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THE KAMAR

THE KAMAR

By

S. C. DUBE, M.A., Ph.D.

with a Foreword by

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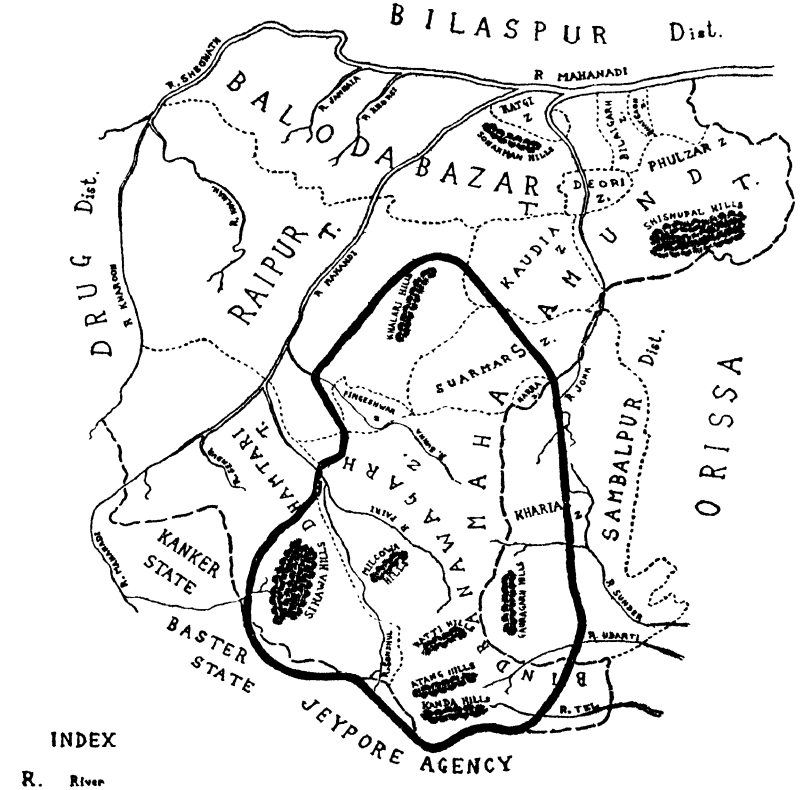
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THE KAMAR COUNTRY.



PREFACE

The last few years have witnessed a rapid advance of anthropology in the Central Provinces and Berar. For many years Russell and Hiralal's *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* was the only existing work which dealt with the ethnography of the province in a rather extensive and summary manner. Being an official compilation it has its obvious limitations and defects. In recent years a number of detailed monographic studies have been published on individual tribes. W. V. Grigson was the first to contribute a full-length monograph on a Central Provinces tribe, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*. This was followed by a series of monographs on the Baiga, Agaria, Maria and Muria by Verrier Elwin. He has also published an important series of books dealing with the oral literature of tribal Middle India. Indrajit Singh has written on Gond economics. The Pardhans of the Upper Narabada Valley have been studied by Shamrao Hivale. M.P. Buradkar has published a number of papers on the social organization of the Gonds in the Central Provinces. An anthropometric survey of the Bastar state was conducted by D. N. Majumdar who has also published a paper on the contact problems obtaining there. K. P. Chattopadhyay has worked on the Korkus and some of his reports have been published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. So far no tribe which is confined exclusively to Chhattisgarh has been studied at full length. The present monograph is devoted to a study of the main aspects of the cultural life of the Kamar, a small and ethnographically little known tribe of Chhattisgarh.

My first contacts with the Kamars were established in 1939, when I had occasion to record some of their folk-songs. At that time I made a few brief notes on their life and living. My contact with the Kamars was maintained by continued visits which enabled me to acquire a working knowledge of their dialect. Nearly all Kamars are now bilingual, besides their own dialect they speak Chhattisgarhi also. To me this was an additional advantage for I could converse with them freely in Chhattisgarhi as well. Gradually my collection of their songs swelled up and my interest in their life and culture also developed. On the basis of this work I published some specimens of Kamar songs and a brief account of their life and living. For some time this was all.

In July 1944, I was first awarded the King Edward Memorial Research Scholarship and later the Morris Memorial Fellowship of the Nagpur Univer-

sity for research in Social Anthropology. I limited my field to the southern part of the Raipur district in Chhattisgarh, specially to the still wild and backward Zamindari of Bindranawagarh and decided to study the tribal cultures of that region intensively. Naturally such a task could not be attemped all at once. The present study is the first in a series of monographs contemplated by me. A similar study of the Chaukhutia Bhunjia is in preparation.

I stayed in the wild and sparsely populated Bindranawagarh Zamindari, the home of the Kamars, from January to June 1945. Unfortunately my tours of investigation in the Kamar country were preceded by a drive for recruitment to the labour units of the army. This created difficulties for me. A rumour went round that I had come to enlist the Kamars for war. Our initial efforts to establish contacts with the people were mostly fruitless, and on several occasions we found that on our approach the entire population of the village deserted it. The first few weeks were thus spent in disappointment. However, as we entered into the heart of the Kamar country we succeeded in establishing some valuable contacts. Our long stay in Chikhli won for us the friendship of Dukalu, Sukalu and Bhainsa, the celebrated Kamar Baiga. Gradually their misgivings were cleared and later we obtained excellent co-operation from them. In the period which followed we visited a large number of settlements in the Gariaband, Chhura and Nawagarh tracts of the estate.

This was followed by an extensive tour of the wild hill-villages of the Mainpur tract and a visit to some Kamar settlements on the hills of the Khariar Zamindari in Orissa. In most of these tours we travelled either in bullock cart or on foot. In these tours we witnessed a number of important rites and ceremonies and recorded very full sociological census of a number of important villages visited by us. A record of nearly two hundred genealogies was also made. A major part of the material documented in this monograph is the result of these investigations.

