriya families. Out of the 28 families having an income between Rs. 101 to Rs. 200, twenty-five are from Saheriyas and finally Saheriyas also occupy the bottom rung of the ladder. A detailed analysis of the sources of income with respect to eight cases (2 each from income groups of less than Rs. 50, between Rs. 51 to 100, and Rs. 101 to 200; one of income group of Rs. 201 and above and finally one of Jat) brought following results.

### Income Range under Rs. 50

*Case I*:— Sukhi (35) a Saheriya has returned an income of Rs. 30.00 per month. His family consists of himself and his wife. They have no children. He earns Rs. 10/- from selling forest produce and Rs. 20/- from working as labourer. He is not indebted because he is not a member of the Co-operative Society and others would give him no loan. His expenditure is as follows:—

| *Food* | *Intoxi-cants* | *Cloth-ing* | *Other expenses* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 20 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 30 |

*Case II*:— Soma (40) lives with his wife and two sons (15) & (18). The elder son helps him in earnings. Soma's monthly income is Rs. 50.00 and he earns it from forest produce (Rs. 25) and general labour (Rs. 25).

His expenditure is as follows:—

| *Food* | *Clothing* | *Social obligations* | *Intoxicants* | *Others* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 36 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 53 |

His wife also takes up work as a labourer and the son sells the forest produce. He is not under any debts, the excess expenditure is met by small borrowing of upto Rs. 5/- or 10/- in exchange for future supplies of forest produce viz. wood and grass.

*Case III*:— Moti (50) lives with seven other members of his family, they are:— his wife, three sons (20, 16 & 14) two married ones with their wives and one grand-daughter about a year old. They live jointly. The total holding is 3.5 acres and income Rs. 70.00 per month. Cultivation brings only Rs. 25.00 per month, the balance is earned by their labour which brings Rs. 38/- and Rs 7/- are obtained by sale of forest produce. The family is not indebted. The expenditure is spread over as follows:—

| *Food* | *Clothing* | *Intoxicants* | *Tobacco* | *Fuel* | *Social obligations* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 42 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4 |

| *Domestic* | *Miscellaneous* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | 5 | 70 |

*Case IV*:— Gajra (35) Saheriya lives with six members of his family viz. widowed mother, wife, younger brother and his wife and two sons 7 and 1 year of age. His total holding is 7 acres and monthly income Rs. 100.00. According to his own admission he has not sown the land because he did not possess the means to do it. In the current year the entire income is from non-agricultural sources viz. (i) forest products and (ii) labour. He is indebted to the Society to the tune of Rs. 250.00. The amount was taken to buy bullocks and although the report is that the amount has been properly utilised, the facts do not support it. He is also indebted to the tahsil to the tune of Rs. 60.00. Both the amounts are outstanding against him, at present however he does not seem to have the means to repay the debt. He spends the income in the following manner:—

| *Food;* | *Tobacco* | *Fuel; lighting;* | *Liquor;* | *Social obligations;* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 68 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 |

| *Religious functions;* | *clothing;* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | 7 | 100 |

*Case V*:— Mooji (40) a Saheriya lives with his wife. They have no children nor any other dependents. He holds 3.5 acres of land out of which 0.5 produces only grass. His monthly income is Rs. 130.00. He is indebted to the tune of Rs. 60.00 to the N.E.S. Block for having obtained the amount to purchase seeds. The income is derived from the following sources:— Agriculture Rs. 50; Forest produce Rs. 45; Labour Rs. 25; and other sources Rs. 10. His expenses are:—

| *Food;* | *Tobacco, Intoxicants;* | *Fuel & Lighting;* | *Clothing;* | *Education;* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 60 | 8 | 7 | 10 | ... |

| *Fodder;* | *Social obligations;* | *Other domestic;* | *Dwellings;* | *Other;* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 17 | 130 |

Though in a position to pay the arrears he does not seem anxious to return the amount, because others too, have not returned the same.

*Case VI*:— Bhagwat Saheriya (35) lives with seven other members viz. two wives; three sons; one daughter and widowed mother. He holds about 4.96 acres of land, bullock cart and possesses 4 cows and two bullocks. His monthly income is Rs. 150.00. His sources of income are:— Cultivation Rs. 65; Selling grass Rs. 60; Labour Rs. 20; Miscellaneous Rs. 5. His expenditure is:—

| *Food;* | *Tobacco, Intoxicants;* | *Fuel & Lighting;* | *Clothing;* | *Fodder;* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 76 | 8 | 4 | 15 | 14 |

| *Dwelling;* | *Religion;* | *Recreation;* | *Other;* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 154 |

He is in debt to the tune of Rs. 300.00 to the Co-operative Society. The loan was obtained for purchase of bullocks and they have been purchased. He has further advanced Rs. 50.00 as loan to another Saheriya on 25% interest for the marriage of the later's daughter. The amount has not yet been paid to him, nor has he bothered to repay the amount due from him.

*Case VII*:— Jiyalal (30) a Saheriya lives with other nine members of the family. They are:— two wives; three sons; two daughters; mother; two nephews. His holding is 5.75 acres and he is in government service

on a fixed salary of Rs. 85/-. He has returned total income of Rs. 260.00 per month. The heads of the income are:—

Service Rs. 85; Agriculture Rs. 30; Forest produce Rs. 85; Labour Rs. 60. There are four earners in the family besides himself. In June 1959 he took a loan of Rs. 650.00 to dig a well. The well has not yet been dug nor has the amount been paid. Although he appears to be in a position to repay the amount but it appears that he is not at all keen to do so. His expenditure is as follows:—

| *Food;* | *Tobacco, Intoxicants;* | *Fuel & lighting;* | *Fodder;* | *Dwellings;* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 150 | 20 | 15 | 15 | 6 |
| *Religious functions;* | *Social obligations;* | *Others;* | *Total* | |
| 5 | 14 | 35 | 260 | |

*Case VIII*:— Lalsingh (40) a widower lives with his other members of his family viz. three sons, (19, 16 & 7), one daughter-in-law and two daughters. There are in all three workers in the family. He holds 16 acres of lands, possesses 3 cows, 4 bullocks and 3 buffaloes. His income is Rs. 120/- per month. He mostly depends on cultivation.

This season 1962-63 he has not sold any timber or grass and therefore his income is exclusively from agriculture. The expenditure is as follows:—

| *Food;* | *Tobacco, Intoxicants;* | *Clothing;* | *Education;* | *Social obligations;* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rs. 75 | 7 | 15 | 5 | 3 |
| *Dwelling;* | *Religious; functions* | *Lighting;* | *Total* | |
| 4 | 6 | 5 | 120 | |

He too is in debt to the tune of Rs. 474/-. He borrowed the amount to dig a well, has neither dug the well nor returned the amount. Besides the above he has also obtained another loan of Rs. 900/- in the name of his son Mulusingh. Both these amounts have not been returned. Some of the money has been spent over litigation with a Sikh for some land near Gadher. Lalsingh claims to have spent nearly two thousand over the case and so far has not succeeded in getting those lands. The Jat admits that this year has been a very lean one for him, otherwise normally he is better off and his income goes upto Rs. 180/- per month. He had poor crops this year and this has caused the income to dwindle.

The income of these cases may be analysed as follows:—

Among the seven Saheriya families in respect of which the study was made, the income from cultivation is invariably less than that from sale of forest produce or from general labour; the only exceptions being V and VII cases. The details are given in table B-22.

**TABLE B-22** (Income)

SHOWING DIFFERENT SOURCES OF INCOME OF EIGHT CASES

| Case No. | Total Income monthly | Cultivation | Forest produce | General labour | Other sources | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I. | 30/- | ... | 10/- | 20/- | ... | |
| II. | 50/- | ... | 25/- | 25/- | ... | |
| III. | 70/- | 25/- | 7/- | 38/- | ... | |
| IV. | 100/- | ... | 60/- | 30/- | 10/- | |
| V. | 130/- | 50/- | 45/- | 25/- | 10/- | |
| VI. | 150/- | 65/- | 60/- | 20/- | 5/- | |
| VII. | 260/- | 30/- | 85/- | 60/- | 5/- | |
| VIII. | 120/- | 120/- | ... | ... | ... | |

Cases I, II & IV derive no income from cultivation and in all other cases income from forest and general labour exceeds that from agriculture. Thus economic dependence on forest and labour is very great.

Table B-23 gives the pattern of expenditure of these families.

**TABLE B-23** (Expenditure)

| Case No. | Total (Rs.) | Food | Tobacco and Intoxicants | Fuel & Lighting | Clothing | Social obligations & domestic needs | Religious functions | Fodder | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I. | 30/- | 20/- | 2/- | | 5/- | ... | ... | ... | 3/- |
| II. | 52/- | 38/- | 7/- | — | 6/- | 4/- | ... | ... | 2/- |
| III. | 70/- | 42/- | 7/- | 1/- | 6/- | 9/- | ... | ... | 5/- |
| IV. | 100/- | 68/- | 7/- | 5/- | 7/- | 5/- | 8/- | ... | ... |
| V. | 130/- | 60/- | 8/- | 7/- | 10/- | 13/- | ... | 9/- | 23/- |
| VI. | 154/- | 76/- | 8/- | 4/- | 15/- | 2/- | 4/- | 14/- | 31/- |
| VII. | 260/- | 150/- | 20/- | 15/- | 6/- | 14/- | 5/- | 15/- | 35/- |
| VIII. | 120/- | 75/- | 7/- | 5/- | 15/- | 3/- | 6/- | ... | 5/- |

This gives the total expenditure on food at 57.7% of the income and this is very near to the village average of 58.3% followed by clothing 7.09%, social obligations 5.4% and tobacco and intoxicants 5.02% respectively. The expenditure on dwellings is comparatively insignificant. The pattern of these 8 cases corresponds to the general pattern of village expenditure which is indicated in table B-24.

**TABLE B-24** (Expenditure)

SHOWING THE PATTERN OF EXPENDITURE OF THE VILLAGE

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | No. of Households | Food | Intoxicants, etc. | Clothing | Domestic utilities | Social obligations | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Saheriya | 56 | 2796 | 520 | 294 | 557 | 263 | 267 | 4811 |
| | | Percentage | 58.1 | 10.8 | 6.1 | 11.6 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 100.00 |
| 2. | Jat | 2 | 150 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 13 | 13 | 251 |
| | | Percentage | 59.7 | 6.8 | 9.1 | 8.0 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.00 |
| 3. | Rajput | 1 | 55 | 8 | 7 | 20 | 8 | 5 | 108 |
| | | Percentage | 50.9 | 7.4 | 6.5 | 18.5 | 7.4 | 4.6 | 100.00 |
| 4. | Chamar | 1 | 60 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 2 | ... | 84 |
| | | Percentage | 71.4 | 6.0 | 5.9 | 11.9 | 2.4 | ... | 100.00 |
| | | Total 60 | 3061 | 550 | 329 | 607 | 286 | 285 | 5254 |
| | | Percentage | 58.3 | 10.5 | 6.3 | 11.5 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 100.00 |

Remarks:— Percentage figures of expenditure has been shown just below the actual expenditure.

The indebtedness in these selected cases is indicated in the table B-25.

**TABLE B-25** (Indebtedness)

SHOWING INDEBTEDNESS IN SELECTED CASES

| Case | Total | Purpose for which obtained | Whether used or misused | Repayments | Agency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I. | ... | ... | ... | | |
| II. | ... | ... | ... | | |
| III. | ... | ... | ... | | |
| IV. | 250/- | Bullocks | used | Nil | Co-operative Society |
| V. | 60/- | Seeds | used | Nil | N. E. S. Block |
| VI. | 300/- | Bullocks | used | Nil | Co-operative Society |
| VII. | 650/- | Well | Misused | Nil | N. E. S. Block |
| VIII. | 1,374/- | Well | Misused | Nil | N. E. S. Block |

The Jat has misused the amount partly because of the bad crops and litigation. In Jiyalal's case (Case No. VII) the reasons are different. He paid off previous arrears and squandered some money because he got involved in a case before caste-panchayat. This necessitated his feeding the panchas and spending some money over them.

CHAPTER IV

# SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

## Age, Sex & Marital Status

The total population of Gadher village is 305 persons — 164 males and 141 females. There are two females of 70 years or above and these are the oldest persons living in the village. There are only 6 males and 12 females, who are above 51 years of age. During the survey it was found that males did not live to attain 60 or more years of age. The villagers have a theory about it. They argue that since males are required to work harder in life, their energies are quickly consumed and so their longevity is reduced. The woman on the other hand does less work and once she survives her child bearing period, she is likely to live longer. This is how they accounted for the greater number females of 51 years or above.

Table C-1 gives the details of the village population age-wise.

At the time of enumeration February, 61 the age of (1) was not returned hence blank. In the survey conducted later the position had changed but there was no possibility of varying the earlier returns. During the last decade there were more male births than females. This is a typical feature of the region. The sex ratio in 0-9 age group works out to 745 females per thousand males as against the district figure of 899 per thousand. The position with regard to the age group 10-19 is even worse, there being only 500 females per thousand males. However in the age group 20-29 years the position seems to have been reversed and for a change we have more females than males. The age group 40-49 appears well balanced, but less females than males are again noticed in 50-59 age group. In above sixty age, however women seem to have it all their way.

## The Sex Ratio Generally

Gwalior Division has returned less females than males — there being 866 females for 1000 males. This tendency has continued during the last sixty years and it is said that it had been in existence since very long time. It has also been noticed that the northern

## TABLE C-1

SHOWING AGE-WISE POPULATION.

Village Gadher; Tahsil Guna; Distt. Guna.

| Age | No. of persons | | | Age | No. of persons | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | P. | M. | F. | | P. | M. | F. |
| 0 | 22 | 14 | 8 | 36 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | — | — | — | 37 | — | — | — |
| 2 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 38 | — | — | — |
| 3 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 39 | — | — | — |
| 4 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 40 | 19 | 9 | 10 |
| 5 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 41 | — | — | — |
| 6 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 42 | 1 | — | 1 |
| 7 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 43 | — | — | — |
| 8 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 44 | — | — | — |
| 9 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 45 | 12 | 10 | 2 |
| 10 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 46 | — | — | — |
| 11 | 2 | 2 | — | 47 | — | — | — |
| 12 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 48 | — | — | — |
| 13 | 2 | 2 | — | 49 | — | — | — |
| 14 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 50 | 16 | 10 | 6 |
| 15 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 51 | — | — | — |
| 16 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 52 | — | — | — |
| 17 | 2 | 2 | — | 53 | — | — | — |
| 18 | — | — | — | 54 | — | — | — |
| 19 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 55 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 20 | 23 | 8 | 15 | 56 | — | — | — |
| 21 | 1 | 1 | — | 57 | — | — | — |
| 22 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 58 | — | — | — |
| 23 | 1 | — | 1 | 59 | — | — | — |
| 24 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 60 | 11 | 4 | 7 |
| 25 | 26 | 10 | 16 | 61 | — | — | — |
| 26 | 1 | 1 | — | 62 | — | — | — |
| 27 | — | — | — | 63 | — | — | — |
| 28 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 64 | — | — | — |
| 29 | — | — | — | 65 | 1 | — | 1 |
| 30 | 28 | 16 | 12 | 66 | — | — | — |
| 31 | — | — | — | 67 | — | — | — |
| 32 | 1 | 1 | — | 68 | — | — | — |
| 33 | — | — | — | 69 | — | — | — |
| 34 | — | — | — | 70 | 2 | — | 2 |
| 35 | 13 | 6 | 7 | | | | |
| P = Persons<br>M = Males<br>F = Females | | | | Grand Total | 305 | 164 | 141 |

districts of Gwalior Division there are still lesser number of females than those districts which are in the southern part of the division. The statistics give an interesting corroboration of these:—

## TABLE C-2

SHOWING FEMALES PER 1,000 MALES.

| | | | 1961 | 1951 | 1941 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gwalior | Division | | 866 | 880 | 862 |
| Morena | District | (N) | 839 | 849 | 832 |
| Bhind | District | (N) | 849 | 843 | 839 |
| Gwalior | District | (N) | 859 | 891 | 863 |
| Datia | District | (S) | 898 | 902 | 906 |
| Shivpuri | District | (S) | 888 | 906 | 903 |
| Guna | District | (S) | 899 | 919 | 905 |

N = Northern districts of Gwalior division.

S = Southern districts of Gwalior division.

As we come down south in Indore and Bhopal divisions as compared to Gwalior division the proportion of women is higher. Thus Rajgarh 917, Shajapur 943, Dewas 936, Mandsaur 925 have all returned more females than the above districts. The characteristics of the region are clearly marked. As compared to 1951 the number of females per thousand males has again down, after an upward trend between 1941-51. It is difficult to give any reasons, but since the whole tract has returned these characteristics, we may ascribe it to the region. The villagers themselves have no theories, nor do they give any thought or consideration over the matter. To them it is an inexplicable natural phenomenon for as they say, strange are the ways of providence. One of them however said that they would always prefer male children to female ones — for the males are more useful and keep the family going. The females by marriages go into other families, do not retain their individuality but contribute to the growth of other families. The male children are economically an asset. The sum and substance of discussion with the villagers over this point in the end was, that we remained where we were at the beginning, in the matter.

### Births

Out of 305 persons 195 are born in the village itself, 103 outside the village but within the district and remaining seven have been born in Rajasthan State, whose borders are only twenty miles away. Table C-3 gives the birth place of the villagers at Gadher.

## TABLE C-3

SHOWING PLACE OF BIRTH OF GADHER POPULATION

| Birth place | Number of persons | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | | | Rural | | |
| | P. | M. | F. | P. | M. | F. |
| 1. Born in the village | 195 | 134 | 61 | 195 | 134 | 61 |
| 2. Born in the same distt. but outside the village | 103 | 29 | 74 | 103 | 29 | 74 |
| 3. Born in other distt. of the State | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 4. Born in other State (but in India) | 7 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| 5. Born outside India | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 305 | 164 | 141 | 305 | 164 | 141 |

P = Persons
M = Males
F = Females

Among the males as many as 134 out of 164 are born in the village and have continued to live in it. It appears that males have not gone out of the village in any number. Among women however 61 have been born in the village and out of these 38 are in the 0-9 age group, in which the girls stay at home. Only 8 married women were born in the village. The balance is in other age groups. Among women the number born outside the village is considerable being 80 in all. These are nearly in all cases the women who have come after their marriages to the village. As far as men are concerned few males who are now living in the village were born outside it. It indicates that very few persons came from other places to stay in the village. The table emphasises the general immobility of the population of the village.

### Marriages

As far as women are concerned marriage is the most important factor determining their mobility. Table C-4 below shows the marital status of Gadher.

## TABLE C-4

| Age-group | Unmarried | | Married | | Widowed | | Divorced | | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | P | M | F |
| 0-9 | 50 | 38 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 89 | 51 | 38 |
| 10-19 | 16 | 2 | 8 | 10 | — | — | — | — | 36 | 24 | 12 |
| 20-29 | 5 | — | 24 | 37 | — | — | — | — | 66 | 29 | 37 |
| 30-39 | — | — | 25 | 20 | — | 2 | — | — | 47 | 25 | 22 |
| 40-49 | — | — | 16 | 12 | 2 | 2 | — | — | 32 | 18 | 14 |
| 50-59 | — | — | 11 | 2 | 1 | 6 | — | — | 20 | 12 | 8 |
| 60-69 | — | — | 3 | — | 1 | 9 | — | — | 13 | 4 | 9 |
| 70 & above | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 71 | 40 | 88 | 81 | 5 | 20 | — | — | 305 | 164 | 141 |

It is interesting to observe that in the age group 10-19 only two females are unmarried and these are 10 and 12 years of age and belong to Saheriyas. In terms of marriage, therefore, the age of marriage comes to twelve years for no person below that age is married and out of six of that age five are married. There is no spinster in the village, marriage is therefore a must for women. None between the age group 20-29 is unmarried and luckily, none a widow. A villager remarked that during this period, for a woman to remain a widow was a sheer waste of good womanhood, continuing he said, "and with no sanctions against a re-marriage she would never be allowed to be wasted". There are however two widows in 30-39 age group. Upto the age of 39 among males there is no unmarried person or a widower, where women are outnumbered by men, this is somewhat interesting. Beyond the age of fifty there are 16 widows. Their number increases as the years advance. Among males in age group 50-59, 60-69 more remain married than widowers. There are no divorces and in the view of the villagers there is no likelihood of any person attaining to that state. 'For', say the villagers, "each will try to resettle and sooner or later will find a companion". Perhaps he may be right for the village there are no divorces. The solitary widow and widower is among the Saheriyas.

Table C-4 incidently throws more light on the married women. A great majority of these are born outside the village but in the district. Table C-5 shows the birth place of married women in Gadher.

## TABLE C-5

SHOWING BIRTH PLACE OF MARRIED WOMEN.

| | Married women born and also married in the village. (Age-group) | | | | | | | | Married women born outside the village but in the same district. (Age-group) | | | | | | | | Married women born in Rajasthan. (Age-group) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | 10-15 | 16-21 | 22-27 | 28-33 | 34-39 | 40-45 | 46 & above | Total | 10-15 | 16-21 | 22-27 | 28-33 | 34-39 | 40-45 | 46 & above | Total | 10-15 | 16-21 | 22-27 | 28-33 | 24-39 | 40-45 | 46 & above |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| Saheriya | 8 | — | 1 | 4 | 3 | — | — | — | 66 | 4 | 18 | 21 | 8 | 3 | 10 | 2 | 5 | — | — | 3 | 2 | — | — | — |
| Jat | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | — | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Rajput | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Chamar | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 8 | — | 1 | 4 | 3 | — | — | — | 70 | 4 | 19 | 21 | 8 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 5 | — | — | 3 | 2 | — | — | — |

Among the Saheriyas five brides have come from Rajasthan the distance in some cases is about 20 to 50 miles. As regards brides that have been born outside the village but within the district the distance from which they came to Gadher is between 5 to 40 miles. The farthest being near Ashoknagar although a majority of the brides are from 5 to 10 miles range. The Saheriyas claim that among them some brides have come from as far as Kotah or even a little further. Kotah is about 110 miles from the village by road and train but the Saheriyas go cross country.

### Immigration

Locally, no statistical data regarding immigration is available; enquiries suggest that many people, mostly Saheriyas who came to Gadher, did not dwell permanently. The Chamars who came here stayed for a while and went to other village (Chapter I). During the last thirty years there are eleven persons who came and settled here. This list has been compiled from local enquiries.

The most common reason for their having migrated to the village is that these persons were staying in the interior villages and so wanted to be near roadside where the chances of casual employment were better. A few case histories are given:—

**Case I**:—Gangu (Gangola) a Saheriya came from Sonthi a village two miles north but in the interior. There were very few Saheriyas in Sonthi and there was no employment; he had some friends in Gadher and so he migrated. That was 30 years ago. To-day he has some land which he cultivates and follows other occupations viz. collecting fuel and other forest produce. In the above case the migrant wanted to be near his tribe and also be able to earn a livelihood.

**Case II**: Mannu (Manna) a Saheriya came from Bijeypur about 12 miles away in south. He had some relations, father's sister's sons, (*Bhua-ke-Ladke*' who called him to Gadher. He had no lands there, was a lonely orphan and so his aunt called him. He stayed on and

is cultivating some land about 0.5 acres. This is a case of immigration for shelter and home.

**Case III & IV :—** Halka (Halko) and Mullu (Mansingh) came to Gadher about 20 years ago. They both came from Ramgada about 15 miles south-east of Gadher. They came as general labourers. At Ramgada there was no work and so in search of work they came and have settled down now. To-day Mullu has been allotted about 2.60 acres of land by the Government under the "new schemes" where-in tribals have been granted lands in the erstwhile Madhya Bharat State and later in Madhya Pradesh. Halka still is landless but earns his livelihood as a labourer.

**Case V :—** Puran (Pranu) Saheriya came from a village in Rajasthan about 25 miles away, 15 years ago. He came with an idea of working as a labourer; it was never his intention to make his home here. He worked as a casual labourer for a few years, later acquired about half an acre of land through another Saheriya. He is now settled at Gadher.

**Case VI :—** Five Saheriya brothers who permanently resided at Borkheda a village two miles away, quarrelled with their Gujar neighbourers, who beat them. As the quarrel made living there unpleasant they decided to migrate and so 12 years ago, came to Gadher. Their land fortunately for them, is situated near Gadher. In Gadher, with other Saheriyas they are now getting along happily and are quite content.

These six cases were picked up because they related to some oldest migrants in the village. It appears that nearness to the road was an important factor in attracting all these persons; it enhanced the possibility of getting some employment and thus earning a livelihood.

Regarding the residents of the village there are a few who stay there only casually i.e. during the particular period or season (as was the case with the Chamars, Chapter I), of these there is no record; of others too, apart from memory there is also no record. According to the villagers in the last fifteen years, nine families — five Saheriyas and four Chamars who were otherwise staying permanently in the village, left the place for employment or work elsewhere.

Fifteen years ago one Shankar Saheriya eloped with a married woman from the village to Ujjain. About five or six years after the incident, he came alone to the village, stayed for a couple of days and returned. He is reported to have told that he was now working in a mill at Ujjain. There was no quarrel or Panchayat meeting. About eleven years ago three Saheriya families left Gadher. One Ratna settled somewhere in Raghogarh tahsil about 15 miles away, the other two who were brothers moved towards Rajasthan border about 20 miles north-west. The elder, it is said, went to his father-in-law's place (*sasural*) and the younger one accompanied him. It is said that he has been staying there as a *ghar jamai* or a son-in-law who stays at his wife's place. Three years ago Gajju Saheriya went to Kotah for earning his livelihood. It is said that he went to work on Chambal Dam Project.

In addition to these, four Chamars have also left Gadher. Two of them are now settled in Bajrangarh and carry on their trade; the other two are in Guna also mending and making shoes. Their failure to eke out a living resulted in their leaving the village.

From these cases it appears that when there is a better possibility of earning a livelihood, people move out otherwise they are content to stay on in the village.

II

## Diseases & Death

The most common diseases with which the villagers suffer are (1) Small Pox; Chicken Pox; (2) Typhoid; (3) Pneumonia; (4) Malaria; (*tejari*); (5) Dysentry; (6) Diarrhoea; (7) Influenza. All these diseases are treated locally, in very few cases is medical aid sought from Guna hospital. The following treatment is carried out :—

## Small Pox & Chicken Pox

The patient is smeared with ash and in a small plate - *thali*, *kuprela* seed (a kind of herb), is placed along with burning camphor. The *thali* is moved in circular motion around the face by the mother, or any other lady; this is known as *arati*. It is said that the flame purifies the atmosphere and cleans up the small pox germs. She would thereafter change her entire set of clothes and go to the *mata-ka-than* or the place of *mata*. The last portion of the distance is covered by prostrating herself. Formerly the entire distance from the house to the *mata-ka-than* was covered by prostrating herself. Having reached the spot she should offer water over the idol and then return. No medicine for eating or shallowing is given. According to them the treatment for *mata* lies in Gorakhmudi (Sphoeranthus indicus) fruit, which is taken and ground to paste. This is applied externally over the spots. The application reduces the heat of the body. No other medicines are given.

## Pneumonia

Locally it is called *nibhoniya*. The Saheriyas catch a few earth worms locally called *chanchua* from slushy land. They are grinded to a paste with water and the decoction is given to the patient. A sickle is then heated and when red hot it is applied to the stomach causing severe burn marks. Two or three burn marks are made. This application is known as *dabhna*.

## Hupka

*Hupka* is the local term applied for children when they have lung or throat congestion causing difficulty in breathing. The following treatments are prescribed.

(i) A big needle is heated and when red hot it is placed horizontally on the stomach to give 3" to 4" burn mark. Three such marks are given.

(ii) If locusts are available, then their legs are removed and the remaining portion is ground and given to the patient.

(iii) A red insect (the lady fly; lady cow); locally called *Ramji-ki-Dukariya* is grinded and given to the patient.

## Malaria

A creeper gourd is plucked and the patient is expected to recover. The skin or root of Acacia arabica (*babul*) along with thorns from the tree are taken to Ank or *Caiotropis gigontis* plant and with the thorns, the leaf of the *ank* plant is perforated at seven places with the prayer: "Please remove our sufferings and we shall remove yours" i.e. ank's.

Another recipe used is a common spider which is crushed with jaggery and given for eating.

## General Fever

*Inora* (Citrullus clocynthis) fruit is given to the patient along with chillies. This is a very bitter fruit. This reduces the fever but causes diarrhoea for which curd milk is prescribed.

## Diarrhoea

*Bael* (Aegel marmelos) fruit is taken and its kernel is given to the patient.

## Dysentry

*Marror-ki-phali* seed is given to the patient. '*Marror*' means griping hence the tree is called *marror*.

**Typhoid**:— is taken to be 'duration fever' i.e. it has its fixed duration and so nothing is given. The patient survives if his luck permits or dies. There is hardly any treatment for it.

## General Tonics

These are for strength and removal of general debility.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Kundar* | 5 *Tolas* |
| *Kamraj-ki-Jad* | 21 *Tolas* |
| *Semal-ka-Moosla* (Bombax malabarica) | 16 *Tolas* |
| *Kanor* | 32 *Tolas* |
| *Dhori Moosli* (Curculigo orchioides) | 80 *Tolas* |
| Bamboo seeds | 5 *Tolas* |
| *Tal Bukhara-ka-Beej* (Astercantha longifolia) | 1 *Tola* |

These ingredients are ground to give a powder. This powder is fried in 40 *tolas* of ghee, preferably of cow's milk. The substance is kept separately now. Thereafter one cocoanut, *cheeronji* (Buchanania latifolia) 10 *tola*, almonds 10 *tola*, groundnut seed 10 *tola*, resins 15 *tola*, *chhuare* 10 *tola* is fried in another 40 *tolas* of ghee and kept separately. Thus two foods are prepared. Both are now boiled with syrup (sugar and water) called *chasni*, made into small *balls* (*laddus*) and kept in closed brass utensils. They should be eaten after eight days and the dose is one *laddu* a day.

## Deaths

In the last five years adult deaths have been due to the following causes. (1) dysentry, (2) tuberculosis, (3) diarrhoea, (4) accident due to a tractor. The villagers hold that the ages when persons are prone to die is either before reaching the twelve or after crossing fifty years. When a man is above fifty years of age, there is little point in treating him, for sooner or later he must die. In fact little care is bestowed upon him. Persons below 12 years of age are greatly exposed to death for in tender age their vitality is low. It is a grievous loss to the family if a person dies between the age of 12 to 50 and consequently he is carefully nursed. Of deaths, no record is kept; even memory has been blurred about the person who died after age of 50 or before attaining the age of 12. The cases of deaths of the age group 12-50 are however fresh in mind. The villagers are not inclined to regard 'deaths' of persons above 50 years of age as deaths but that it was only a natural consequence.

## Snake-bite

Snake-bite is treated by exorcism. The villagers are very confident in holding that there have been no deaths from snake-bites and also recourse to any other form of treatment was not taken. There have been quite a few cases of snake-bite and some in which persons are bitten by cobras and vipers, yet none died or even went to the hospital. The snake-bite cure by exorcism is based upon the legend of Tejaji.

## The Legend of Tejaji

Tejaji was a Jat from Rajasthan side. While he was going to fetch his wife from her place, he saw a blazing forest fire, towards which a cobra was slithering. The snake would surely have perished and so out of kindness Tejaji drew it aside and saved it. The snake was then annoyed and shouted "Why did you save me? I wanted to die. My consort 'nagin' has already perished in flame".

The following conversation is reported to have taken place:—

Tejaji asked:— "In that case you may die now. I will not save you".

The cobra was upset and was in no mood to argue with Tejaji. It replied.

"Now I cannot die. At that time I was in a mood to perish; now I don't want to; but since — you have disturbed me, I will teach you a lesson and bite".

Tejaji:— "Wait! wait! I am now going to fetch my wife and would return after three days. I promise I will come back to you, if you let me go now".

The snake agreed.

So Tejaji went and was snubbed by his step mother-in-law who did not send her daughter with him. Next day as Tejaji started to go, he was invited by one of his wife's friend (a Gujar woman) to stay with her. He agreed and it so happened that during the night a few heads of her cattle were stolen. She requested Tejaji to search them. Off went Tejaji to search and after a fight with Minas in which he was injured he brought back some cattle; yet the favourite calf had not been traced and the lady implored him to try again. Time was running out since he had made a date with the snake, Tejaji decided to go to the snake and asked for three days extension so that he could accomplish the task. The snake observing the forthright behaviour of Tejaji agreed and so he was back searching for the calf. The search led to an affray and Tejaji fought bravely to rescue the calf but it was pyrrhic victory, for he was badly cut up and all over his body there were gaping wounds. After returning the calf he still remembered his promise to the snake and so went back to him.

The snake pleasantly surprised to see him was full of praise for such a resolute man. It asked him to show him some clear place where it could bite. "You are so badly cut up, there is hardly any clean spot where I may bite" it said. Tejaji was in fact so badly bruised that there was literally no place on his body where the snake could bite. Tejaji whereupon said "My tongue is the only portion of my flesh which is fresh and not cut up and you may bite there".

The snake agreed, but before it did so, Tejaji told the snake, "Now look, I will die for having done good to you, but what will happen to my name? Promise me that my name would not be forgotton, for I die doing good".

The snake was so pleased with Tejaji that he promised that Tejaji's name will not easily be forgotten. It said, "If henceforth, any person bitten by a snake, ties a knot after remembering the name of Tejaji, I promise he will not die".

The snake bit Tejaji in the tongue and he died; but since then he also attained immortality and is remembered at the time of snake bites by persons of the region.

## The Ritual and Cure

When a person has been smitten by a snake, the person ties up a small knot with a piece of cloth a few inches above the bitten spot. It is not a tourniquet and is not tied with a view to prevent the flow of blood supply, yet at the same time it is sufficiently strongly secured so as not to get loose. When the knot is tied the person implores to Tejaji "Oh Tejaji save me from this serpent bite and I shall perform meditorious deeds in your honour". This done there remains nothing more. It is said that the person would not die after he has fixed up the knot. Should the knot come off, then he may not survive; therefore the knot must be very secure for it is almost the life-line. This done he looks forward to eleventh day of moon in the second half of the month of Bhadra — the *gyaras* — also known as *dol gyaras*. On this day a fair is held at village Bhulen about 20 miles away in Kotah district of Rajasthan where a cenotaph commemorates Tejaji. Legend has it that Tejaji died in the village. The

person/s bitten by snake earlier, go to the cenotaph on this day. It is customary for at least two or three persons to accompany the patient for it is necessary that the patient should not be allowed to fall on the ground lest he may die. From quite some distance the buntings and flags locally called *fareras* can be seen on top of the cenotaph. When once these become visible the patient must keep his eye on them. If he dares to look at the ground, he may feel giddy and fall down. This must be prevented as it may cause serious consequences. It is said that this march towards the temple is a fairly difficult one and the patient quite often feels giddy.

He then reaches the cenotaph. On the *chabutara* of the cenotaph a Mina who has been possessed by devta appears and he asks the patient. "What is the good deed that you intend to do". The patient replies suitably. Usually the patient says that he would dig a well, plant a *phareri* on the cenotaph, feed the caste, offer gifts at the cenotaph. The Mina — priest satisfied after receiving the answer, gives some ashes, — called *bhaboot* and asks him to open the knot which was tied at the time of snake bite, this done the patient would not die.

It has also been observed that the promises made are invariably carried out. There is no going back on it. Such is the awe of a promise in the name of Tejaji.

Apart from this the Saheriyas give the juice of some leaves of a tree, which they are reluctant to disclose. It is given as soon as possible after the snake bite. There is, however, no medicine for local application. Their reluctance was rather difficult to overcome. A similar difficulty was experienced by the late His Highness Madhao Rao Scindia who in his Memorandom No. 33 said:—

(Reproduced in Roman)

..... *"MALOOM HO KI AISI JADI BOOTI KE WAKIFKAR AISI DAVAO KO BAHUT CHHIPATE HAI, JO BADI BADKISMATI IS MULK KI HAI LIHASA DARIYAFT KARNE ME BADE TACT KI JARURAT HAI AUR HIKMAT AMLI SE POOCHHNA CHAHIYE UT-PATANG TARIQE SE KAMYABI NA HOGI".*[53]

It may be rendered in the following manner:

"Be it known that persons knowing about such herbs (*jadi-booti*) very much conceal them, which is a great misfortune of this country. Therefore a great amount of tact is required in such investigations and questions must be asked tactfully. Hap hazard investigations are not likely to achieve any success."

It is interesting to note that as far back in 1914-15 the late His Highness Madhao Rao Scindia wrote in the Administration Report of the State as follows:—

"It may be remembered that in one of the Reports in my Review, I suggested to the Medical Department, to try and find out the "Jari Booties" which have in them medicinal properties. To my great regret the Department has utterly failed for want of zeal and interest. Our Indians as a rule are not keen investigators, I am sorry to note still I am now trying again as a second attempt in asking the Department to be so good as to employ a few men to search for them earnestly and to acquire information from the people who know about them. They may atleast take notes of such things as I was told by a person that the root of "Hingot" (*Balani-tesroxburghii*) if given to a man bitten by a snake at once cures him provided the man swallows its juice. How far this is correct I am not prepared to take vow still my idea is that as our men go ahead in this investigation, they should send a complete report to the laboratory, on receipt of which the staff there can experiment and inform the Darbar of the results. As far as I have heard this country is full of such useful things. On this point much information can be got from Saheriyas and various other people".[54]

Even to-day a Saheriya is reluctant in talking about his medicine. The little information given by some, is resented by others and these others usually the elderly types do not look with favour the divulging of this information. In fact at their look of disapproval, the enthusiastic informer cools off, much to the chagrin of the investigator.

## Some Case Histories

Gyarsi a Saheriya woman was bitten by a black snake three years ago in the feet while she was working in the field. Her husband tied a piece of cloth and secured a knot in the name of Tejaji. It was the month of Kartik and Bhadra was almost ten months away. She was not treated further.

In the month of Bhadra on the *dolgyaras* day she was taken to Bhulen cenotaph and there she promised

53. Administration Report of Gwalior State 1914-15 as reproduced in "Chanderi-ki-Aushadhiya".
54. Ibid.

to feed the community by feeding them with 1¼ maund of sweet and *pooris*. The knot was opened then and the feast was subsequently organised at the spot. She is still alive.

Bheron was sleeping on a hay loft in the month of Phalgun (March) and he was bitten by a snake in the thigh. He lit up fire, in which he saw the snake entering the dung cakes. He got up and brought some medicine leaves from the nearby jungle. On return he found the snake cuddled up in the same place. The snake was killed. It was a big black snake. The villagers believe that after biting a person the snake remains dormant and does not move quickly. Bheron is still alive and the spot where he was bitten is raw and has not yet healed. Because a boil has formed over it, it was not possible to see what type of marks the bite caused. He is not worried about the injury not healing up. He felt that it may take some more time but would heal up.

Jaggu accidently stepped on a snake who stung him. He too ate the medicine which Bheron had taken. The snake in this case slithered away and disappeared. It was dark grey but not black. He is apparently hale and hearty.

As far as snake bite accidents are concerned; the villagers rely on their own remedies. They do not remember to have ever sent a case to the hospital or even about a case proving fatal. They were reluctant in disclosing the herb which cures snake bite cases.

## Education

There is a primary school about half mile west of the village housed in a government building. Although as many as 40 boys are on rolls, only 25 attend and these are mostly from Gadher. Out of these, seventeen boys come from Saheriyas. There are in all nine literate persons apart from some boys. Table C-6 shows the number of literates and educated in various age groups.

**TABLE C-6**

SHOWING LITERATE AND EDUCATED PERSONS

| Description | Age Group | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | | 0-9 | | 10-19 | | 20-29 | | 30-39 | | 40-49 | | 50 & above | |
| | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. | M. | F. |
| 1. Uneducated | 155 | 141 | 51 | 38 | 19 | 12 | 27 | 37 | 23 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 17 | 18 |
| 2. Literate & educated (Total) | ... | — | — | — | 5 | — | 2 | — | 2 | — | — | — | — | — |
| (a) Literate | 9 | — | — | — | 5 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| (b) Primary or Junior basic | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| (c) Matric and Higner | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |

## Amenities in the Village

Apart from the school there are no other facilities worth the name. The road passes through the village and hence the facility for communication is good. All other amenities are available at Guna.

III.

## Types of Family

The Rajput family is a joint one and out of two Jat families one is joint and the other is what may be called nuclear one, consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. Among the Saheriyas, the trend appears to be towards nuclear type, they show a marked preference for the above. Table C-7 gives the details regarding pattern of families.

**TABLE C-7**

SHOWING PATTERN OF FAMILIES

| Castes | Total families | No. of nuclear families | No. of-intermediate families | No of joint families | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saheriya | 56 | 29 | 16 | 11 | |
| Jat | 2 | — | 1 | 1 | |
| Rajput | 1 | — | — | 1 | |
| Chamar | 1 | 1 | — | — | |
| Total | 60 | 30 | 17 | 13 | |

1. Nuclear Family :— Consists of husband, wife and unmarried children.
2. Intermediate Family :— Married couple and unmarried brother, sister, one of the parents.
3. Joint Family :— Married couple with married sons/daughters or with married brothers/sisters.

The Saheriyas say that each family is formed on basis of work done or the economic effort put-in. Since each has to earn livelihood — each must stay within a family. Very few of them have any means by which a big family could be supported. In joint family, the Saheriyas claim, there are quite a few idlers and yet they live and eat together. With them such a course could not be possible. A joint family requires more space to live. The limited accommodation they aver often leads to trouble and later quarrels. Building a new home does not cost much and so a new house is easily built and a family could settle in it instead of crowding in one home. There being no settled occupation so the younger one is free to move out. In other castes where cultivation is more or less a settled occupation the son on growing up has to look after it. He is tethered to his past and the shackles are not easy to break. Even when a family breaks up, there is very little trouble or inconvenience amongst the Saheriyas; for there are no lands to be parcelled or other valuables to be partitioned He came empty handed and parts almost in similar manner, thus the setting seems helpful to nuclear family. The Saheriyas regard nuclear families as normal but the other castes cling to the traditional notion of the joint family being the best.

It is in this light that the Jats and Rajputs think, although even they concede that gradually joint families are disintegrating.

### Size of the Family

Statistically an average family in village consists of 5.01 members. The detailed break up is given in table C-8.

## TABLE C-8

SHOWING NUMBERS OF MEMBERS IN HOUSEHOLDS

| No. of members in a family | No. of the households | Total persons | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | — | — | Average 5 persons per household. |
| 2 | 10 | 20 | |
| 3 | 7 | 21 | |
| 4 | 10 | 40 | |
| 5 | 10 | 50 | |
| 6 | 5 | 30 | |
| 7 | 10 | 70 | |
| 8 | 4 | 32 | |
| 9 | 2 | 18 | |
| 10 | — | — | |
| 11 | 1 | 11 | |
| 12 | — | — | |
| 13 | 1 | 13 | |
| Total | 60 | 305 | |

The Jat family referred earlier contains 11 members whereas in one Saheriya household there are 13 members. In eleven households there are four members apiece, and nine have only two each.

The notable change from the past is that joint families have shown signs of disintegration. Even Saheriyas agree in this. They seem to say that while in the past they had more joint families, the present trend appears against it.

IV.

## INTRA FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

### Father and Son

The father in the childhood remains loving and doting. The father will not fondle wtih the child if the grand-father, grand-mother of child or his father's elder brother appears within sight. The father takes over looking after the son after he reaches the age of 8-10 years when he steadily initiates him into cultivation or other occupation. The son remains, a sort of an understudy, somewhere between a help and hindrance. The son picks up the occupational background and soon begins to inherit the minor vices, e.g. smoking. The father when learns about it, does not discourage the son, although never openly acquisciese in it e.g. would not offer a *bidi* or a *chilam*. As the son grows up he feels more self reliant and as he begins to earn some money, he begins to feel more independent of the father, we may sum up — the feeling of independence from his father in the son is directly related to his capacity for earning; the more established he becomes in earning the more independent he seems to grow.

Among the Saheriyas, after the marriage the son generally sets up his own establishment. In joint families however the authority of the father is supreme.

### Father and Daughter

The father dotes on the daughter but she remains

almost in exclusive custody of the mother. The father appears to regard the daughter more philosophically feeling that she is destined to go out of the family. A great deal of this sentiment of kindness is perhaps attributable to this feeling. The father and daughter relationship is a prohibited one and followed rigidly. No case of incest was reported. The father is anxious to get her married when the time is due and out of regards and affection gives her whatever gifts he can.

### Mother and Son

In the infancy the son is dearly attracted to the mother, then for a while the father takes up the upbringing and the son finds newer friends. It is a prohibited relationship. No case of incest was reported, when the son is married and if he stays with the parents it is a crucial period for both of them, because on this relationship depends the future of a joint family.

### Mother and Daughter

The mother is very fond of the daughter and she grows up exclusively under the chaperoning. The mother would teach her domestic jobs and in many cases is her first and also the last teacher. Very often the daughter is cause of causing friction between daughter-in-law and mother, because the mother has great affection for her. She feels more free with her mother and would relate to her, her woes and treatment meted out at her father-in-law's place. The mother intuitively appreciates her difficulties better and the fact that she would soon go away brings her still closer on many occasions, they also cause a lot of friction between the mother and daughter-in-law.

### Brothers

During the childhood they are full of affection for each other. After the marriage things change. If their wives do not pull on well the brothers also quarrel among themselves. Quarrels are also common at the time of partition. Among step-brothers the quarrels are more frequent. It is observed that though the brothers may quarrel among themselves but as against an outsider they are united.

### Sisters

The only time the sisters remain together, is, as long as they are not married, during which time they remain on good terms. After the marriage they meet each other on some particular occasion like marriage etc. and quarrel only if their share of gifts happens to be less than the other.

### Husband and Wife

Among the Saheriyas between husband and wife there is a lot of love. If there is no love, then the relationship may not endure and may end up in a divorce. The husband is regarded as the senior partner: the lord and master and the wife is his inferior. The husband keeps the money, the accounts if any and provides for the running of the house-hold and although the wife may be an earner, she still gives her earnings to the husband. The husband treats the wife kindly. She has to do all the work in the house apart from going into the forest for earning some more money. Generally speaking the relations between husband and wife are pleasant and there have been no complaints of misbehaviour although beating wives is a common practice.

### Mother-in-law — Daughter-in-law

The mother-in-law regards herself as the mistress of the house and daughter-in-law is supposed to be subservient to her wishes. She (mother-in-law) exercises her authority over her and makes the daughter-in-law do all the domestic chores. Quarrels are not in-frequent and often when the son also sides with his wife, the quarrel becomes serious and may lead to break up up of joint families. With the father-in-law the bride is supposed to observe *purdah* and does not talk to him. It is an avoidance relationship and no case of incest have been reported. This relationship either continues or breaks up the joint families. It has been pointed out that in the past few years the influence of the mother-in-law, or father-in-law has diminished considerably and disintegration of joint families is a common result.

## V.

## INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY

### Statutory Provisions

Devolution of land is governed by Section 164 of Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code, 1959 according to which the holding of a Bhumiswami[55] tenant devolves as per list in section. The law regarding devo-

55. Bhumiswami:— from Hindi word Bhumi — land — and Swami — master: literally master of land, Bhumiswami is a tenure holder of lands, holding them from the State. The right in land are heritable and transferable subject to certain conditions.

:ution and transfer of the holdings of a Bhumiswami is reproduced below.

(Sections 164-165 of Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code, 1959). "164. (1) Notwithstanding any law, custom or usage to the contrary, the interest of a Bhumiswami shall on his death devolve in accordance with the order of succession given below:—

*Class I.* — Son, predeceased son's son, son of a predeceased son's predeceased son, widow or husband as the case may be, predeceased son's widow, widow of a predeceased son's predeceased son and widow of a predeceased son's predeceased son's predeceased son.

*Explanation I.* — A grandson whose father is dead and great grandson whose father and grand-father are both dead shall inherit equally with the son.

*Explanation II.* — The widow of the deceased or if there are more widows than one, all his widows together shall take the same share as that of a son. The widow of a predeceased son shall inherit in the manner as a son if there is no son surviving of such predeceased son, and in the like manner as a son's son, if there is surviving a son or a son's son of such predeceased son. The same rule shall apply *Mutatis Mutandis* to the widow of a predeceased son of a predeceased son.

Class II — Daughter
Class III — Father
Class IV — Mother (if she is a widow). ... .....
Class V — Step mother (if she is a widow).
Class VI — Brother of the whole blood.
Class VII — Brother of the half blood (being a son of the same father).
Class VIII — Daughter's son.
Class IX — Brother's son.
Class X — Brother's son's son.
Class XI — Father's father.
Class XII — Father's mother (if she is a widow).
Class XIII — Sister.
Class XIV — Sister's son.
Class XV — Paternal uncle (father's brother).
Class XVI — Paternal uncle's son (father's brother's son).
Class XVII — Paternal uncle's son's son.
Class XVIII — Father's father's father.
Class XIX — Father's father's mother (if she is a widow).
Class XX — Father's paternal uncle.
Class XXI — Father's paternal uncle's son.
Class XXII — Father's paternal uncle's son's son.

*Explanation* — If there are more heirs than one of the same class, other than class I who shall inherit per stripes, all shall share equally (2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) where the interest of a Bhumiswami is inherited by a female:—

(a) from her father or mother, such interest on the death of the female shall, in the absence of her heirs of Class I or Class II of the order of succession specified in sub-section (1), devolve upon the nearest surviving heir of her father as ascertained in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1);

(b) from the husband or her father-in-law such interest on the death of the female shall, in the absence of her heirs of class I or class II of the order of succession specified in sub-section (1), devolve upon the nearest surviving heir of her husband as ascertained in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1);

(c) as a widow, mother, father's mother or father's father's mother such interest shall, on her re-marriage, devolve upon the nearest surviving heir of the last male holder of such interest as ascertained in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1);

(3) Where the total area of land in possession of a Bhumiswami together with the land which he is entitled to inherit under this section exceeds the prescribed ceiling limit, so much of the inheritable land as makes the total exceed the prescribed ceiling limit shall after selection by the Bhumiswami and demarcation in the prescribed manner devolve upon the other heirs of the propositus as ascertained in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1).

## Rights of transfer

165. (1) Subject to the other provisions of this section and the provisions of section 168 a Bhumiswami may transfer otherwise than by will any interest in his land.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) —

(a) No mortgage of any land by a Bhumiswami shall hereafter be valid unless at least five acres of irrigated or ten acres of unirrigated land is left with him free from any encumbrance or charge;

(b) subject to the provisions of clause (a) no usufructuary mortgage of any land by a Bhumi-

swami shall hereafter be valid if it is for a period exceeding six years and unless it is a condition of the mortgage that on the expiry of the period mentioned in the mortgage deed, the mortgage shall be deemed, without any payment whatsoever by the Bhumiswami to have been redeemed in full and the mortgagee shall forthwith re-deliver possession of the mortgaged land to the Bhumiswami.

(c) If any mortgagee in possession of the land mortgaged does not hand over possession of land after the expiry of the period of the mortgage or six years whichever expires first the mortgagee shall be liable to ejectment by the orders of the Tahsildar as trespasser and the mortgagor shall be placed in possession of the land by the Tahsildar.

(3) Where a Bhumiswami effects a mortgage other than usufructuary mortgage of his land in pursuance of the provisions of sub-section (2), then notwithstanding anything contained in the mortgage deed, the total amount of interest accruing under the mortgage shall not exceed half the sum of the principal amount advanced by the mortgagee.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), no Bhumiswami shall have the right to transfer any land —

(a) in favour of any person who shall as a result of the transfer become entitled to land which together with the land, if any, held by himself or by his family will in the aggregate exceed ceilnig limits as may be prescribed;

(b) if such transfer shall result in a holding the area of which is below five acres of irrigated or ten acres of unirrigated land;

Provided that nothing in this sub-section shall apply in the case of a transfer in favour of a co-operative society or an institution established for a public, religious or charitable purpose or a transfer by way of mortgage.

Provided further that nothing in clause (b) of this sub-section shall prevent a Bhumiswami from transferring his entire holding or any portion of his holding having a mango grove thereon.

*Explanation.* — For the purposes of this sub-section, a person's family shall consist of the person himself, the minor children and the spouse of such person living jointly with him and if such person is a minor then his parents living jointly with him.

(5) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any other enactment for the time being in force, no land of a Bhumiswami shall, in execution of a decree or order of a court, be sold to any person who as a result of such sale shall become entitled to land which together with the land, if any, held by himself or by his family will in the aggregate exceed such ceiling limits as may be prescribed.

Provided that nothing in this sub-section shall apply in the case of a co-operative society where any land is put to sale in execution of a decree or order passed in favour of such society.

*Explanation.* — For the purposes of this sub-section, the expression "a person's family" shall have the same meaning as assigned to it in sub-section (4).

(6) Notwithstanding anything in sub-section (1), the right of a Bhumiswami belonging to a tribe which has been declared to be an aboriginal tribe by the State Government by a notification in that behalf for the whole or a part of the area to which this Code applies shall not be transferred to a person not belonging to such tribe without the permission of a Revenue Officer not below the rank of a Collector, given for reasons to be recorded in writing.

(7) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) or in any other law for the time being in force —

(a) only that part of a holding of a Bhumiswami shall be liable to attachment or sale in execution of any decree or order as is in excess of five acres of irrigated or ten acres of unirrigated land;

(b) no land comprised in a holding of a Bhumiswami belonging to a tribe which has been declared to be an aboriginal tribe under sub-section (6) shall be liable to be attached or sold in execution of any decree or order;

(c) no receiver shall be appointed to manage the land of a Bhumiswami under section 51 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (V of 1908) nor shall any such land vest in the court or any receiver under the Provincial Insolvency Act, 1920 (V of 1920) contrary to the provisions of clause (a) or clause (b):

Provided that nothing in this sub-section shall apply where a charge has been created on the land by a mortgage.

(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 the 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 Co-operative Society or shall affect the right of any such society to sell such right for the recovery of such advance.

(10) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Registration Act, 1908, (XVI of 1908) no officer empowered to register documents thereunder shall admit to registration any document which purports to contravene the provisions of this section.

(11) Nothing in this section shall —

(a) invalidate any transfer which was validly made; or

(b) validate any transfer which was invalidly made;

before the coming into force of this Code.

*Explanation.* — For purposes of this section one acre of irrigated land shall be deemed to be equal to two acres of unirrigated land and vice versa.

From the above it follows that male heir viz. a son is preferred to a daughter. A daughter has been placed in category II and since class I excludes class II she has no chance of succeeding to the land of her father if her brothers or dependents of brothers are surviving.

The statutory law agrees with the ideas the people have about law of inheritance and appear quite aware of it but whereas this law is applicable to the holdings only, they apply it to all other properties moveable or immoveable. They would not like a daughter to inherit house if the son is living. The daughter need not be given any share in it. Whatever had to be given to the daughter ought to be given at the time of her marriage or when she comes to her father's place. Beyond this she should not be given anything.

Where a son is dead, her widow is given his proportionate share, but the customary law requires that she should not re-marry and should look after the children. In case she re-marries or starts living with anyother man all lands held by her are taken away by the deceased's relatives and she is sent out of the family. The caste panchayat settles the dispute, if any, no recourse to court of law is taken. The powerful patwari may also obtain some money and help in the disposal. The lands are however restored to the children, when they are capable of managing it; but this is not always so: for attempts to usurp the holdings are not entirely unknown.

VI

## Leisure & Recreation

There is no organised form of recreation. The small children (age upto 8/9 years) play with whatever they can improvise. Their favourite games are: *gulli-danda; gadi-gadi; cowries* and hide and seek. They are played in following manner:—

*Gulli-danda*:— is a great favourite. The game consists in hitting a small *gulli* which is a small piece of wood of pointed edges, with a small stick long piece of wood about 1½′ to 2′ long, 1½″ in diameter called *danda*. After the *gulli* on being hit goes to some distance, the striker calls for his 'runs', which depends upon the length of the *danda*. If the non-striking side agrees the 'runs' asked, go to the credit of the striker. If the non-strikes challanges then, the entire distance is counted in terms of these 'runs'. If the number of 'runs' asked are excessive then striker losses his chance. In this way 'runs' are added and victory is claimed after the other side too had its strike. The party scoring more 'runs' wins.

*Gadi-gadi*:— It means playing with an improvised cart. One child would sit at the end of the stick which has a flattened end and the other boy would drag him away. After some time they change places.

*Cowries*:— Three or four boys can play together. Each boy contributes 3 or 4 *cowries* to the common pool and they dig up a small hole about 2″ to 3″ in diameter. A small distance is measured out and from this distance the *cowries* are thrown into the hole. As many as may enter the hole are won by the thrower. He then aims and hits other ones; when he misses hitting one he loses his turn and others take over. Thus they keep winning or losing. It is nearly same as school boys playing 'marbles'.

The girls during this period do not play these games. They however play their own games: the favourite one being *chulanhia* or making a small hearth. They make a small *chulha* and cook. Thus from the very beginning they seem to prepare for their domestic chores.

Boys between the age group 9 to 14 years play *kabaddi; kho-kho; gulli-danda* and 'a local variety of

Foot-ball'. While the first two are played as per rules, and the games are taught in the school, *gulli-danda* is played as already described. Foot-ball is played by keeping two stones on each side. No rule seem to be observed while playing. It is an all in game and whichever side pushes the ball across the goal wins. The ball is made at home by piecing together cloth, rags and such other soft material. Scoring a goal is the only goal in the game.

## Leisure & Recreation in Day to Day Life

Idle gossip appears to be the main recreation during the leisure period. It is the only recreation with men and although women are not an exception, but they have some other recreations too. The usual place for gossiping is open space out side the house. A few friends sit and thrash out topics of general interest, passing around the smoking pipe called *chilam*. The atmosphere is informal and friendly. Whenever women assemble, they pass sometime in singing. They are fond of singing: either when going to the forest or returning from work or sitting at home to grind the corn. The songs are sung without any orchestral accompaniment.

For men the other recreation is an occasional drink at Guna. At the end of the day when the timber that he carried has been sold at a good price and there is some money in the pocket, he feels like relaxing. A drink or two puts him on the top and if money still reminds him of its existence, he may even visit a cinema, but such may only be an occasional lapse. Cinema does not attract Saheriyas, and although they may visit it sometime, but as yet they have no taste for it. A good feed at Guna is also a part of recreation and he would any day prefer to have a good feed rather than visit a cinema.

## Festivals

The festival season starts from Shrawana which usually falls in July/August each year. On the full moon day of Shrawana the men gather in the evening and sing and dance *lehngi*. *Lehngi* is danced by about 20-25 persons. Music is provided by beating a drum and playing small jingle bells (*ghungru*; which are tied around the neck of buffaloes). The drum beater and bell player stand in the middle, around whom the dancers circle, with two small sticks (2' to 3' long) in their hands and strike each other's sticks as they whirl around. The movement answers to the music, slow halting at the beginning, it steadily gathers in tempo and beats faster, the faster it beats the quicker move the feet and soon the orchestra and the dancers in perfect rhythmic harmony present a gay spectacle of swirling lines of movement, clean and crisp sounds of the batons all in tune with the well regulated beats of the drum. The dance goes on and as the drumer calls the tune the dancers respond. The drumer plays faster and faster and the dancers move around in unisom and only when their feet become heavy as logs do they call it a day. It is energetic, rhythmic dancing even by most exacting standards. The dances go on for six or seven days. The women do not participate in this, but during the month of Shrawana they use the swing or *jhoola* and enjoy themselves. Swinging during these days is very common on any good tree which can stand the strain a swing is tied and the women have it on their way.

The Saheriyas do not seem to know as to why they dance on this occasion but their reply seemed to contain one small hint — for they replies, 'This is our only celebration during rainy season'. The emphasis obviously is on rainy season — in fact it appears to be a welcome dance for the rains. The dancing radiates joy — joy to both the gamester and the bystander. It seems to echo the joy with the earth reflects as the life-giving rain drops splash against it. The falling of rain after a parched summer is particularly welcome. Almost after the rains start there is plenty of work to do: viz. repairing house, making it rainworthy, tilling the land etc. — but by *Shrawana* life settles down to a more placid routine. The house has withstood the lashing of rains: the fields have been sown and the crops are beginning to germinate, one could visit and watch happily and brust into a song. So now is the time to sing in joy for the beautiful gift of rain! rain which ensures better crops, food, in fact continuance of life and so it seems for the favours and gifts received, the Lord has made them truly thankful.

The next important festival observed is during Nav Durga or the nine days during which Durga is worshipped. Durga is worshipped in the form of Kali or the goddess of destruction. On the first day of this week *jawaras* are sown. Barley seeds or wheat grains are sown in leaf cup *dauna* or a broken pot. They sprout and grow up to a height of 4" to 6". These are known as *jawaras*. For the first six or seven days nothing is done. Ceremonies begin on the seventh day and last upto the nine: the tenth day being the Dushera festival.

On the seventh day, all Saheriyas gather together and carry with them red flag. They form a small procession and move along to the place of Kali which is on top of the hill. They move about singing and dancing singing praise of Kali — shouting *Kali Mai ke Jai*. Having reached the spot they plant the flag, break cocoanuts and smear Kali with vermillion. This done they distribute cocoanut as *prasad* and return in the same manner as they went.

The eighth day is observed as an individual offering day. On this day all persons who had promised earlier to honour the Kali by planting a *pharera* at her shrine gather together. Some offer to honour her at their homes and so they clean up a small square (3′ x 3′) and place the small buntings. On this day those who offer a *pharera* form a small group, visit other villagers singing and distribute cocoanut as *prasad*. They then return to their places. On this day nobody visits the Kali. Persons offering *pharera* keep a small oil lamp burning from the very first day i.e. the day on which they planted *jawaras*. This oil lamp burns till Dushera.

On the ninth day everybody gets ready after an early breakfast by 0900 hours. The house is cleaned up. A few persons however with flour and other rations including a goat, liquor go to a cool grove about 2 furlongs south of the village. The rest in their best clothes gather to form a procession. The procession moves from one cluster to another to the accompaniment of singing males and females and dancing males.

They reach the place where rations etc. have been carried. Here they join and help in preparing food. It is a community feast for which they have come. Some time in the afternoon, the entire company goes to the Durga idol on the top of the hill. While going the males keep singing and dancing, the women prostrate themselves as they go. Not all women do so, but a few, specially who had asked for favours and which have been granted, do so. When they reach the spot, the procession becomes more orderly.

The goat is sacrificed now. One person acts as the executioner and with one blow severs the head. Liquor is also offered. Cocoanuts are broken and a small sacrificial fire is lit up. After this everyone returns to the spot where feast has been kept ready. In the feast meat is cooked. Generally a goat is slaughtered in the morning for the feast. The meat of the sacrificed goat is distributed as *prasad* and cooked the following morning. On this day it is necessary to sacrifice a goat; blood must be offered and no matter what they may eat, the sacrifice of goat on the day is necessary. To obtain the goat subscriptions are raised and so the menu of the feast depends on these contribution. On return it is time for some liquor. Only the men drink it, women and children do not participate in this. This is followed by general dinner at about dusk or shortly thereafter.

On the next day all the males at least one from each house gather and collectively visit all the shrines of the village. Coconut is offered and if possible another lamb is sacrificed. This depends upon availability of funds. The meat of this lamb is distributed to the followers as *prasad* and is cooked and eaten. Thus ends the Nav Durga celebrations.

## Diwali

Lately i.e. for the last 10-15 years the Saheriyas have started celebrating Diwali. On the Kartik *Amavasya* day, the day on which Diwali is celebrated in the country, the Saheriyas light earthen lamps and place them in front of their houses. Lamps are also lit up on the day following *Amavasya*. The Saheriyas do not observe any *puja*. The next day after Diwali, the cattle is bathed and decorated. This is known as *godhan puja* or worship of cattle wealth. The cattle which includes cows, buffaloes, bullocks and calves are fed with *poories* and gaily decorated for the day.

## Holi

Holi is celebrated for two days. On the *phalgun purnima* (full moon) day which generally falls in March the children gather, and at a central spot in the village where all can easily assemble a branch of a tree is planted to give it a shape of a tree. The entire village assembles in the evening at about the dusk time. The cultivators bring corn leaves and an elderly person among the congregation ignites the Holi. Whereas in some places Holi is ignited by the village headman or some Sarpanch, but this is not the practice here.

On the following day the entire village plays with colour, mud and ash, showering it upon others. The day starts with men congregating at home place and soon their number swell. They visit each other's houses and greet one and another. On this day they also visit other houses and after the visit the male inmates join in and so the crowd swells. As the persons gather, some break into a melody and the rest join. Thus with songs and dances the procession sweeps along the

entire village, infecting every one with a maddening gaiety. This goes on till about 4 or 5 p.m. in the evening. Towards the later part of the afternoon drinks make their appearance. Quite a few are fond of the bottle and so a little liquor adds immeasurably to the fun — for once there are few sober persons left; and with a little liquor inside everybody feels fine almost 'on the top of the world'. And if there has been some collection of money, then the day is climaxed by the performance of a nautch girl viz. *bedni*[56] who may be called from a nearby village; thus with a dancing girl tantalisingly swirling around in an aroma of wine, smoke and melody of bawdy songs, life reaches dizzy heights of rapturous joys. On this particular occasion she dances *rai* a dance exciting and stimulating and accompanied by vulgar, obscene songs. The day of *Bedni's* dance is a great occasion and persons from nearby villages flock to see the performance. The women also watch the dancing. Sometimes the villagers also join in the dance and invariably the best male dancer joins her dance and keeps singing. The visit of a *bedni* is thus a very exciting event and the dancing continues well into the early hours of the morning. The songs which are sung on this occasion are called *swang* and are usually smutty.

When a *Bedni* has been invited the villagers send invtiations to the following nearby villages (1) Borkheda, 2 miles; (2) Sonthi, 2 miles; (3) Gadha, 4 miles; (4) Khoda Panj, 5 miles; (5) Hilagana ,3 miles and (6) Mau, 2 miles. Persons from these villages throng to watch the performance. This system of inviting is reciprocal. *Bednis* are available in Rothai 12 miles; Fatehgarh 20 miles and Raghogarh 18 miles. Sometimes they may even be invited from a Rajasthan village.

The *Bedni* is paid Rs. 25.00 to Rs. 50.00, depending mostly on two factors (a) her looks and (b) capacity for dancing. The visit is for dancing only. In case there are good male singers in these villages, they are specially invited to join the singing with *Bedni*.

## Fairs

The villagers visit the following fairs or Melas:—

(1) Guna Mela held in January/February each year;

(2) *Bees-bhuji-ka-mela* at Bajarangarh in Nav Durga week;

(3) Shivratri Mela in Phalguna at the village temple;

(4) *Tejaji-ka-mela* — Bhadra *gyaras;*

(5) Besides the above, they visit the weekly market at Guna and Rothai.

(i) Each year at Guna a mela is held some time in January/February and it lasts for about a fortnight. For villagers it is an opportunity for sight seeing and an opportunity for eating at cheap restaurants. It does not however provide an opportunity for earning.

(ii) About two miles away from Bajrangarh and surrounded by forest is located the *Bees-bhuji-ka* Mandir. The temple is dedicated to Kali whom the Saheriyas worship. During *Nav Durga* period they visit the temple, sing and make their offerings; usually in the form of sweets purchased locally or in cash.

(iii) On the Shivratri day a *mela* is held at the village temple which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Shopkeepers from Guna bring some wares but mostly these are sweet-meat sellers. Saheriyas attend the *mela* though they do not enter the temple to perform a *puja*.

(iv) The *mela* at Bhulen in honour of Tejaji is attended by the people for two reasons:— (1) for the fun of attending a big fair; (2) for fulfilling promises made especially in case of snake-bite. Every year a few persons from the village make their way towards Bhulen, to attend the fair. Their main attraction being small wares and eating shops.

## Folk Songs

Songs mostly vary with the season and the months of the year. Here are some of the varieties of songs:

(1) Chopai:— is sung in the month of Ashad-Shrawan (July-August) or the rainy season.

*SAB DEVTAN*[1] *ME HANUMAN BADE*
*DHAN*[2] *ME DHAURI*[3] *GAI*
*SAB KAPDAN*[4] *ME KAMRA*[5] *BADE*
*VOH JANAM*[6] *DHUBIYA*[7] *NA JAE*

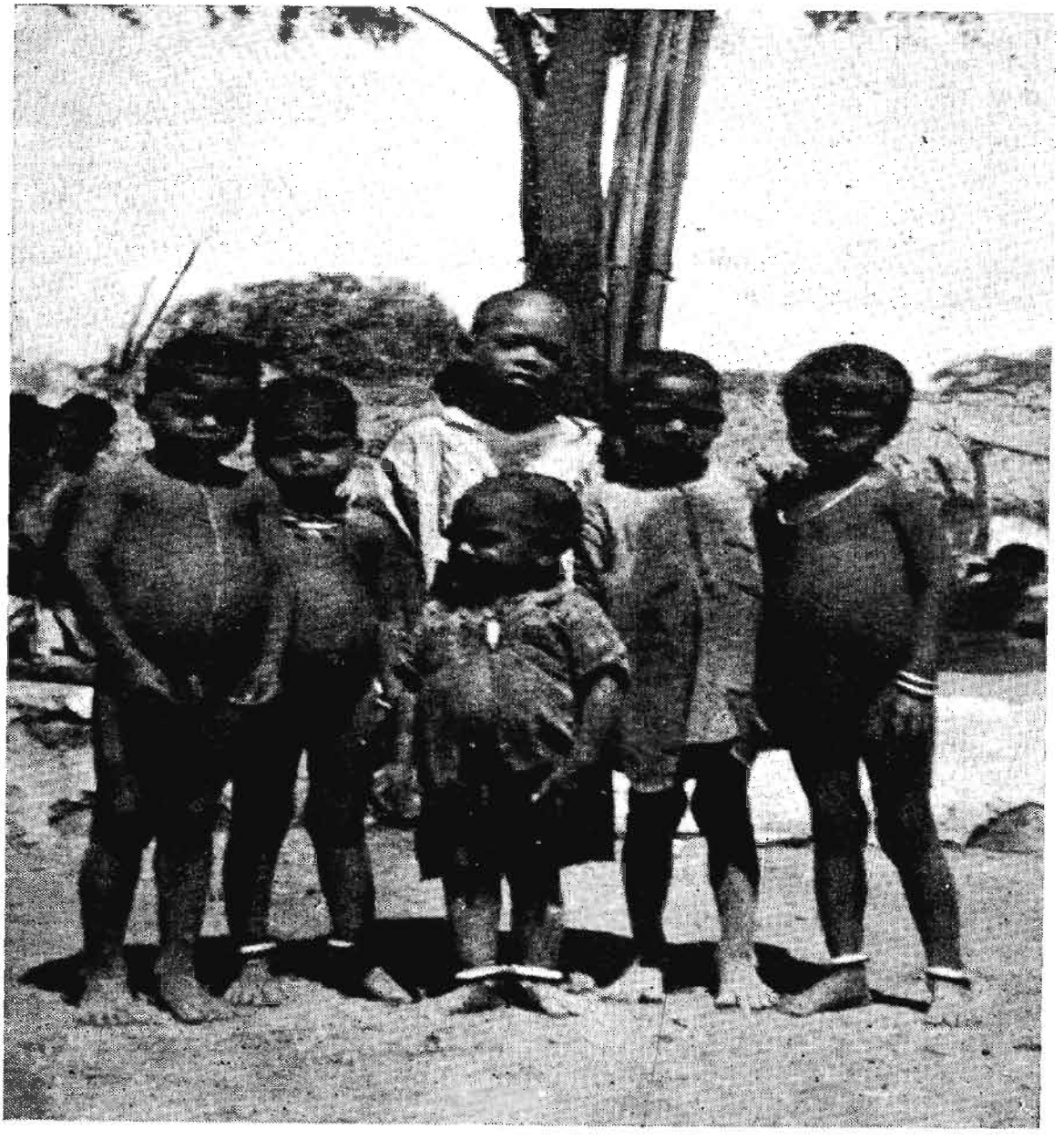
translated it means:—

Of all Gods Hanuman is the mightest;
Of all wealth a white cow is the best;

56. Bedia:— A caste of gypsies and thieves who are closely connected with the Sansias".
In Sagar the women of the caste, known as Berni are the village dancing girls and are employed to give performances in the Holi festival where they dance, the whole night through, fortified by continuous potations of liquor. This dance is called 'rai' and is accompanied by most obscene songs and gestures".
(The Tribes & Castes of C. P. of India, by Russell and Hiralal, Vol. II, p. 224).

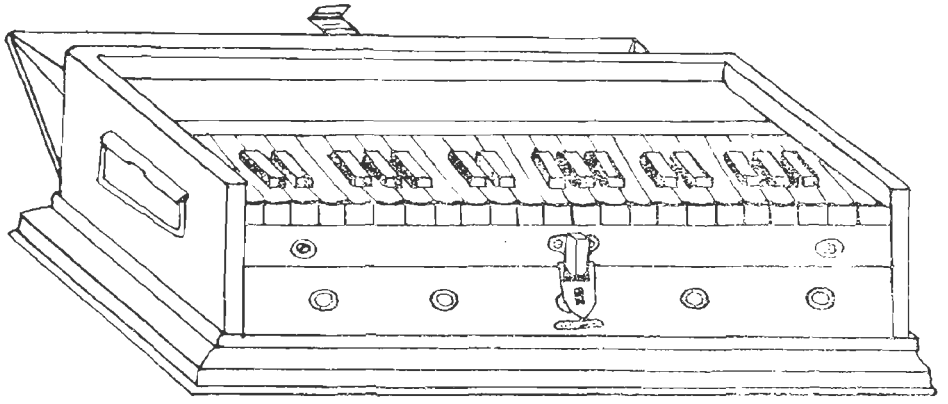
1. Gods; 2. Wealth; 3. White; 4. Clothes; 5. Blanket; 6. From the birth; 7. a dhobi.

# PLATE XXXIV

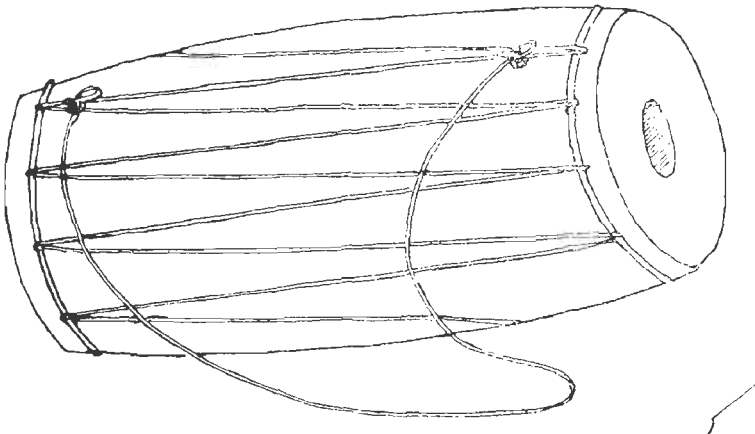


A group of Tribal Children

# PLATE XXXV



HARMONIUM



DHOLAK



MURLI



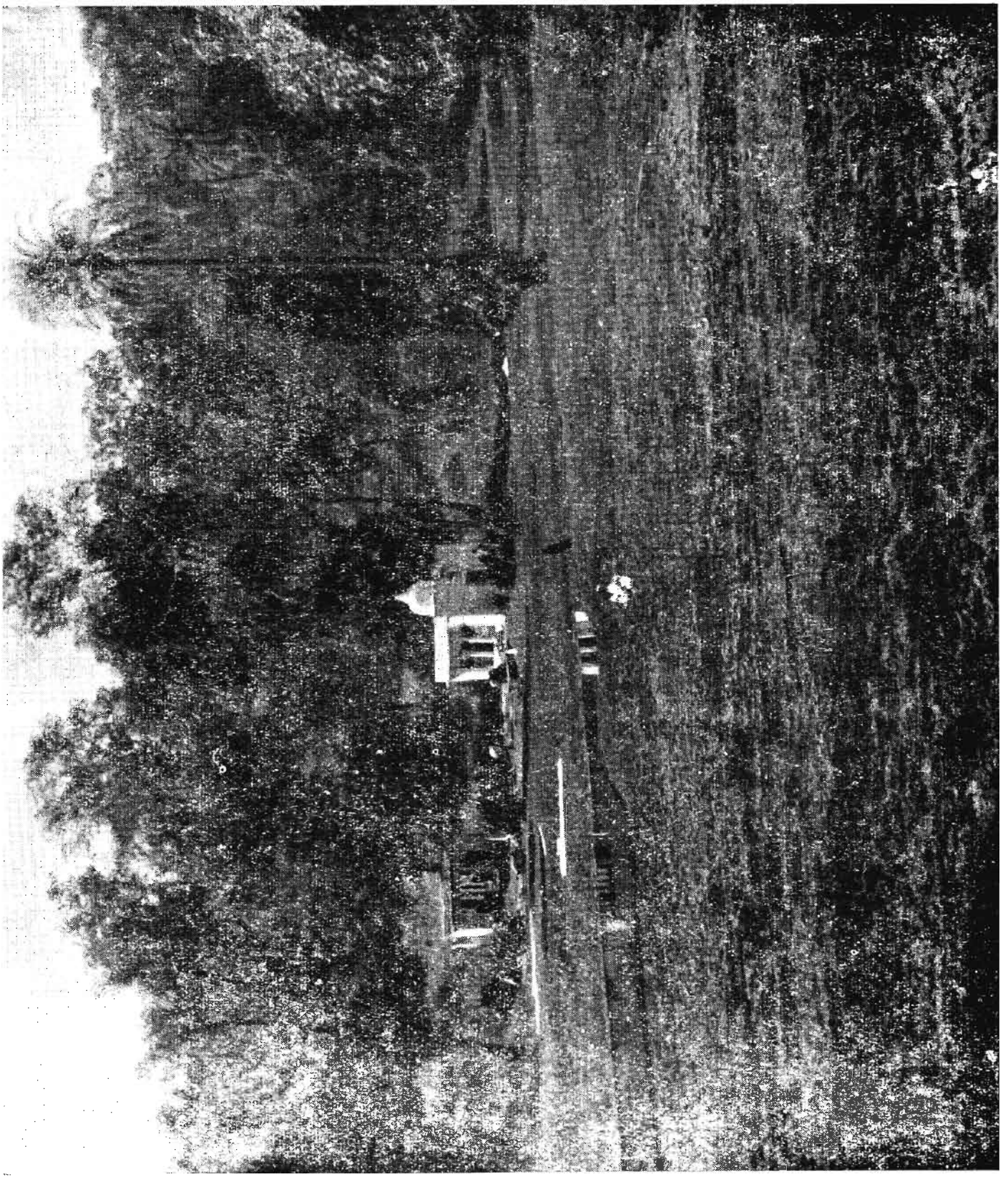
MANJEERA



BEEN

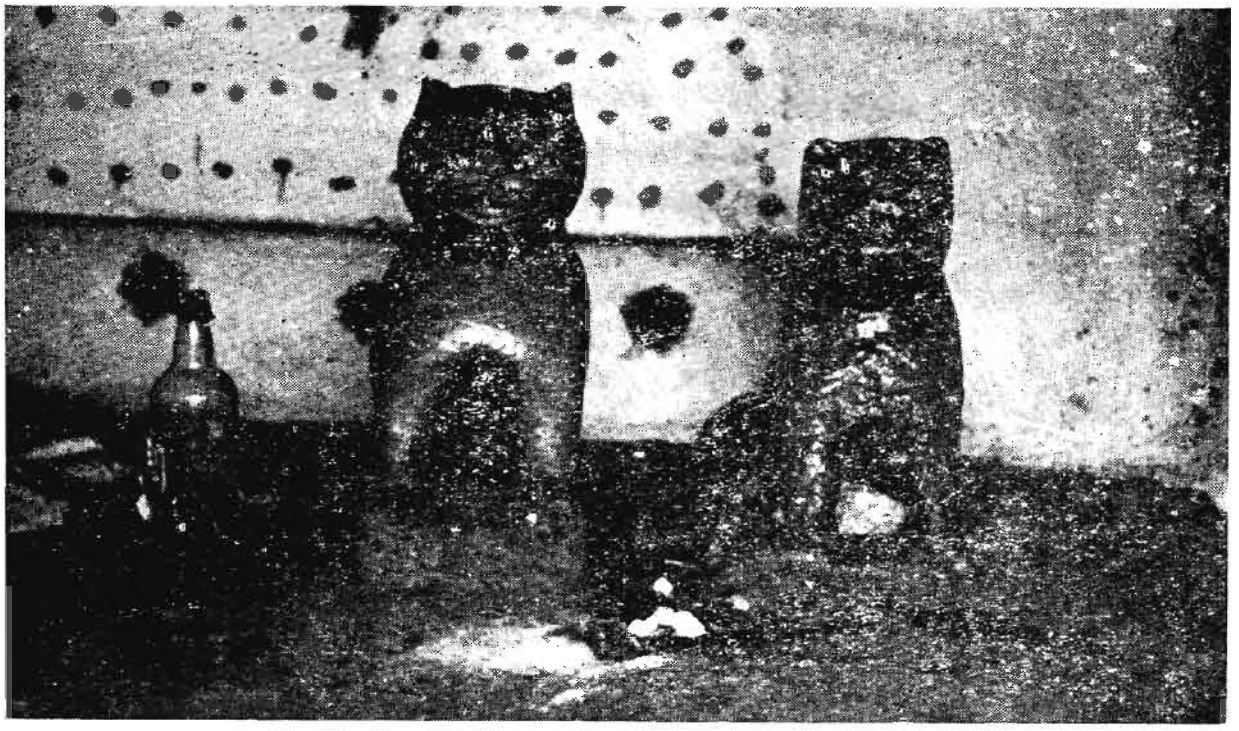
Musical Instruments

# PLATE XXXVI

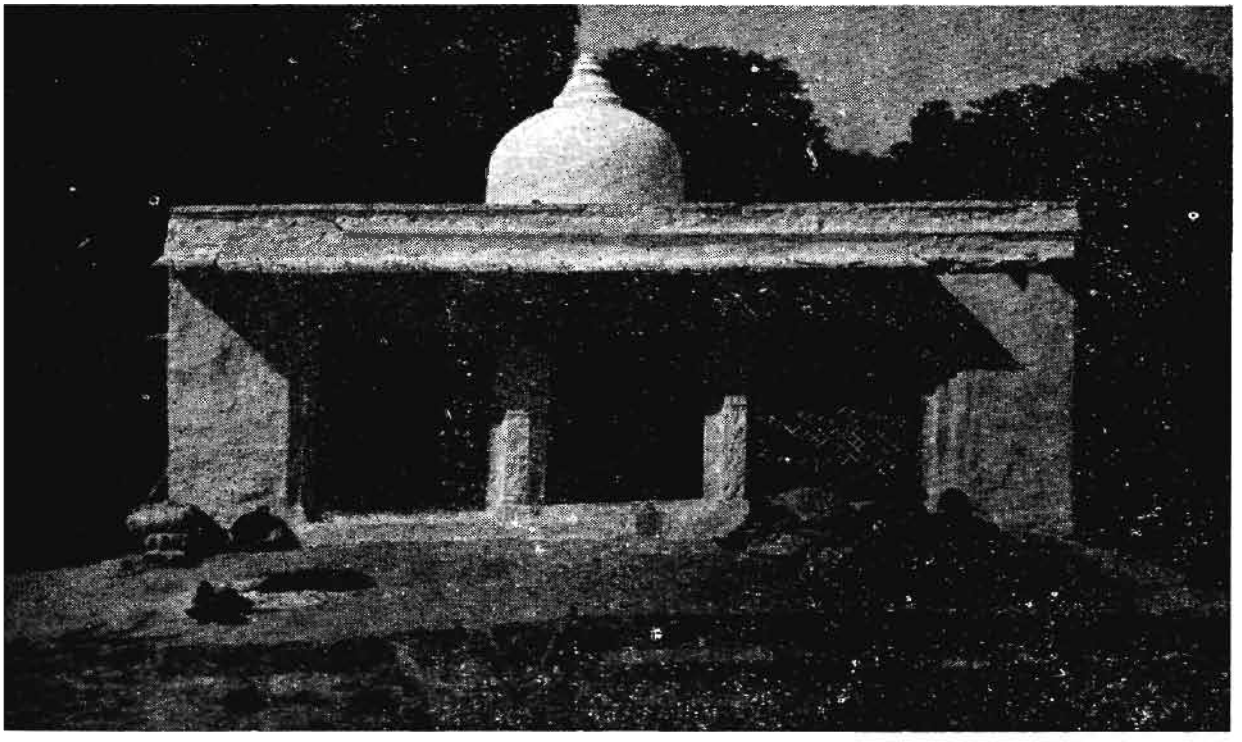


Khoobat Baba's Temple and surroundings

# PLATE XXXVII

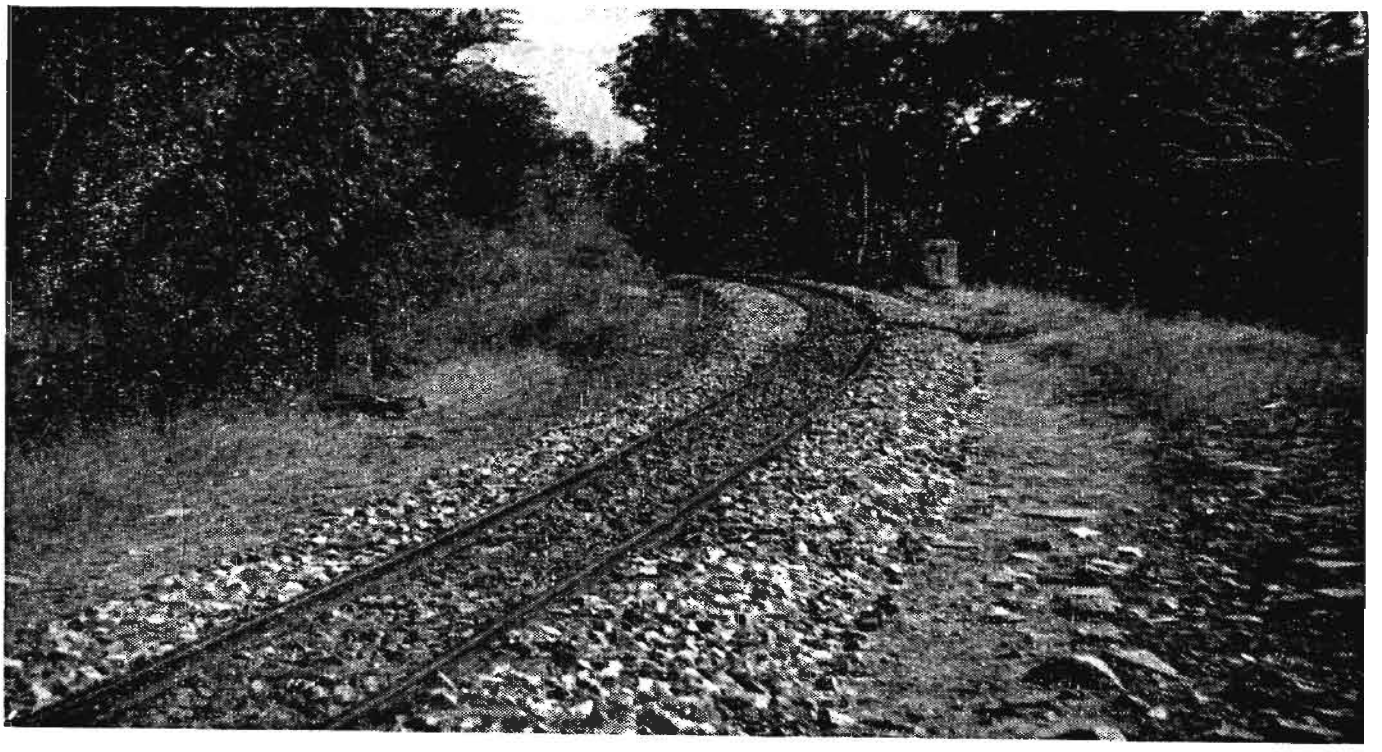


The Idol of Khoobat Baba
(The idol on the left is new one)



The Temple of Khoobat Baba

# PLATE XXXVIII



The Narrow Gauge Railway Line
(Passing behind Khoobat Baba's Temple)

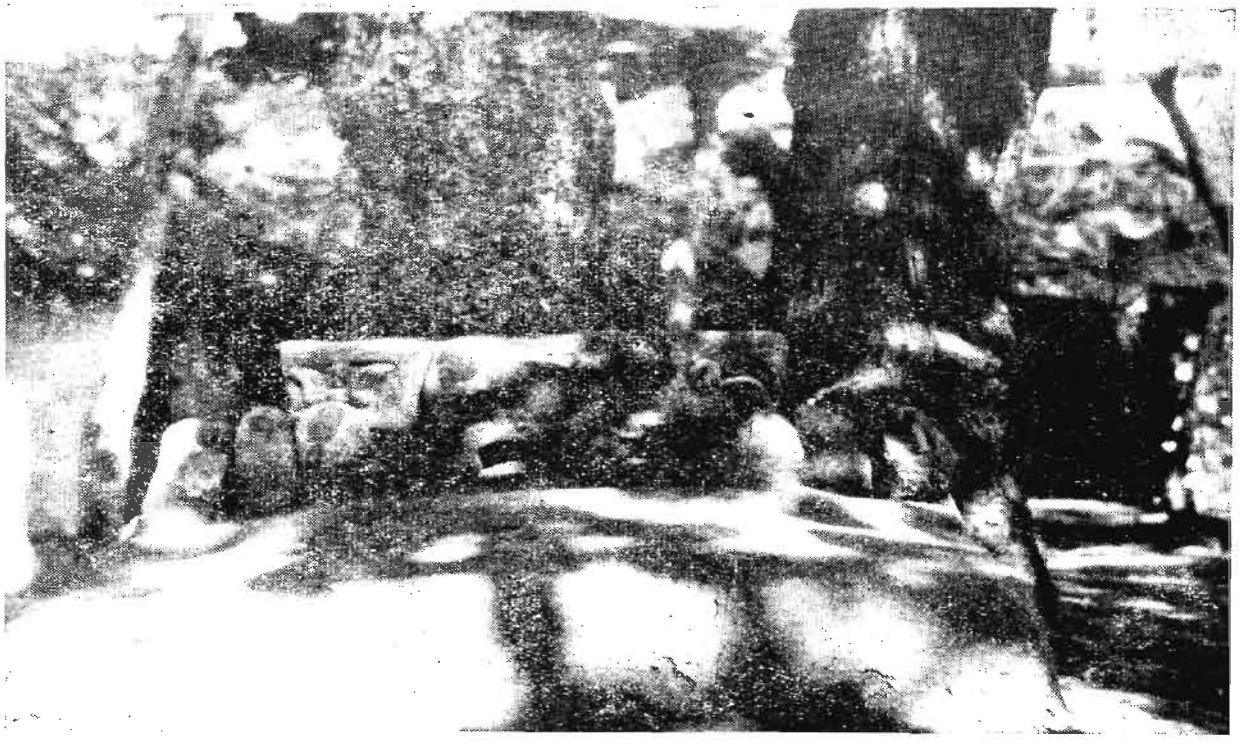


The Forest surrounding Khoobat Baba's Temple

# PLATE IXL



The worship of Bhairon

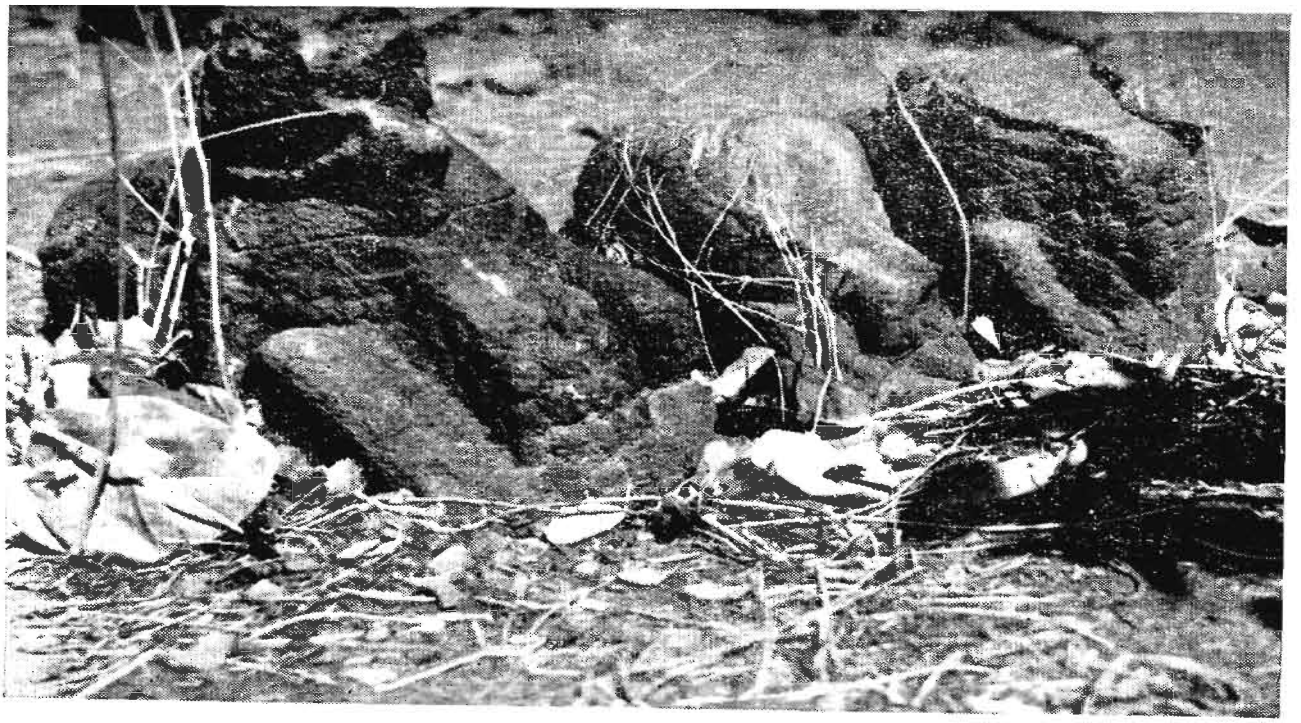


Mata-ka-Than

# PLATE XL



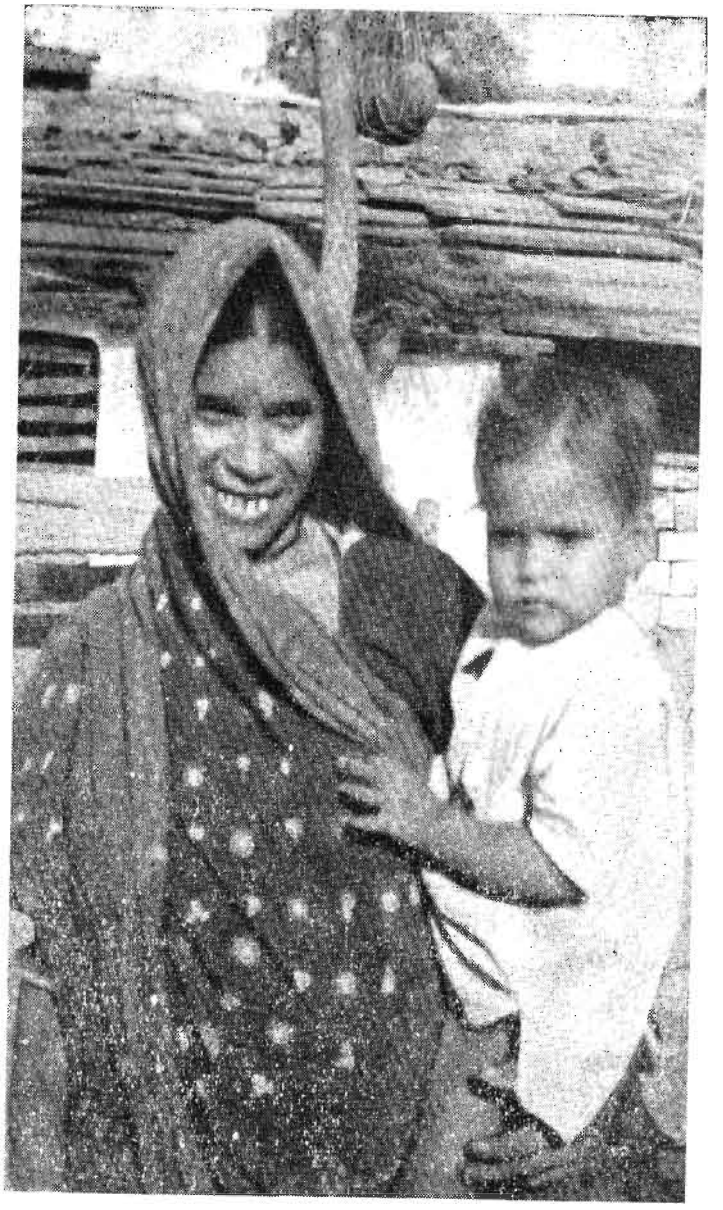
Local Memorial of Khoobat Baba



Thakur Devta of Ramkhedi *now in neglect*

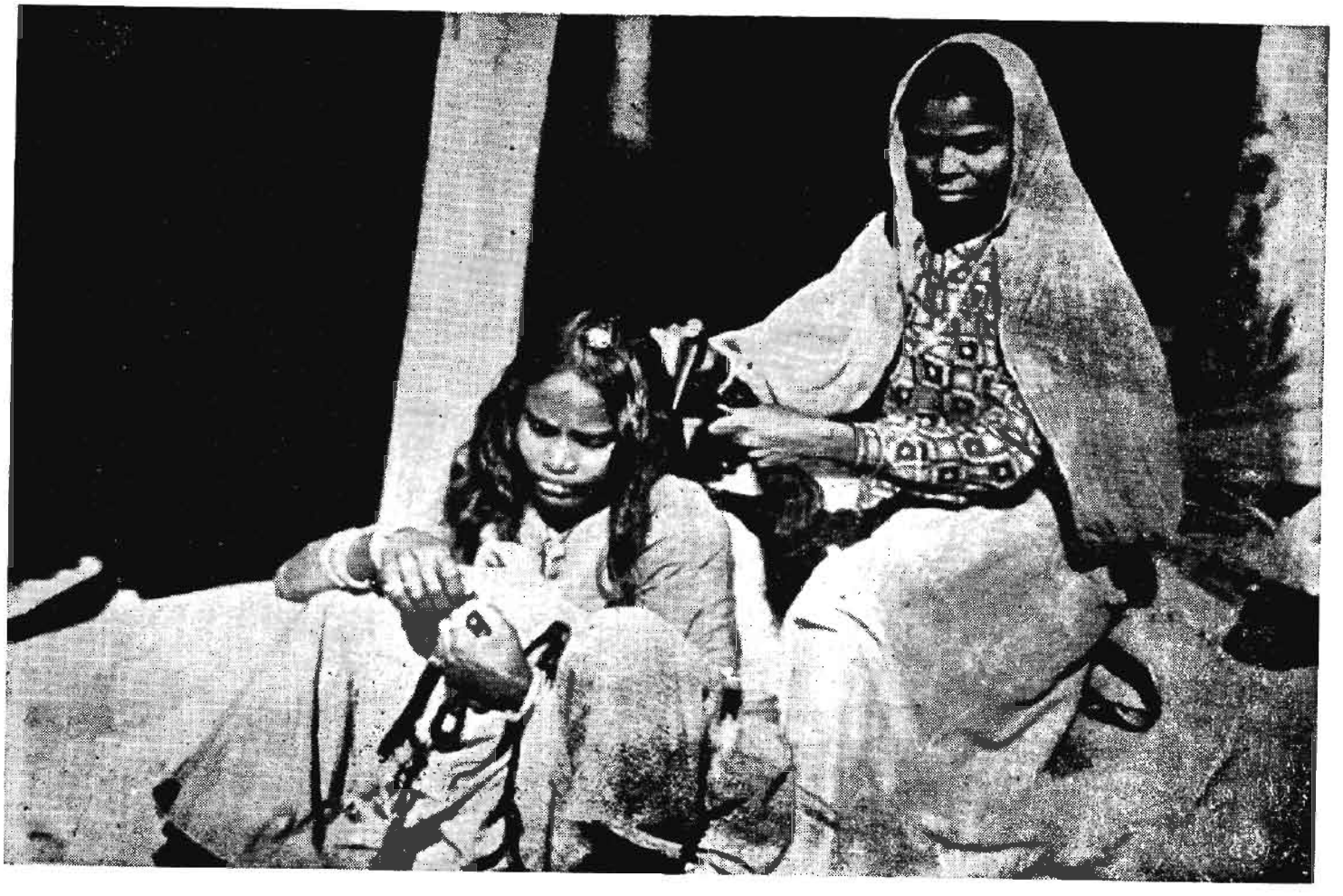


The Carpenter



A Saheriya woman and her child

# PLATE XLII



Hair dressing in the open

And of all clothes a blanket is the finest;
For since its beginning it never goes to a dhobi.

During the idle hours women keep humming these songs. There is no specific occasion for it but generally during this season the song is very popular.

**Tejaji :**— Songs in honour of Tejaji are sung during the months of Bhadra (at about the same time when the fair of Tejaji is held).

**Heed :**— *Heed* is in the nature of folk tale partly sung but mostly recited and popular during Diwali or Kartik month. One such is reproduced below.

'The bullocks complained to Gods that they (bullocks) are mal-treated — they are yoked, beaten and otherwise too, badly treated. They requested the Gods to save them from these hardships and the Gods agreed. The God came to see their condition on the next day after the Diwali and found that the bullocks were being decorated and the general treatment meted out was good. Thereupon the Gods dis-believed their versions.'

**Rasiya :**— Generally this is sung in Magh — January/ February.

**Langoriya Phag :**— These songs are generally sung round about Holi season in the month of February/ March and continue to be sung in summer months as well. In one of such moments she exclaims:

*"KAILA[1] MAIYA[2] SE JA KAHIYO[3]*
*ME JATAN[4] DEKHAN AOONGI[5]*
*ARE THOKAR[6] KHANE AOONGI AUR CHHELAN[7]*
*ANKH LAGAOONGI[8]*
*MELA DEKHAN AOONGI AUR*
*GAJRA[9] MOTIYAN[10] LAOONGI*
*KAILA MAIYA SE JA KAHIYO.....*

Tell Kali, the goddess, that I would come to see the Mela,
Come to be hustled about in the crowd and flirt with the Romeos,
Will come to see the Mela
And buy garlands and artificial pearls;
Tell Kali — .....

These songs are related by Saheriya women, who were able to sing them. It is obvious from these how steadily but surely non-tribal influences seep through, and are accepted in due course. For a Saheriya to think of a *dhobi* and sending clothes to him, does not appear to fit in the background in which he has been known to live — or perhaps he is emerging to assume new dimensions. Yet in the other song:

*'CHHELAN ANKH LAGAOONGI'*

the Saheriya woman comes into her own irrepressible self, seeking newer thrills, and fresh pastures. "After all", she argues, "a little flirting is so interesting" and she so thoroughly identifies herself into the vast multitude of the Mela wherein an unnoticed occasional lapse may truly be absorbing. It has been that way with them and so why seek to alter it !

Songs play an important roll in life: they relieve the monotony: when doing household chores, so while grinding the flour one hears an unintelligible songs. The women are however not known for dancing. Men dance on a few occasions as referred earlier.

At the time of Diwali — or rather after the rains the women clean their houses and paint the walls with white chalk or raw colours. On this occasion some floral designs are made on the doors or walls. Peacock, tiger and birds appears a favourite subject. Apart from this the singing of *kirtans* is becoming popular. They would gather near a *chaupal* and along with orchestra begin to sing in the evening.

## VII.

## RELIGION

There is a Shiva temple about half a mile away from the village. The villagers do not claim any credit for its construction or its maintenance. It is located in a cave behind which lies the railway line. All castes of the village visit the temple for worship. They do so whenever it suits them. Occasions like Shivratri, Mondays in the month of Shrawana are important for the worship of Shiva and so almost all visit the temple during the period. There is no managing committee or trust to look after the temple. A *pujari* looks after the temple. He hails from Sonthi village and at the request of the villagers agreed to stay and look after the temple. The villagers do not pay him anying regularly, since this is not the only source of earning, he does not demur. This is the only temple in the village and there are no mosques or other religious institutions.

The Saheriyas generally follow Hinduism as is found among some lower castes. Among the Gods of Hindu pantheon they worship Shiva, Rama, Kali, Krishna

(1) Kali, the Goddess; (2) Mother; (3) tell; (4) the Fair; (5) will come; (6) Being rushed over in the crowd; (7) Romeos; (8) Flirt; (9) garlands of flowers; (10) Artificial pearls.

and Hanuman: apart from these they have their local deities viz. Bhumiya, Bhairon, Thakur, Bali Devata, Naharsingh or Khoobat Baba and also believe in evil spirits: *bhoot, pret, jind.* Besides this objects of Nature are also worshipped. In the case of Saheriyas it appears that religion embraces everything from lofty pantheon of Hindu Gods to primitive worship of natural objects. It was regarding this that Johnstone wrote:—

"Each of these inculcates the worship of a special deity or set of deities and inspite of mutual contradictions all are considered to be of divine inspiration. The absence of a central controlling authority has allowed the admission of extraneous elements and of an almost countless number of deities and though the greater deities are still largely worshipped and revered, yet local godlings abound in nearly every village, while in addition to the worship of regular gods of the Hindu Pantheon, we find the worship of ancestors, of ghosts, and of sacred animals and plants. Hinduism abounds in this kind of popular religion, but the subject is too wide to be fully treated here even were the materials prepared. The leading idea of all such worship is propitiation which implies fear of the anger or vengeance of a higher power".[57]

The religion professed is therefore a mixture of Hinduism in its primitive form, nature worship in its wide variety and beliefs and faiths in various local objects of reverence. They do not employ Brahmins to conduct their ceremonies but do it themselves. Gods of Hindu pantheon are worshipped in a simple manner: the evil spirits are placated by sacrifices and wine and objects of nature worshipped by reverence.

That some tribes professed to be Hindus as is obvious from 1901 report of Johnstone who wrote:

"In every case the great majority of Animists have called themselves Hindus and have named their sects or deity, but inasmuch as they are not recognised by the Hindus, the mere borrowing of a god cannot bring them into this religion..... The probability is that they have objects of worship, peculiar to different tribes and profess Hinduism for the purpose of raising their *status* by incorporation into the prevailing religion of India. One set of inquiries among the Saharias near Sipri in Narwar district elicited the declaration that they had no god but *Karasdeo*,* but when I personally pressed them on the point, they admitted that they worshipped the pipal (Ficus religiosa) and other trees with offerings of water, yet *Karasdeo* is not among the sects recorded for Animists in the Census figures. Saherias have no respect for the cow and do not employ Brahman priests".[58]

Saheriyas prior to 1931 were classified under Animists, which to many did not appear a very satisfactory method. It is profitable to quote Ranglal the then Census Commissioner of Gwalior. He wrote:

"A special feature of the present census is the outright abolition of Animism as a census religion. Animism has never been the professed religion of any community or class in this or any other country, but has in the past been thrust on that large residuum of primitive races, who in point of mental attainments are considered to be inferior to the more articulate but the nonetheless animistic sections of the population. That spirits and magic powers still play their part in the conceptional world of primitive peoples must at once be admitted. But that does not reveal anything distinctive. In the sphere of religion there is such a baffling intertexture of barbarism and electric light that neither can be said to be the absolute master anywhere. High gods in low places are as common as low spirits in high places. There is, for instance, little to choose between the Hindu of the plains, who believes that the spirits of his ancestors consume the impalpable essence of the rice balls provided for them and the Hinduised Bhil of the hills who on seeing a bulge on the trunk of a 'pipal' tree atonce takes it to be the abode of malevolent spirits. On every count the Hinduism of the Hindu stands on a higher plane than the Hinduism of the Bhil, but that is no reason why the existence of the common animistic background should be interpreted as expressive of a definite phase of the Hindu faith in the one case and the hall-mark of Tylorian animism in the other."

57. Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXI — Gwalior, Part I Report, J. W. D. Johnstone p. 35 .

*Karasdeo:

Karasdeo with his brother Hiraman is worshipped mostly by the Gujars and Ahirs, as being the protector of cattle. He is stated to have miraculous powers by means of which he gave hands and feet to a potter without limbs, and afterwards breathed life into a clay horse moulded by the potter. He is also associated with Neem (Melia azadrichta) tree. It is said that he along with his brother went away to the Himalayas and never returned.

Hiraman is worshipped in Morena district. (For details please see author's Village Survey Report of Dikhatpura). Saheriyas living on Jhansi border and towards Bundelkhand region are known to worship Karasdeo, but Brahmins now officiate at some Saheriya functions. Cow is still not held in reverence.

58. Ibid, p. 46.

Further he continues:

"The point of the whole matter is that there never was any cogent reason for rejecting on the one hand a religion openly professed and practised by any group of primitive people and on the other for relying on the mere existence among them of animistic beliefs as a satisfactory basis for classifying the whole class as animists."

"There is yet another consideration which has not received adequate attention in the past. It is a matter of common knowledge that most of our submerged classes have now entered into their heritage of logic and reason and have definitely passed out of the naturalist stage. Many of them almost to a man have been absorbed by Hinduism and others are now so near the border line that it is difficult to say what they were fifty years ago. Hinduism can and does in the case of these peoples exist side by side with a belief in spirit".[59]

From the above it follows that Saheriyas have steadily gravitated towards Hinduism. In the all embracing Hinduism a certain amount of animistic tendencies can be clearly noticed. In fact, in many faiths such traits could be discerned, but it is towards Hinduism that the Saheriya's worship habits and customs lead them. They also appear to have been influenced by the other villagers who were their neighbours and they adopted the present form of worship.

We have been dealing with the word 'Animism' without underlining its scope; having mentioned it a number of times we may attempt to outline its tenets. Animism may be described a cult of propitiatory worship, which envisages that human beings are surrounded by unfriendly elements and powers whom it is necessary to keep on one's right side. Risley aptly described it as follows:—

"The oldest of the religions recorded in the Census, if indeed it can be called a religion at all, is the medley of heterogeneous and uncomfortable, supersitions now known by the not entirely appropriate name of Animism. The difficulty of defining this mixed assortment of primitive ideas is illustrated by the fact that there is no name for it in any of the Indian language."

Risely further surmises:

"It conceives of man as passing through life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements tendencies, mostly impersonal in their character, shapeless phantasms of which no image can be made and no definite idea can be formed. Some of them have departments or spheres of influence of their own: one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, another over cattle disease; some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, others again are associated with rivers, whirlpools, waterfalls or with strange pools hidden in the depths of the hills. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills which proceed from them and usually the land of the village provides the ways and means for this propitiation."[60]

Whereas some form of animism is to be found in the Hinduism, it would equally be true to say that among the so called animists, there are traces and streaks of Hindu ritual. It would obviously be not very accurate to deny the fold of Hinduism to those who have been described as 'Animists'.

When we consider the Saheriyas their age old jungle habitations we are tempted to concede that animism came to them naturally. A society which lives in the background of awe-inspiring rivers, forests, hills and its creatures, many of which are fierce and constitute danger to life soon learns to live with it. It is, therefore, the all powerful tiger, who a natural object of terror — also becomes an object of reverence. There is hardly any time or thought for other modes of belief or worship or their lives. Trees are worshipped because they provide shelter and also because on some of these trees viz. *Pipal* (Ficus religiosa), *Bad* (Ficus bengolensis), live the spirit of the dead; hence they became an object of reverence, though if a beehive is located in any one of them they would not hesitate to pluck it.

As the Saheriyas left forests and came nearer roads and nearer villages their religious practices were effected by their contacts. Thus Bonarjee wrote the following in the case of Saheriyas of Lalitpur.

"Saheriyas usually inhabit ten to twelve houses in a village which constitute a separate muhalla. This scattering of the tribe is important for it has increased the contact with Hindu culture and greatly increased the rapidity of Hinduisation." [61]

Through contact the Saheriyas began to come nearer Hindus of the lower caste who inhabited the

59. Census of India 1931 Vol. XXII — Gwalior, Part I — Report, By Ranglal pp. 215-216.
60. Census of India. 1901 Vol. I — India Part I Report by — H. H. Risley and E. A. Gait, pp. 349 and 356.
61. Census of India, 1931, Report of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Vol. XVIII, Part I, p. 595.

villages. Thus it came to be that they started worshipping deities like, Bhumiya, Hiraman, Karas Deo, Bhairon, Devi and Khoobat to cite some examples. So we find that the Saheriyas follow Hinduism of the lower castes. They have had little chance or opportunity to observe the orthodox form of religion. It is also interesting to note that whereas other lower castes tend to give up some of their practices, and even beliefs, but the Saheriyas seem to be adopting them.

## Worship

About half a mile to the north of the village is situated a small Shiva temple. The Saheriyas often visit this temple and pay their respects by reverently folding their hands. The other castes worship here. During the month of Shrawana on Mondays a fair is held here and draws a good crowd. The Saheriyas do not know any legend or myths regarding Shiva, much less do they know the significance of the worship. They visit the temple during the month of Shrawana when a multitude visits and offer flowers. They worship Shiva, because the temple is close by and because other persons in the village worship Him. If there had been no temple then perhaps they might would never have known Shiva. The maxim 'while in Rome, do as the Romans do', seems to have influenced their mode of worship. Incidentally it is one of effects of living together with other Hindus.

The Saheriyas are acquainted with the other Gods in Hindu pantheon, and respect them. It is however doubtful if they worship them. When a Saheriya is asked as to what religion and mode of worship they follow? The reply almost invariably is: they are Hindus and worship Hindu Gods like, Krishna, Ganesh, Hanuman, Rama. They do not offer any regular worship to these nor do they even visit a temple dedicated to them.

The highest place among Gods, however, belongs to Indra, the formless, for whom there are no idols. He is responsible for the rains, which bring prosperity, food to eat and water to drink; on Him depends the life in the year to come; the time to come which they call *sammaiya* and so to Indra they pay their obeisances. Each year a little before the rains break, a community feast is held and if collections have been good, a goat is sacrificed in the honour of Rain God. This is a very important ritual and it is a must for all Saheriyas. Without Indra being pleased the forests which provide shelter may wither and animals may die.

Each year towards the end of the summer and preferably before the first rains, all Saheriya families collect: each contributes about 2-3 seers of flour and food is cooked outside the village at a shady spot. If money has been collected, then a goat is purchased for sacrifice. When the food is cooked a little portion is taken out and a small fire is lighted. This food is consigned into the fire in the name of Indra. Since to Indra no memorial or monument is built this takes place in open space. Lately the Jat in the village has also joined in the celebration. Women do not go to to the spot but get the food on return. The food is regarded as holy and given in small bits to others, as *prasad*. The Saheriyas have been doing this for a long time. They reckon that living in Nature they can ill-afford to keep the Rain God displeased hence such an invocation becomes necessary.

*Devi* or *mata* is worshipped as a Goddess. By *devi* Saheriyas do not necessarily mean her to be Shiva's consort, but merely a female goddess who when displeased causes epidemics and deaths. She is worshipped to save themselves from small-pox or cholera or children's diseases. Although no memorial is built in her honour, but the place of her worship is clearly laid out. She occupies an important place in the worship because she controls the general health of the people. She is also worshipped to cure barrenness. Another important feature of her worship is that during the 'Nav Durga' period, she is regularly worshipped. Water is offered to her and sometimes a chicken or goat is sacrificed. The animal is slaughtered in one stroke to ensure a painless death. During this period of *nav durga* (from third day bright half of Asvina to the 10th day) the Saheriyas dance, sing and brandish their weapons like axes, swords etc. *Nav durga* celebrations are a community function and all join it. It has been stated that they have been following this ritual for a long time. 'Mata's Place' is located about a mile towards the abandoned village site. In an open space half a dozen stones of varying sizes, smeared in vermillion lie and above them rise small buntings and flags. This is her place.

The mata is also worshipped in case of outbreak of cholera epidemic. The worship is known as *marai-ki-puja*. *Marai* meaning cholera. On this occasion the following ritual is gone through. An earthen vessel is broken into a smaller one of irregular shape and is called *khapra*. In appearance it becomes a broken plate. In this vessel liquor is poured and diluted with water. The entire village is circled on foot and the person

then reaches the place of *mata* where the liquor is poured over Her and the vessel broken. *Sindoor* (vermillion) is put on the *mata* and a cocoanut is broken. Some also plant a bunting on the spot. This is locally known as *pharera chadhana* or offering a bunting. Some also sacrifice a hen or goat.

Among the local deities the following are the important ones. (1) Khoobat Baba, (2) Bhumiya, (3) Bhairon, (4) Thakur and (5) Bali Miya.

## Khoobat Baba ( Plate XXXVI and XXXVII )

The region abounds with legends regarding *Khoobat Baba.* Although they often differ in details, over a few incidents of *Khoobat's* life, all seem to be agreed on important incidents shaping his life.

Now it is said that almost 300 years ago there lived a *dhobi*, a washerman, by name Khoobat, possessed of super-natural powers. One day as he was washing his clothes by the river, his wife brought him some food, the food was without meat and the bread was badly cooked. Khoobat was annoyed and told his wife that he would go to the jungle in search of some food. In case he returned in a form other than his own, then she was not to be frightened. To bring him back to his original man's form he gave her some herbs which should be placed near his nose so that he may inhale it. This done he assumed the form of a tiger and killed a deer (some say a buffalo). He appeared as a tiger and when his wife beheld him she got frightened and fled. She had misplaced or lost the herb earlier and so it was not possible for her to bring him back to a human form. Khoobat was so annoyed that he tore his wife to pieces and lived in the form of a tiger eversince. According to a popular belief Khoobat still roars about in that shape and visits his shrine occasionally. The transformation occured nearly 300 years ago and his worshippers are found today.

Johnstone in his report wrote:—

"His shrine is a fine masonry building containing representation of a lion and a drum. (please see photograph). Worshippers beat the drum and pour liquor on the image, to supply which a liquor seller sits near the spot all day and is said to derive a good trade. He replenishes his stock from the water of the neighbouring stream which is believed to turn water into wine. Khoobat is worshipped as a divinity by the low caste population including the Animistic Saharias on the occasion of births and marriages, but not infrequently even high castes Hindus visit the shrine to pour wine on the image." [62]

There is a temple in honour of Khoobat hardly fifty yards from the National Highway 3. It is between Shivpuri and Gwalior about 7 miles from the former. Near it lies a dilapidated brick-wall shed, which was converted to a small room. It was here that once, liquor seller sat. (please see Johnstone's descriptions in preceding para). Even today liquor is offered at the image but it has to be brought from Shivpuri town. The liquor bottle (plate XXXVII) in the photograph was a part of an offering made that day. There are interesting legends about Khoobat Baba and all of them signify the respect and position of authority he held. Some are narrated below.

While Gwalior-Shivpuri Railway (Central Railway-narrow guage) was under construction, at first it was planned to take the line in front of the temple, later on the idea was given up. It was said that the *Sahibs* were forced to abandon the earlier scheme because of Khoobat Baba's annoyance, and so the rail road passed towards the rear of the temple. The villagers say that during the day the track was laid and fixed but next morning the whole thing was found up-rooted. Khoobat Baba did not approve of the rail-raod passing in front of his shrine, hence he caused these obstructions. Finally the site was abandoned and thereafter Khoobat Baba has never troubled the railway.

Another legend has it that even today the train must salute Khoobat Baba, otherwise woe to the railways. As it happens, behind the temple is a cutting on a curve where all the trains are required to give a whistle. This whistle is a salute for Khoobat Baba. (please see plate XXXVIII). Once it is said that the narrow guage train was derailed. The passengers invoked Khoobat Baba who promptly put the matters right. The railway authorities, it is said, then implored the Baba and requested that such a thing may never happen again. Khoobat is reported to have granted their request.

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At the temple of Khoobat in Mamoni in Shivpuri district I was told that there were two youths (1) Khoobat Dhobi, (2) Jairam Charvah who tired of their mundane life in the village went to Bengal and after 16 years of stay there acquired a supernatural powers. Jairam was a great devotee of Hanuman but he never returned to the village presumably he went away towards the Himalayas. Khoobat on return settled down in his profession and then the incident transforming him occured. This is the explanation given for the supernatural power which Khoobat had acquired.

62. Ceusus of India, 1901, Vol. XXI — Gwalior, Part I, Report By — J. W. D. Johnstone, p. 36.

## The Temple in honour of Khoobat

The temple was constructed by one Lakha Banjara who happened to come from Rajasthan side. Nearly two hundred years ago, there was a famine as a result of which Lakha Banjara was obliged to move out. So with his herd of cattle and other followers he moved out and came in search of a spot where he could be safe, particularly from tigers, who then were in great numbers. Lakha asked the villagers as to, at which spot may he encamp? The villagers showed him the spot where the temple stands today, saying that he would be safe from tigers and the stream would always give enough water for his animals. The spot was safe because it is said that Khoobat had washed his clothes there hence acquired an immunity from attacks of a tiger. So Lakha Banjara with his retinue stayed there and though tigers howled and prowled about, yet never was he or his animal attacked. Lakha Banjara now began to think that this was a hallowed spot and surely belonged to some holy spirit. He stayed there during the entire summer. Lakha was also without a child. So he prayed to the beneficent spirit there, that he would build a temple at the spot if he be-got any children. In due course he got children and then constructed the temple. There are quite a few stories about this Lakha Banjara. The repairs of the temple are carried out by the devotees of *Khoobat* as a part of their gratefulness.

## The Natural Surroundings

At the foot of a ridge which is densely covered with forests, flows a small stream, which retains water for most part of the year. This stream has a broad bank and on both banks there are plenty of *khajoor* and other trees, which are often clearly reflected in the placid water. About 200 yards north lies a portion of ridge through which the rail road passes and trains coming to Shivpuri lumber up their way noisily battling against a steep gradient. The temple is a simple construction of stone raised over a small platform. There are six pillars four supporting a flat roof in the middle of which is a small cupola. Inside the temple is a idol of tiger seated almost erect on his hind legs. The smaller idol is the older one and the bigger one has only recently been added. The tiger is smeared with *sindoor* (vermillion). The open vacant space around is used by worshippers for bivouacking. Towards the south of the temple a dilapidated room or rather an enclosed verandah still stands. In bygone days it was occupied by a liquor-seller (referred to earlier in Johnstone's report). The liquor-seller of bygone days is the present day priest of the temple. This came about in an interesting though fairly natural manner.

When Khoobat was deified it was necessary to have a priest at the temple. It was not possible to get any Brahmin. The offerings consisted of liquor and animal sacrifice and they appeared to fit in well with the legend. Kalars used to be traditional liquor sellers; and for them it was a good opportunity to ply the trade and earn a little virtue as well. So a Kalar became the priest-cum-liquor seller. In due course of time the Excise Department prohibited the sale of liquor at this place for it was found that people bought liquor not only for offerings but also for on the spot consumption. It appeared to have become a drinking rendezvous which was frowned upon by the excise authorities. It is said soon consumers exceeded worshippers and there were drunken revelries. It was then decided that sale of liquor should not be allowed near the temple, not because liquor is prohibited for an offering but because one should not carouse too loudly near a temple.

The present priest whose ancestors sold liquor at the temple does so now only at his shop in Shivpuri. He however keeps a bottle or two with him when visiting the temple, for the needy worshippers wanting to make the offerings. Attending the temple at this place is not his only occupation he is local excise contractor selling liquor, *bhang* and opium. He is not staying in the temple premises these days owing to illness in the family. He attends the temple from morning to the dusk and returns to Shivpuri. He claims that round about the temple no tiger would ever cause any damage. The Saheriyas support the views and go to the extent of saying that they may roam anywhere in the forest but before leaving their homes if they remember Khoobat's name for then they would always be safe.

The priest also said that on quite a few occasions he had seen the tiger but never was the tiger in a range or in a mood to cause harm. He avers that he saw the tiger at the stream, quenching his thirst but never was the tiger known to have caused any mischief. The terrain and jungle around provided a good home for tiger; hardly half a mile south stands a pedestal which marks the spot where the Duke of Connaught shot an eleven foot six inches tiger.

Khoobat is held in very high esteem and a recent incident serves to underline the point still better. In 1962, a *teli* from Shivpuri worshipped Khoobat Baba

for about 8-10 days and offered liquor too. His prayer was that he may be told about some hidden wealth which he hoped to dig up. He wanted it to be revealed to him in a dream, so that he may search and get it. His prayer was not granted. He was disappointed and sore. One day he drank merrily near the temple and felt so unhappy that he decided to teach the deity a lesson. He therefore went in the temple in the evening and dug out the idol and threw it out of the window.

Next day when people came to know about it, they were annoyed and soon many persons from nearby villages collected. The matter was reported to the Police who registered the case and after investigation put up the accused for trial. The trial drew a lot of public attention; the court room was packed and outside the court a crowd could be seen anxiously following the proceedings inside. The accused however was acquitted much to general disappointment of all. Many villagers still hold the view that accused ought to have been punished. The interest that it aroused, the heat that it generated speaks of the reverence for the First Information Report (FIR) of the crime reads:

प्रतिलिपि चेक रसीद जयराम नम्बर १९४।६२ धारा २९५ ता० हि०

**पुलिस शिवपुरी**

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|---|---|---|---|
| नाम | उमानाथ | बाप का नाम | सरजूराम |
| जाति | यादव | साकिन | सतनवाड़ा चौकी |
| पेशा | नौकरी | उम्र | २६ साल |
| स्टेशन से फैसला ९ मील उत्तर | | मुकाम | खूबत |
| तारीख १६-१०-६२ | | तारीख रिपोर्ट २१-१०-६२, ५-३० दिन | |

समय सदर में उमानाथ कानि० २४० चौकी सतनवाड़ा का थाना पर आकर इंचार्ज चौकी हेड कानि० लिखी रिपोर्ट निम्न मजमून की पेश की जो निम्न-प्रकार है।

श्रीमान कोतवाल साहब,
कोतवाली शिवपुरी

विनय है आज दिनांक २१-१०-६२ को मुद्दई छोटेलाल पुत्र गंगाराम कलार साकिन शिवपुरी घोसीपुरा ने रिपोर्ट किया कि अमरचंद तेली सा० घोसीपुरा का आज से ५ दिन पहिले दिनांक १६-१०-६२ को खूवत महाराज के मंदिर में आया व उनसे दफीना की मांग कर रहा था। कुछ देर बाद पत्थर की चट्टान उठाकर उनके सिर पर पटक दिया जिससे पूंछ का झोरा टूट गया फिर मूरत को घसीटता हुआ मंदिर के बाहर फेंक दिया था। उस समय कल्ला पुत्र छोटे सहर देख रहा था। उस समय दिन के दो बजे थे। इसके बाद दिनांक १७-१०-६२ को परसू पुत्र गिल्लइयां कोरी कोलारस, सिव्वा कोरी ठेह, गया-जीत कलार ठेह तथा एक चमार यह मूरत उठाकर मंदिर में रखा है। टूटा हुवा अंग पुजारी के पास है अतः रिपोर्ट मुनासिव कार्यवाही हेतु सेवा में प्रेषित है। २१-१०-६२

जगदीशप्रसाद हेड० कानि०
चौकी सतनवाड़ा

सूचना पर से धारा २९५ ता० हि० का जुर्म पाया जाता है कायमी जरा० नं० १९४-६२- पर की जाकर अनुसंधान प्रारम्भ हुवा।

Khoobat is now worshipped by all castes. Even persons who are relatively free from the danger of a

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Translation of the copy of the case diary — Crime No. 194/62, Section 295, Indian Penal Code. Police Station Shivpuri.

Name:— Umanath, Father's name:— Sarjooram, Caste:— Yadav, Resident of Satanwada, Occupation:— Service, Age:— 26 years. Distance of the place of the occurrence from the station:— 9 miles north. Place of occurrence:— Khoobat, Date:— 16-10-62. Date & time of the report at the Police Station:— 21-10-62, 5-30 p.m.

Umanath Constable No. 240 of Police Out Post Satnawada came to the Police Station and submitted the following report written by tht Head Constable I/C. of the Out Post.

To,
The Kotwal Saheb,
Kotwali Shivpuri,

Submitted that the complainant Chhotelal s/o. Gangaram Kalar, r/o. Shivpuri, Ghosipura has reported this day 21-10-62 that 5 days ago on 16-10-62 Amarchand Teli r/o. Ghosipura visited the temple of Khoobat Maharaj and prayed for being given some clue for a hidden treasure. He waited for a little while and thereafter took up a heavy stone and threw it on the head of the idol smashing the end of the tail. Thereafter he dragged the idol and threw it out of the temple. This incident was witnessed by Kalla s/o. Chhote Saheriya. This happened at 1400 hours. Then, on 17-12-62 Parsoo s/o. Gilleiya Kori, r/o. Kolaras, Shibba Kori r/o. Theh, Gayajit Kalar r/o. Theh and one person of Chamar caste all collectively lifted the idol and placed on its very place in the temple. The broken part of the idol is with the priest (pujari). The report is therefore submitted for necessary action.

Sd/- Jagdish Prasad
Head Constable,
Police Out Post Satanwada,

On the basis of the above information an offence U/s. 295 I.P.C. appears to be made out and after having registered as Crime No. 194/62, the investigation commenced.

tiger all known to worship him. Persons from nearby villages and sometimes from far off places come to the temple seeking relief and cure for their ailments. A few cases picked at random are given:—

Dilsingh, a Kirar from Guna district was without a child, although 8/10 years had elapsed since his marriage. He came to this temple, offered wine and prayers promising that if he begot a child he would feed the community at the temple site. He got a son and he carried out the promise.

Dalpat Singh a Gujar from Karera tahsil in Shivpuri district visited the shrine in April 1960. He too was childless: he offered his prayers and was after a year blessed with a son. He returned to the temple and fed about 20/25 persons who were there that day..

Ramji Ram a Brahmin from Shivpuri was childless after about 20 years of marriage. He came to the temple prayed and his prayer was granted. He got a daughter and in gratitude visited the shrine again and fed about 30 persons whom he brought from Shivpuri. It relates to the year 1959.

Radhe Shyam, a Mahajan from Indore was childless and visited the shrine in February 1962. He prayed and promised to do some *punya* (virtuous deed), if his prayer was granted. A year later he revisited the shrine to fulfil his promise, after getting a son.

Mangilal, a *dhobi* from Kolaras had a son who was continuously ailing. He came to worship and when the son had recovered but before fulfilling his promise learnt that the idol had been broken. So he decided to replace it. He got a new one made and placed it on the pedestal on 27th May 1963.

At the temple a few worshippers had gathered. A small boy of 4/5 years of age and his mother were also present. When questioned the father, a Saheriya from Pohri tahsil about 25 miles away, replied that they had come to offer their thanks for the complete recovery of their son. About two years before the son was falling ill regularly. He had been shown to the doctors at Pohri and Shivpuri and yet he seemed no better. So some one advised him to come to this temple. He came, prayed and conquered the disease. According to him in the last two years the son was almost cured. He had now come to thank the deity. No medicines had been given to him from the temple. His thanks-giving consisted in feeding about ten other persons. The parents permitted no photograph lest 'some evil' eye may have ill effects on the child.

In all cases no medicines were given, and in no case was the person benefited inclined to back out of the promise. For persons backing out, the *pujari* said that Khoobat would deal with them in his own way. He, however, emphasised that such a thing was unheard of. Better late than never; but promises are always fulfilled.

The worship assumes some other forms too. In many villages, villagers have raised a small memorial in honour of Khoobat Baba. The memorial consists of a stone being placed on a raised platform called *chabutara*. In some places it is also called a memorial of 'Naharsingh'. Nahar and Singh both meaning tiger. The raising of a platform of this type is not restricted to any particular caste or tribe.

When people are on their way for any important work say marriage or for litigation, they would visit the shrine and make an offering. Cocoanut is also offered along with money. A marriage party either while going for the marriage or returning with the bride would invariably stop at the spot and make an offering, seek the blessings and pray for success of the mission.

Khoobat Baba's reputation is now more or less firmly established in the rural areas. In urban areas too, due deference is given to him. His name is an antidote for a tiger: for on seeing one, all that needs to be done is to remember Khoobat and no harm would befall: but it is not the tiger alone against which the name of Khoobat holds good, for praying to him could well a panacea for all troubles.

## Nahar Singh

Naharsingh is a local deity, Nahar and Singh both meaning tiger. At the old village site over a small raised platform (please see photograph) is a stone smeared with vermillion. This place is dedicated to the tiger and Lord of the jungle — the jungle in which also lives Saheriyas — the jungle from which he gets his food and through which he ekes out a meagre living. A tiger is a real danger in these environments preying on his adversaries including the defenceless man. To honour him, a small raised platform and worship appears necessary.

Whenever the Saheriya moves out towards jungle, he first visits the Naharsingh shrine, bows his head and folds his hands in reverence. Naharsingh is also worshipped for curing some other ailments. Worship of Naharsingh may beget children or some people from

sickness. The worship thus becomes a panacea for all troubles and overcoming hardships. To a society living in jungle, there can hardly be any greater danger than the one arising from a tiger. Tiger thus becomes an animal of awe and is perhaps worshipped because of it.

## VILLAGE DEITIES

### Bhumiya

According to the Hindi dictionary *bhumiya* means a Zamindar, god of village. The villagers regard *bhumiya* as god of the village. He is the first deity which is installed at the time of setting a village. Regarding *bhumiya* Johnstone writes:—

"Bhairon and Bhumia according to local information are looked upon as forms of 'Shiva', but the identification is doubtful and is subject to correction. These are both guardians of the soil and in all probability are originally village godlings who have risen in status. Bhumiya is associated with the dog, and is sometimes known as Bhura Deo." [63]

The villagers however do not associate *bhumiya* with Shiva in any manner. They only regard it as a village God, as the supreme master of village and specifically denied its ever having been associated with a dog. According to them *bhumiya* is installed at the time of settling the village. A spot, preferably under a tree is chosen and big stones — about 3-4 in number are placed below it. The stones are smeared with vermillion and later a platform is created round the tree. Later if some carved or engraved stones become available they are placed on the platform in addition to those already lying.

*Bhumiya* is worshipped on the occasion of marriage, births and other important events in a family by all castes. The worship consists in smearing the stone with vermillion, offering a cocoanut and then distributing *prasad*.

### Bhairon

The villagers do not associate *bhairon* with 'Shiva'. They regard him as deity which keeps their animals safe, besides the above *bhairon* is also worshipped for removal of other ills specially sickness. Saturday is the day of *bhairon* worship. Beneath a tamarind (Tamarindus indica) tree, two or more stones are placed, they are smeared with vermillion (please see photograph).

The worshippers before offering, place two small stones on his/her head and go to the tree. A coconut with sweets costing about Rs. 1.25 are also offered and a small red cloth is tied around the bigger stone. When there is a cattle epidemic, and if it is suggested to them that animal sacrifice is necessary then a goat, fowl is sacrificed at *Bhairon's* place. Liquor too, may be offered if prescribed. The worship is usual on an individual basis; but where there is an epidemic among the cattle, then the entire village joins in the worship.

### Bajrang or Kherapati

*Kherapati* is the deity which is the master of the village or khera. He is responsible for the peace, and safety of the entire village. His place is invariably outside the village so that he may guard the village from these evil influences, viz. illness, undesirable strangers. *Kherapati* ensures security of the village and *bhumiya* is the deity installed on founding the village and is inside the village. *Kherapati* is worshipped, generally by the villagers, all gathering at the same time. Individual worship is also met with, for if the cattle be lost then it is more likely that search if conducted after offering worship to *kherapati*, would be successful.

### Thakur Deo

Near *Bajrang* is located *Thakur Deo* (please see Plate IXL). Legend has it that Gond Thakurs were rulers of this region. They also looted the near about region and built a small fort in which they secured the loot. This fortress is now in ruins and was once located at the old site of the village. The spirits of these ancestors still visit the ruins and perhaps still hovers over it. During the Dushera time they aver that hoof steps could be heard even now, because the treasures lie buried round about, big snakes are frequently seen. The place of *Thakur Deo* thus assumes a sanctity because of its association with the ancestors. The worship consists in offering a cocoanut and sometimes placing a bunting at the spot. During Dushera along with other deities *Thakur Deo* is also worshipped.

### Bali Miya

*Bali miya* was a Mohammedan fakir or on asetic who is said to have lived about 100-200 years ago. He was a great exorcist and possessed remarkable powers of effecting a cure and preventing diseases specially for children. He used to read and give a amulet (tabiz)

63. Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXI — Gwalior, Part I, by J.W.D. Johnstone, p. 37-38.

for tying round the arm which had the desired effect. He was revered by all castes because of his extra-ordinary powers. About half a mile from the village towards the old site — lies a mound of earth and scattered on top of it are a few stones. This is known as *bali miya's* tomb. It is not certain if this is an actual tomb. *Bali miya* is worshipped by placing some burning incense at the tomb and by sacrificing a fowl or a partridge. Partridge and fowl are two favourite birds sacrificed at this spot. The sacrifice is carried out when such a course is recommended by the village exorcist.

## The Evil Spirits

There is great faith in the working of evil spirits who harm living persons and these placated rather than worshipped. The most important among these are:—

(1) Bhoot; (2) Pret — or Jind.

## Bhoot

*Bhoot* may be described as a spectre, fiend, ghost, a goblin, a demon, an evil spirit.

It is hard to describe as to what a *bhoot* is like. It is said to be a mere shadow and creates a sudden terror in the person whom it harasses. A ghost is an evil spirit and rises where a person has been murdered, or dies an accidental or unnatural death. It is said that under these circumstances the desires of the person remain unsatisfied and so to wreak vengeance the ghost arises and harasses others. It is said that *bhoot* afflicts a person or gets after a particular person (*bhoot laggaya*). The affliction comes in the form of a mortal fear, which is very real and induced bodily reactions. The ghost usually lives in the burning ghats (*marghat*), other far off lonely places or at the spot of accidents or unnatural death. A *bhoot* will harass any body who may happen to pass near him irrespective of his being guilty or innocent. The Saheriyas also believe that if a person dresses well, lives neatly then his chances of being pursued by a *bhoot* are greater. It is reasonable to expect that the *bhoot* would continue to operate for about 12 years, after which time it may disappear as mysteriously as it comes. A *bhoot* will invariably do harm, for it lies not in its powers to do any good.

The following case was narrated by Vijaya who suffered at the hands of a *bhoot*. Vijaya is a worldly wise Saheriya of keen intelligence and a sturdy built. He narrated:—

"It was summer evening and the sun was about to set when I was returning home after receiving payment of wages, for the work done on Fategarh Road. I saw an old man and then a shadow came over me; by the time it passed the old man had become young. This young man began to fight with me. He bodily lifted me and threw me down 10-12 times. When I was thrown down, I began shaking with fear but then I remembered Bajrang-Hanuman the 'Monkey God' and that seemed to have saved me. Thereafter I felt feverish for about a week and had to remain away from my work for over a month. During this month, every few days the fever would return and it was quite some time before I felt normal again."

Vijaya did not remember to have wronged any person at that time. He did not know as to whose evil spirit had attacked him. The other characteristics regarding *bhoot* are that it practices deception and it can assume any shape, size or dimensions. There is no treatment against *bhoot;* but a faith-cure alone is possible and only a capable exorcist who knows how to recite the appropriate *mantras* can do so. In such cases the faith-healer recites the *mantras* and calls the fiend: he may then banish the fiend or give the victim a few nails which when driven into tree will cause the fiend to disappear for good. Apart from faith-healing there is no other cure.

A ghost is capable of staying under the water too. It is said that near the village Khoda Panj near Rothai, there is a lake with plenty of water. In the lake lives a fiend who once in three years claims either a man or a cattle-head. This has been a regular feature since long. The villagers aver that when he takes a life the cattle is first thrown up and grabbed and taken down to the bottom.

## Jind or Pret

A *jind* is merely like a man clothed in all white-clothes and may found underneath a *bargad* (Ficus bengalensis) tree. He is not wicked in nature, and is selective in victimization. He is capable of doing good and evil and is generally regarded as more powerful than a ghost. He does not practice deception. The following case was narrated by Moolchand Saheriya.

"I was often troubled by some unknown power. Once while sleeping in loft in the field, I was thrown off and hurt myself. Often I would be thrown off my bed. This happened for a couple of years at varying intervals. Once when I was sleeping underneath a

*peepal* (Ficus religiosa) I was suddenly awakened. A man appearing in white clothes came near me and sat at my head. He said, "My statue is lying underneath the bunyan tree. Please remove it and raise a small platform for me. If you do so, I shall never bother you." At this I did, as told and since then I have never been bothered."

It is said that if the *jind* becomes annoyed with any one then it would harass the victim by all possible means, and make life very difficult for the person. If the *jind* takes a fancy to any person, then he would help that person to greater gains. However there are no cases within knowledge where benefits have been received. The *jind* remains active for eighteen years. No animal is sacrificed in its honour.

### Beliefs Generally

The villagers believe in the law of Karma and re-incarnation. The Saheriyas believe that where a man dies naturally, he is always reborn in some form or other depending upon his deeds or misdeeds in the previous life. Where a man dies of unnatural death he may not be reborn. He may assume the shape of ghost and may hover about for about twelve years. After twelve years, however, the chances of his being born elsewhere revive.

## VIII

## VILLAGE ORGANISATION

There are no village factions on basis of territorial affiliations. The Saheriyas form a fairly homogenous group and there is practically no interference from other villages.

The village, however, depends upon neighbouring ones for providing various services and facilities. In Borkheda village, two miles away are situated lands of some Saheriyas and Thakur. Thither they go, but always return home after the work. The main market where produce is sold is at Guna. The produce mostly consists of fuel, wood, honey, wax, lac and grass. For employment they walk to Guna and nearby villages viz. Man, Panj, Sonthi, Rothai and Hilagana. This employment is in the form of an agricultural labourer. Sometimes employment as an unskilled worker with the P.W.D. gang is also available. This usually depends upon the seasonal repairs on the roads. Then there is some work in the forest and the forest contractor engages them. This is confined to the Gadher Reserve Forest Range. At the time of harvesting the villagers often move out to the villages upto 25 miles away and return only after the wheat crop has been cut: They usually remain away for nearly 15-20 days after Phalguna or February/March. They are known to move out as far as Raghogarh (15 miles) and towards Ashoknagar (30 miles).

The villagers only supply fuel wood. grass, lac, wax, honey, *tendu* leaves. These supplies are sold at Guna unless they work under a contractor, in which case the articles are given to his men. The Saheriyas sometimes make brooms and mats from palm leaves and sell them at Guna. They are also known to make rope from *kans* (Saccharum spontaneum) and sell it in the market at Guna. The products are sold purely by individual enterprise. There is no organisation for marketting the products. Since the produce is not considerable it is transported either as a head load or by bullock carts. Trucks and wagons are not required.

There is very little work for the *dhobi* or washerman since Saheriyas never give their clothes for washing. The Jat gets his clothes washed from Guna from where *dhobi* comes to collect the clothes. If the Jat happens to go to Guna then, he would leave the clothes for washing. For a year's washing the *dhobi* is paid twenty seers of wheat or other grain. The clothing of women and children constitute the main bulk of *dhobi's* work. The Rajput house is also visited by the *dhobi* on same conditions.

The *nai* or barber is called from Sonthi. His services are mostly made use of by Thakur and Jat. Lately the Saheriyas also have started utilising his services. He is paid at the rate of 10 seers of wheat per adult head shaved or hair cut during a year. For children below 7-8 years of age, no charge is made but above that age, a concessional rate of 5 seers of grain per year is charged. His services include a hair cut and a shave. He visits his clients once in about eight days. Barring a few Saheriyas others being unable to pay for his services do not employ him. They prefer to be shaved at Guna by any barber at the market and pay about 0.35 P for a hair cut and shave. The children are not taken to the barber but their hair are clipped at home. A Saheriya does not shave frequently. Two shaves per month and one hair cut in about six to eight week's time being the average. The barber has no caste scruples in shaving a Saheriya: but if a Saheriya is unable to pay him, he naturally will decline to shave.

It was also noticed that the Saheriyas engage and then discontinue the barber, almost at will. There was hardly any continuity. It is obvious that a barber is used only when they can afford it. A barber is not required at the time of marriage by a Saheriya, but the Thakur and Jat avail of his services. He acts as a liaison man, a messenger for carrying invitation, a batman for the bridegroom and in short a man of general utility. For all his services he is paid in cash depending on agreement with the father of bride/bridegroom. In a son's marriage he is paid more for there is much work to be done. Sometimes the payment may also be made in kind, the quantities depending upon agreement between the two parties.

At death ceremonies also the *nai* acts as a messenger and shaves off the hair. He is paid separately for it usually on an *ad hoc* basis. By a convention, which has grown by usage a barber is meant for an entire village or a group of families. No other barber will visit these families unless the person concerned has, for some reasons, shown his unwillingness to attend. The new barber would only take over under these circumstances. It is also not possible for a family to bring in any barber, whom they want, for the village barber has a prior claim to attend on the residents of the village.

### Dai — Midwife

*Dai* or midwife is called from Sonthi. She is a *basor* woman and is untrained. She visits all the houses when required. On delivering a son she is paid more than on delivering a daughter. There is a growing preference for payment in cash: the payment varying from Rs. 1.25 to 2.50 for a daughter and Rs. 2.00 to Rs. 5.00 for a boy. In case there is no cash in the house, grain of an equivalent amount could also be given. She usually raises her demand keeping in view the circumstances of the other party. With the *dai* also comes a sweepress, a *mehtarani* from sweeper caste from the same village. She is paid about Re. 0.75 to Rs. 1.50.

### Badhai (Carpenter)

The carpenter usually comes from Hilagana and Sonthi. He receives his payment in cash and varying rates for different jobs. He may be called for the work to the village or may be asked to do it at his own place. He is not permanently attached to any family for carrying out their work. There are two carpenters one at Sonthi and the other at Hilagana who cater to the demands of the village.

### Rituals

At least on two occasions the entire village joins the celebrations. These are worship for rain God, sometime before the monsoons break. On this occasion, described earlier, the various communities, however, cook their food separately. The second occasion is at the time of *nav durga* period near *dushera*. The Jat and Thakur also participate though in a limited manner. At the time of Holi the entire village again gather to celebrate. At the time of Shravana the entire village joins in playing the *lehngi*.

The Village Panchayat is dominated by the Panchas from Hilagana. There is only one Pancha from the village. He is not particularly effective in the panchayat. There are no Saheriya Panchas. The school in the village is run by the Education Department of the State. Apart from this there are no other facilities provided by the government. Wealth is not concentrated in with particular community. Although Jat and Thakur are comparatively well-to-do, yet there are two Saheriyas who are equally affluent, the other Saheriyas are genearly poor. Another point noticed regarding wealth is that it bears no proportion to the influence in the village. The Saheriyas are no longer oppressed with any influence in particular, on the contrary it was apparent that the Thakur and Jat cultivated the friendship of the Saheriyas so as to retain some importance in the village.

The village leadership has not yet grown beyond the Jat who is the Patel and a member of the panchayat. The clusters do not have a separate leader. In social activities of the village, all hamlets join in. There is no inter-hamlet tension in the village. The Saheriya males, females and children visit each other very frequently. Among the Jat and Thakurs the question does not arise and they do not visit the Saheriyas except when invited for a particular function or celebrations. Visits to each other is mostly castewise.

## CASTE PANCHAYATS

### Caste Panchayats Generally

Each caste has its own panchayat which once was a very powerful institution, for its verdict became the iron law. Lately, however, a change is discernible,

although the panchayat continues to decide cases and resolve disputes and its decisions are accepted in most cases in all earnestness and without demur; yet in a few isolated cases, a spirit of revolt is perceived. About twenty years ago such an attitute was unthinkable but now it is creeping in: and though it is not serious enough to threaten the existence of the age-old institution, but nevertheless it is ominous and points to the shape of things to come. What exactly would they be could be any body's guess.

## The Jat Panchayat

In the village there are only two families, in nearby villages there are a few Jat families. In the district, there appears to be a greater concentration of Jats towards northern portions. The Jat panchayats are very powerful bodies and deal with a variety of offences and misdemeanour.

## The Organisation

Such six villages where Jats live are linked up to form what is known as *Ghar* Panchayat. Two persons from each village are called to sit as panchas. These persons should be of good reputation and generally well off economically. All twelve members from six villages constitute the quorum and unless all are present they would not function. The complainant is required to request the panchas to assemble and he has to foot all the bills in connection with their boarding and lodging arrangements. He may be later awarded compensation to include these expenses.

The panchayat would hear cases of matrimonial offences, abductions, kidnapping, murder, complaint of trespass pertaining to field boundary disputes. The punishment inflicted by the panchayat are seldom lightly taken, and has to be suffered. If a *ghar* panchayat expels anybody then the judgment is a judgment *in rem* and no other *ghar* panchayat would absolve him of the guilt. No member of the caste would have anything to do with him unless he has paid the prescribed penalty and is finally absolved. The panchayat is independent of lawfully constituted court as would be obvious from the following cases:—

Puttusingh had a grown up daughter who was major. A neighbouring youth Ratansingh enticed her away and started to live with her in Guna. Puttusingh discovered her there. He along with his four sons is said to have assaulted Ratansingh with *lathis* who as a result of injuries sustained, died in the hospital. Puttusingh and his sons were charged with murder, tried but acquitted. After their acquittal the Caste Panchayat assembled to deliberate upon the whole episode and decided to expel Puttusingh and his sons from the caste. This was a punishment for the murderous assault. They dismissed the plea of grave provocation by arguing (1) the girl went to stay with Ratansingh on her own accord, (2) if Ratansingh had enticed her then Puttusingh should have called the panchayat, rather than assaulted him. Puttusingh and his family have been expelled from the caste. He would not be able to marry his children into other Jat families of same rank. In extreme cases all persons of same clan or *gotra* are regarded as outcastes. This is locally known as *chhekna* or complete expulsion. Such persons are always looked down upon. In their marriages hardly 10-12 persons condescend to go as guests with the *barat*, the priest would think twice before officiating at a ceremony at their place and then he would demand exhorbitant fees. The other members of the community would never even share a drink or a smoke with the expelled family. The *hookah-pani* is stopped.

The expelled party could be re-admitted into the caste if he succeeds in marrying a female member of his family and actually performs the ceremony of giving the bride away or *kanya dan*. Such a person will always find it hard to marry girls of his family. He may either be required to pay heavy sums or dowry to the bridegroom and only perhaps succeed in getting a poor groom or one who suffers from same defects, or widower — in other words he would only succeed in striking an uneven match. It may be that he himself may not be having a girl of marriageable age in his family, then in such cases it would be sufficient if he performs the *kanya dan* ceremony at some of his relations. For this he would, of course, have to spend a lot of money. A person who marries into such a house is rediculed and generally looked down upon. He may be slighted and the expression used is *pour chhudana* meaning releasing from the restrictions.

Other punishments awarded by the panchayat consist of fines and sometimes feasts are ordered.

The Caste Panchayat has no source of income, but it has very powerful hold. It maintains no staff and dispenses justice according to its own rules and conventions.

The Saheriyas do not have any Panchayat comparable to the above. (Their panchayat has already been dealt with earlier).

## The Gram Panchayat

There is no Gram Panchayat at village Gadher but village falls under the jurisdiction of Hilagana Panchayat and sends one member. This is a statutory Panchayat constituted under Madhya Bharat Panchayat Act.

The Panchayat extends to Sonthi, Man, Gadher, Hilagana and Borkheda and has five panchas including a Sarpanch. From Gadher a Jat is the member. The Chairman or Sarpanch hails from Hilagana and is an Ahir by caste. Both are literate. There is a paid Secretary for the Panchayat who maintains the records and writes the proceedings of the meetings. Meetings should be held at least once a month but the villagers aver that there has not been many meetings. A quorum of three is necessary but often the lack of quorum causes postponement.

The panchayat was allotted funds by the Block for completing a school-cum-panchayat building and making an approach road of about two furlongs. Both the tasks have been completed. The villagers complained that the panchayat was not particularly enthusiastic in undertaking works hence very little has been done. The panchayat does not look after the sanitation or drinking water arrangements nor has any lighting arrangements been made. Its main source of income is grant which it receives.

## Voluntary Organisation Clubs etc.

There are no clubs or libraries nor are there any *other voluntary organisation in the village.* The villagers do not seem to have given any thought to it. Apparently it appears that for sometimes this is not one of their felt needs.

## Family Planning

They have no idea of family planning nor are they aware of any such movement. They do not remember to have had any discussion or talk on the subject. No agency has so far approached them yet. The block or the Public Health authorities have not yet visited the village for this purpose. They are not aware of any family planning measures. When sound about the need to limit the families, they naively agreed that four children were enough. This however was a mere wishful thinking and they did not seem particularly anxious to press the point any further.

## Removal of Untouchability

The question of removal of untouchability does not arise in as much as there are no untouchables in the village.

CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

But for extreme inconveniences at Ramkhedi, the old habitation, Gadher might not have been inhabited. The village once in forest, now on its fringe, suggests the steady process of deforestation. The National Highway 3, as it winds up north, weaves the econimic pattern of the villagers giving them many points of socio-economic contacts. This has certainly given some mobility and economic opportunities to the villagers. With this has also come a new awareness. Looking at the other end of the telescope, the tribals have moved further away from some of their traditions and customs. The Highway is not mere silent spectator, content to watch the peaceful village lying near it, but more like the fast moving traffic over it, it has contributed to their being weaned away from their past.

The village has been mostly inhabited by the Saheriyas — a Scheduled Tribe, Jat and Rajputs. The forest which has from time immemorial sustained them is still kindly disposed; but how long will it remain so (or rather allowed to remain so), could be anybody's guess? The present reckoning does not make one very optimistic. There has however been a change — occupational diversification — which may be summed up as, from the forests to the cultivated fields: some of them have taken to cultivation. Although they are far from being confirmed agriculturists — yet the trend towards taking to cultivation is obvious. If neither the cultivation nor the forest is able to provide any sustenance, then one may turn to the Highway, which would still provide some labour; or one may just walk on to Guna, in the hope of some employment. The Saheriyas being only a few miles from Guna, have been considerably affected by the urban influence and good means of communications. These have shaped the habits of a section of the population.

Economically the Saheriya, barring one or two exceptions, is not well off. The grant of loans, is not likely to improve their material condition. Haphazard grant of loans, have seldom alleviated economic distress, if any thing they have increased indebtedness. The need for a follow up of the loan, to see whether it has been properly utilised needs greatest emphasis. They have so far not cared to return the taccavi loans and do not appear to be worried about it either. The habit of thrift is unknown; but nonetheless loans are welcome since repayment is not deemed necessary. Another indication of their difficult economic condition is their exploitation by the money lenders.

Their houses fall in three distinct clusters and are made of mud walls, in which stones and boulders have been added, local tiles and leaves are used for the roofs. In the food and drinks the Saheriya is fond of meat, which is however not easily available. Liquor is also very welcome and they spend nearly one seventh of their income over it. In the matter of housing the Rajput and Jats are better off. They also do not have a great partiality for the bottle. In the matters of religious faith and practices the Saheriyas however, provide a very absorbing study. Clinging to primeval beliefs they are gradually taking to some practices found among the various castes in Hindus. They are fast acquiring what may be termed as "local colour", to wit, the calling of Joshis to ward off the effects of *mool nakashtra*. The manner in which they celebrate some of the festivals *nav durga, holi* etc. also supports the above. Exorcism still drives away many maladies and where all these rituals fail, prayer fills up the gap; for more things are wrought by prayer. A festive occasion, is celebrated with great *e'clat* be it *'lehngi'* when they themselves dance or the *rai* with the *bedni* dancing, for which they would go miles to watch the performance. These two gay celebrations recall their great zest for such occasions. The financial limitations have imposed restrictions on the sacrifice of a goat or on the offering of wine, yet whenever possible, this is done. It is indeed somewhat surprising to note that some of these Saheriyas have not taken to illicit distillation, specially in view of the high prices of country liquor and the distance that has to be travelled before it becomes available.

A tribe living in the jungle and hardly well equipped to defend itself from the terrifying wild forces, fully well realised that a tiger had to be revered.

Their worship of Khoobat Baba therefore becomes interesting. Like many Hindus, their belief in the law of Karma stands out prominently. Their fatalism goes to the extent of a complete surrender, for the Baimata has already ordained the Fate. The society living in the jungle soon realises that the hostile elements — natural and super natural have to be faced in a spirit of peaceful co-existence and the *bhoots*, *pret* and *jind* and to the quota of affliction: ways must be found out to cope up with them. The Saheriyas have adapted to these conditions, though these too are changing. Another tradition of the past that they seem to carry with them is their system of medicines. Their cure for snake bite is very interesting. Some of the other 'cures' are baffling. That they know about some herbs being medicinally useful is certain. Also their reluctance to disclose the same becomes exasperating. One is led to conclude that there is some sort of taboo in not disclosing the names of these medicines: for the late Maharaja Gwalior, nearly 50 years ago noted the same tendency. There has not been any appreciable 'advancement' on this point.

From the jungle to the Highway village, on the urban fringe, unmistakably points to the 'change'. Where is this going to lead them to? The question is a difficult one for the beginning does not know the end, yet one cannot fail to observe the 'Great' change which 'Time and Contacts' have brought about.

# APPENDIX

SHOWING TOTAL CASTEWISE INDEBTEDNESS IN RELATION TO OCCUPATION, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.

| S. No. | Caste/Tribe | Name | Occupation | | 'Average P. M.' | | Loans obtained from | | | | Total | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Primary | Secondary | Income | Expenditure | Tahsil | N. E. S. Block | Cooperative Bank | Money lender | | |
| 1. | Jat | Kamarlal Hargovind | Agricul. | Forest | 120/- | 115/- | 575.00 | 900.00 | 825.00 | 500.00 | 2,800.00 | |
| 2. | Rajput | Chhotesingh Pyarelal | -do- | -do- | 110/- | 108/- | ... | 200.00 | ... | 100.00 | 300.00 | |
| 3. | Saheriya | Javarya Rupchand | Gen. lab. | Agricul. | 80/- | 75/- | 123.31 | ... | ... | ... | 123.31 | |
| 4. | —do— | Mangi Chhutta | -do- | -do- | 100/- | 95/- | 75.00 | ... | ... | ... | 75.00 | |
| 5. | —do— | Fundi Ramlal | Agricul. | Forest | 170/- | 158/- | 63.56 | ... | ... | ... | 63.56 | |
| 6. | —do— | Bhamra Nanda | Gen. lab. | Agricul. | 40/- | 36/- | 150.00 | ... | ... | ... | 150.00 | |
| 7. | —do— | Mutia Baldeva | -do- | -do- | 70/- | 68/- | 130.00 | ... | ... | ... | 130.0 | |
| 8. | —do— | Gangola Ratana | Forest | -do- | 150/- | 105/- | 200.00 | 109.00 | 425.00 | ... | 734.00 | |
| 9. | —do— | Nattha Kalla | Gen. lab. | -do- | 60/- | 54/- | 75.00 | ... | ... | 50.00 | 125.00 | |
| 10. | —do— | Kisna Ramsingh | Forest | -do- | 160/- | 132/- | 63.31 | ... | ... | 200.00 | 263.31 | |
| 11. | —do— | Soma Ratana | Gen. lab. | -do- | 50/- | 50/- | 120.00 | ... | 180.00 | ... | 300.00 | |
| 12. | —do— | Daula Amarya | Forest | -do- | 100/- | 100/- | 60.00 | ... | ... | 100.00 | 160.0 | |
| 13. | —do— | Hukma Javarya | Gen. lab. | -do- | 78/- | 75/- | 80.00 | 230.00 | 160.00 | 250.00 | 720.00 | |
| 14. | —do— | Lakhchand Ramsingh | Forest | -do- | 130/- | 110/- | 53.00 | ... | ... | ... | 53.00 | |
| 15. | —do— | Nirpat Dulia | -do- | -do- | 170/- | 150/- | ... | 1,000.00 | 500.00 | ... | 1,500.00 | |
| 16. | —do— | Sukkha Kammoda | Agricul. | Forest | 238/- | 230/- | ... | 850.00 | 215.00 | ... | 1,065.00 | |
| 17. | —do— | Kanna Dulia | Forest | Agricul. | 150/- | 150/- | ... | 650.00 | 250.00 | ... | 900.00 | |
| 18. | —do— | Jaikishan Bhura | Agricul. | Forest | 260/- | 268/- | ... | 650.00 | 200.00 | 200.00 | 1,005.00 | |
| 19. | —do— | Pritam Kanhaiya | Forest | Agricul. | 120/- | 110/- | ... | 170.00 | 200.00 | 200.00 | 570.00 | |
| 20. | —do— | Lalchand Rupsingh | -do- | -do- | 135/- | 128/- | ... | 150.00 | ... | ... | 150.00 | |
| 21. | —do— | Mokam Gutta | -do- | -do- | 150/- | 130/- | ... | 150.00 | ... | 200.00 | 350.00 | |
| 22. | —do— | Mardu Dulia | Gen. lab. | Agricul. | 100/- | 83/- | ... | ... | 255.00 | ... | 255.00 | |
| 23. | —do— | Shankar Dulia | -do- | -do- | 45/- | 38/- | ... | ... | 258.00 | ... | 258.00 | |
| 24. | —do— | Kashya Dulia | -do- | -do- | 60/- | 60/- | ... | ... | 351.00 | 400.00 | 751.00 | |
| 25. | —do— | Gajja Kamarya | -do- | -do- | 100/- | 100/- | ... | ... | 225.00 | 310.00 | 535.00 | |
| 26. | —do— | Narayan Phundi | Forest | Agricul. | 120/- | 108/- | ... | ... | 290/00 | ... | 290.00 | |
| 27. | —do— | Hira Gulji | Gen. lab. | -do- | 80/- | 106/- | ... | ... | 538.00 | ... | 538.00 | |
| 28. | —do— | Balla Nandua | -do- | -do- | 50/- | 50/- | ... | ... | 389.00 | 50.00 | 439.00 | |
| 29. | —do— | Ramratan Hariya | -do- | -do- | 140/- | 135/- | ... | ... | 320.00 | ... | 320.00 | |
| 30. | —do— | Prahbu Phundi | Forest | -do- | 75/- | 75/- | ... | ... | 399.00 | 250.00 | 649.00 | |
| 31. | —do— | Soma Lalchand | -do- | -do- | 120/- | 112/- | ... | ... | 180.00 | ... | 180.00 | |
| 32. | —do— | Bhamra Phundi | -do- | -do- | 130/- | 125/- | ... | ... | 245.00 | ... | 245.00 | |
| 33. | —do— | Imrat Kishna | -do- | -do- | 160/- | 103/- | ... | ... | 180.00 | ... | 180.00 | |
| 34. | —do— | Ghasita Bhamra | -do- | -do- | 160/- | 165/- | ... | ... | 150.00 | ... | 150.00 | |
| 35. | —do— | Bhabhuti Chhatua | -do- | -do- | 150/- | 104/- | ... | ... | 150.00 | 300.00 | 450.00 | |
| 36. | —do— | Soma Shankar | Gen. lab. | -do- | 50/- | 50/- | ... | ... | 236.00 | ... | 236.00 | |
| 37. | —do— | Mansingh | Forest | Gen. lab. | 72/- | 68/- | ... | ... | ... | 200.00 | 200.00 | |
| 38. | —do— | Govind | -do- | -do- | 45/- | 42/- | ... | ... | ... | 100.00 | 100.00 | |
| 39. | —do— | Kanhaiya | -do- | -do- | 47/- | 38/- | ... | ... | ... | 100.00 | 100.00 | |
| 40. | —do— | Mishri | Gen. lab. | Forest | 62/- | 58/- | ... | ... | ... | 120.00 | 120.00 | |
| 41. | —do— | Manna | -do- | -do- | 103/- | 98/- | ... | ... | ... | 400.00 | 400.00 | |
| | | | | | 4,510/- | 4,165/- | 1,768.18 | 5,059.00 | 7,121.00 | 4,030.00 | 17,978.18 | |

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## GLOSSARY

*Achar* — *Buchanania latifolia*

*Adhonta* — Boiled to almost half concentration

*Agnikulas* — The four fire tribes descended from *Agni* or fire

*Agwani* — Reception of the marriage party

*Ajwayn* — Thymol

*Akha-ki-roti* — A food cooked by the bride for the first time at her father-in-law's house for dinner

*Akha-teej* or *Akshaya tritiya* — A Hindu festival observed on the eighteenth day of Vaishakh — month corresponding to April-May

*Amla* — An ornament worn on ankles

*Anchal-dena* — Giving the breast feeding

*Angarkha* — A Jacket-cum-half sleeved shirt corresponding to a waist coat

*Angochha* — A cloth worn across the waist upto the knees

*Ashad* — The fourth month of Hindu year

*Badera* — A beam of wood placed on the centre length of the house

*Bahar-nikalna* — A ceremony of coming out of the house which usually takes place after 15 days or so after the birth of a child

*Bahen* — A name of Tattooing designs on arms

*Baimata* — The universal Mother: the Births and deaths of infants take place at her bidding; known as fortune writer

*Baisakha* — The second month of the Hindu year

*Balbachhewala* — One who has children; the respect which goes with a married man

*Bali devta (miyan)* — A deity of the village

*Barat* — The marrigae party

*Batasha* — A semi-spherical cake which is made of sugar, light and spongy

*Bedni* — A class of woman who dance and sing, are coarse in their manners and regarded very low: also known as prostitutes

*Bees-bhuji-ka-mela* — A fair at Bajrangarh in Nav Durga week

*Bendi* — An ornament worn on the forehead

*Ber* — *Zizyphus jujuba*

*Bhaboot* — Some holy ashes

*Bhairon* — A village deity which keeps animals safe

*Bhajans* — A prayer; devotional songs

*Bhajiyas* — Snacks prepared by gram flour fried in oil

*Bhamar* — Circumambulation of sacrificial fire made by the bride-groom and the bride at the time of marriage

*Bhamri* — A tattooing design on calves of the legs

*Bhang* — *Cannibus sativa*

*Bhoosa* — Husk, chaff
*Bhoot* — An evil spirit
*Bhua* — The father's sister
*Bhumiswami* — A tenure holder of lands; a right in land under the M.P. Land Revenue Code 1959
*Bhumiya* — A God of the village
*Bhutta* — The cob of corn
*Bichhuvas* — An ornament which is worn on the toes by married women only
*Bidai* — Farewell
*Bidi* — A country cigarette made from tendu leaves
*Binuri* — The first ceremony of the marriage taking a round of the village
*Bor* — An ornament worn on forehead
*Buhar* — Contacts or family relations in the village
*Bukhur* — An agricultural implement
*Chaddar* — A coverlet; bedsheet
*Chandrabanshi* — Descendents from lunar race
*Chappaties* — 'Gannocks', cakes of unleavened flour
*Charmkar* (*Chamar, Mochi*) — A caste of shoemaker, skinner and tanners
*Chasni* — Liquid brown jaggery
*Chatai* — Mats made of palms
*Chaupai* — A tattooing design
*Chenchua* — Earth worms
*Cheru-ka-pani* — A decoction for a woman after the child birth
*Chharu sirana* — The disposal of ashes, bones, nails and teeth etc. after death in a nearby tank or some holy river
*Chhata* — A small necklace of coral stone
*Chhikna* — Complete expulsion from the caste
*Chhoot* — A drink made by adding some ashes to plain water given to woman to hasten a less painful delivery
*Choolah-ka-nyota* — An invitation to the hearth invitation to the family
*Choora* — An ornament worn on ankles
*Chilam* — Smoking pipe made of earth
*Chowki* — Outpost
*Chulania* — Small hearths
*Chulha* — A hearth
*Daal* — Pulse
*Dabhna* — Application of burn marks on body
*Daksharaj or* (*Himachal*) — Father of Lord Shiva
*Band* — Fine, penalty
*Dekchi* — Utensil
*Deo-uthani-ekadashi* — The eleventh day of the month of Kartika of Hindu year on which Gods wake up and marriage season commences
*Deswali* — A clan of Jat caste
*Devata* — God; Deity
*Dhartimata* — The Motherland
*Dhobi* — Washerman

*Dholak* — A small drum
*Dhulaniya* — An golden ornament worn on the neck
*Diwali* — The great festival of Hindus which falls on the fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of Kartik when earthen lamps are lighted and wealth worshipped

*Dolgyaras* — A ceremony on eleventh day of moon in the second half of the month of Bhadra

*Dubara* — A kind of country wine
*Dussehra* — One of the great Hindu festivals falls on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Ashwin. This day Rama killed the demon Ravana

*Fareras* — Flags
*Farmaishi* — A listener's choice
*Gadi-gadi* — Playing with an improvised cart
*Ganayana* — A ceremony which consists in presenting the ornaments and clothing to the bride at the time of marriage

*Gandasa* — Spear or a thick sharpened iron blade
*Gangen* — The Ganga-holy river
*Ganji* — A small heap of grass
*Gauna* — The ceremony of taking a bride to her husband's house for the first time after marriage

*Geda* — Small wooden beams which support the tiles
*Ghada* — A big earthen vessel for storing water and making gruel of juar

*Ghargrahsthi* — Indication to the respect which goes with a married man to feel himself responsible for he has a family to support

*Ghar-jamai* — Person who resides at his father-in-law's home
*Gharpanchayat* — Six villages linked together and inhabited by the Jats form a jurisdiction of a Caste council.

*Ghoonghat* — A veil
*Ghungru* — Small jingle bells
*God-bharna* — A ceremony of filling up the lap which denotes the successful negotiations for betrothal

*Godhanpuja* — A worship of cattle wealth
*Gotra* — The clan
*Gulli-danda* — A game which consists in hitting a small *gulli* which is a small piece of wood of pointed edges with a small stick called *danda*

Gur — Jaggery
*Hanuman* — The monkey God who assisted Rama against Ravana
*Hasiya* — A sickle
*Hat* — A weekly market
*Havan* — Sacrificial fire
*Hiraman* — A deity worshipped for various diseases of animals
*Holi* — The Hindu festival of colour observed on the last day of the bright half of Phalguna

*Hookah* — A hubble-bubble; smoking pipe

*Hupka* — A local term indicating for a disease of children when they have lung or throat congestion causing difficulty in breathing

*Izzat* — Prestige

*Jadi-buti* — Herbs

*Janani* — The Universal Mother

*Janjira* — A colourful ornament of decoration made of coloured stone glass and lac

*Janmastami* — The birth day of Lord Krishna : eighth day of the dark-half of Bhadra

*Janwasa* — The place at a bride's house where the marriage party is accommodated

*Jatta* — Matted hair

*Javaras* — Green small sprouts of barley

*Jhella* — An ornament of the ear

*Jhoola* — A swing

*Jind* — An evil spirit; ghost

*Joshi* — A caste who makes the horoscopes

*Kabaddi* — An Indian out-door game of boys who play the game by forming two parties

*Kada* — An ornament worn on ankles

*Kakai* — A comb

*Kakaniya* — An ornament worn on wrist

*Kanda* — Dried cowdung cakes used as fuel

*Kangana* — An ornament worn on wrist

*Kangna-Khulna* — A ceremony of opening of bracelets at the fourth day of marriage ceremony

*Kanjadi* — A professional dancer of Kanjar caste

*Kanyadan* — The ceremony of giving the bride away as gift or charity in marriage

*Kardhoni* — An heavy silver ornament worn on waist

*Karma* — The Hindu philosophy which says that a man is rewarded or punished according to his good deeds and evil deeds.

*Karanphool* — Golden ornament of the ears

*Karasdeo* — A deity worshipped mostly by Ahirs and Gujars

*Karonda* — *Carrisa spinarum*

*Kashyap* — A rishi or a saint — may probably have developed into an eponymous hero from kachhap

*Katha* — A religious discourse

*Kenthri* — A bedding made of old pieces of cloth

*Khair* — *Acecia catachu*

*Khajoor* — The palmyra, the date tree

*Khangwari* — An ornament worn around the neck

*Khaps* — Endogamous groups of a caste

*Khapra* — Locally made flat tiles

*Khatedar* — A landholder

*Kheer* — A dish made of rice milk and sugar boiled together

*Khema* — A pole around which a bridegroom goes seven times in case he is marrying with a widow

*Kherapati* — The lord of the village
*Khichadi* — A food prepared by rice and pulse together
*Khoobat Baba* — A tiger god worshipped as a divinity by the low caste generally on the occasion of births and marriages
*Khokho* — An Indian game
*Khoont* — Extreme corner, border
*Khurcha-roti* — A food offered to marriage party in case father of the bride is very poor; it is tied to the turban instead of eating
*Kismet* — Luck, fortune
*Kisan* — A cultivator
*Kothi* — A granary
*Kudali* — A pickaxe
*Kulhadi* — A hatchet, an axe
*Kurap karna* — A weeding operation
*Lagoon* — A letter sent by the bride's father to the father of the bridegroom for settling the day of marriage
*Lapsi* — A gruel of juar
*Lehnga* — A skirt or petticoat
*Lehngi* — A dance by about 20-25 persons beating sticks and drums,
*Long* — A gold ornament worn on the nose
*Mahadeo* — God shiva
*Mahurat* — The auspicious occasion
*Maili-boot or Ghatoiya* — An evil spirit often visible in a female form and haunts mostly the female
*Mandap* — A canopy raised for marriage ceremony
*Manjira* — A kind of cymbal
*Mantras* — A vedic text or hymn
*Marai-ki-puja* — Worship of cholera
*Marghat* — Burning ground
*Masala* — Literal meaning condiments; also a country wine
*Mata* — The Godess of Small pox
*Mohar* — A crown which is worn by a bride-groom during the marriage ceremony
*Mohri* — A crown which is worn by a bride during the marriage ceremony
*Moong* — Green gram
*Mool* — The ninetenth Nakshatra (planet) considered inauspices
*Mulethi* — A bark having medicinal properties
*Myals* — The shaft to support the roof
*Nai* — A barber
*Nakshatra* — The planet
*Nal (Sarra)* — The cord
*Nam* — Name
*Nariyal* — Cocoanut
*Nazar* — Influence of evil eye
*Nazar-Jhadna* — To brush out the effect of evil eye
*Nazar-lagna* — The nasty effect of the evil eye

*Negi* — Tips to attendants during marriage ceremony

*Nekchar* — This consists in waving a lighted *thali* and garlands around the face and supposed to keep the boy safe from evil influence

*Nibhoniya* — Local pronounciation of pneumonia

*Osara* — A small varandah

*Palka* — A bed-stead

*Pandit or pujari* — The priest

*Pardah* — Veil

*Patel* — Headman of the village

*Paur-chhudana* — Releasing from the caste restrictions

*Pav-pakharna* — A ceremony of touching the feet of bride and bridegroom

*Peeli chhitthi* — A letter smeared with turmeric giving it a yellow tinge. It is written by the priest and notifies the date fixed for the marriage

*Phawda* — A spade

*Polka* — A loose blouse

*Poncha* — Tattooing designs on wrist

*Poola* — Stock of wheat corn

*Potli* — An earthen water-pot to be carried on to the fields for cultivators

*Punya* — The virtuous deeds

*Rajputra* — The son of a king; the prince

*Rakhi* — A sacred thread to be tied on wrist at the festival of Rakshabandhan

*Rama* — The God Rama who killed the Ravan and worshipped by Hindus

*Ramji-ki-dukariya* — The lady fly; the lady cow; a red insect

*Rango* — A cheap metal resembling silver

*Rasi* — A kind of country wine

*Rashi* — A sign of Zodiac

*Ratjaga* — A ceremony on first day of marriage days observing keeping awake at night

*Reja* — A very short blouse which leaves the back exposed and in the front covers the breasts barely

*Renhat* — One of the means of irrigation from wells

*Safa* — Turban, a five to six yard coarse cloth to be wrapped around the head

*Sagai* — Betrothal

*Sammaiya* — A year which brings prosperity

*Sarangi* — A flute, a musical instrument

*Sasural* — Father-in-law's place

*Savaka* — A set of dress for the village woman

*Savasa* — An attendant or helper to bridegroom who generally happens to be husband of bridegroom's father's sister

*Sheera (Shirra)* — Sweets of jaggary

*Shikar* — Hunting

*Shradha* — An act of devotion or offering of food and water for the deceased or ancestors

| | |
|---|---|
| *Shradh-paksha* | — A fortnight in the month of Kuar in which offering of food and water to one's ancesters is made |
| *Sindoor* | — Vermillion |
| *Surajbanshi* | — Descendents from the solar race |
| *Swang* | — A song sung on the occasion of dancing by *Bedni* |
| *Tabiz* | — An ornament worn on neck to be not influenced by evil eyes |
| *Tabla* | — An musical instrument |
| *Taini-chhuana* | — An act of touching the forehead of the deceased with a twig while burning pyre by the chief mourner |
| *Tejaji-ka-mela* | — A fair held in memory of Tejaji — a saviour from snake bite |
| *Tervi* | — A ceremony of thirteenth day after the death |
| *Thakurat* | — A symbol of good family back-ground or status |
| *Tona* | — An act of taking off the effect of evil influence etc. |
| *Toran-marna* | — A ceremony of touching a small wooden bracket with the sword built above the door by the bridegroom |
| *Tuladan* | — A gift to Joshi as per weighment |
| *Viman* | — A small palanquin in which a deceased is made to sit for taking to burning ground. |