In April 1946, we returned to the Kamar country for further investigations. This time I collected some important data on tribal law and its breaches and carefully checked the material collected in the previous tours. While the monograph was in preparation I visited the Kamars thrice and final touches to the manuscript were given in the Kamar country itself. Since then I have been working on the Chaukhutia Bhunjia, a neighbouring tribe, and have maintained a regular contact with the Kamars.

I am aware that traditional monographs are now going out of fashion. But our knowledge of the tribal cultures of India at this stage is so inadequate and in some cases so inaccurate, that for many years more to come anthro-

pologists will have to make as far as possible full records of the cultures which they study and describe. I have, therefore, given equal place to economics, social organization, customary law and religion in this account of the life and culture of the Kamars, touching briefly in the end the problems of culture contacts and tribal rehabilitation also.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For hospitality and assistance in field-work I am thankful to my numerous friends and well-wishers. It is impossible to mention all of them individually. In particular, however, I have to thank Mr. G. K. Tewari and the Court of Wards administration of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari for the facilities which they provided for my field work. My thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Konher for their unfailing hospitality and to Mr. Prabhulal Shrivastava for excellent arrangements for my tours. I had the benefit of the company of my friend Dashrathlal Chaubey in the first tour and my wife accompanied me in the subsequent tours. It is difficult to assess in words the value of their company. The latter helped me greatly by elucidating several points from Kamar women and also in preparing the manuscript and seeing it through the press.

The cost of the publication of this monograph was met partly by grants from the Madhya Pradesh government, the King Edward Memorial Society, and the Nagpur University. My special thanks are due to Shri U. Misra, Registrar, Nagpur University and Dr. V. S. Jha, Secretary, Education Department, Madhya Pradesh, for their interest in this work. The Council of the Ethnographic and Folk-culture Society obliged me by undertaking the publication of the monograph in conjunction with the Universal Publishers Ltd. at a time which seems to be one of the most difficult in the history of book production.

For guidance, stimulation and other help I am grateful to my teacher Shri A. Sen and Prof. S. V. Puntambekar. Shri Sen has done much to popularise anthropology and stimulate anthropological research in the Nagpur University. All along Dr. Verrier Elwin has evinced a keen interest in my work and I have benefited greatly by his valuable suggestions. I am obliged to Professor Chattopadhyay for making several important suggestions as an examiner of the doctoral thesis. Professor Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf encouraged me by his highly appreciative report on my thesis and obliged me further by contributing his valuable foreword. I am greatly indebted to both Dr. and Baroness Haimendorf for the consideration, kindness and encouragement that they have shown to me. As a direct result of stimulation received from them I am undertaking further field studies in tribal Hydera-

bad, an area so ably studied by them. Dr. D. N. Majumdar was closely associated with the publication of the monograph at all stages and I am thankful to him for his keen interest and practical assistance. The book owes much to his sympathy, resourcefulness and guidance. For the maps, sketches and line-drawings I am grateful to Shrimati Tara, Shri R. P. Jyotishi and Shri Shanker Srivastava. Finally I can not adequately express what I owe to my father for his forbearance, understanding and encouragement.

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S. C. DUBE

FOREWORD

The study of India's pre-literate civilizations has reached a stage where further progress depends largely on an intensification of anthropological field-research. The first half of the twentieth century saw the collection of sufficient information on the cultures and ways of life of some of the more primitive as well as of the advanced populations of India to allow us to recognize the ethnological pattern of the sub-continent in rough outline, but most of the detail remains to be filled in and it will be many years before our knowledge of India can approach that of anthropologically better known parts of the globe. Every detailed study of a primitive Indian people must therefore be welcomed and students of the ethnology of Middle India will be grateful to Dr. Dube for his lucid and sympathetic description of the Kamars, a tribe hitherto practically unknown to anthropology. The present book, which earned the author a doctorate of the University of Nagpur, is a straight monograph in the traditional style. Equal consideration has been given to all the main aspects of the Kamars' cultural life and this is indeed the soundest approach to a first study of any primitive community. The choice of one single aspect as the central theme of a book may be rewarding in the case of a society known, in broad outline at least, from the writings of previous scholars, but there are few Indian cultures which warrant at this juncture such a specialized form of presentation of ethnographic material. Lines of approach developed in the classical fields of anthropological research in North America and Oceania cannot be applied in every respect to the comparatively virgin ground of India where for some time to come anthropologists will have to concentrate on the primary task of giving as complete an account as possible of whatever aboriginal society they study.

Dr. Dube has recognized this position and in *The Kamar* he aims at presenting an accurate and complete picture of tribal life as an integrated whole. Although he consciously avoids transgressing the borders of ethnographic description, his study nevertheless leads us directly to the consideration of several major problems of comparative Indian ethnology. For the Kamars belong to a cultural stratum which has only recently been identified and isolated.

This stratum is represented by a number of tribes standing economically midway between food-gatherers and primitive agriculturists. Most of them are numerically insignificant and have long been overshadowed by their

more advanced tribal neighbours whose colourful and more complex cultures have monopolized the interest of earlier observers. Though the ethnographic surveys of such authors as Thurston and Russell did not ignore these tribes altogether no clear understanding of their cultural position is to be gained from the information contained in the various 'Castes and Tribes' series, and Dr. Dube's quotations from the article by Russell and Hiralal show up the inadequacy of the data hitherto available on the Kamars. The same applies to other tribes of comparable status and it was not until the publication of Elwin's *The Baiga* in 1939 that anthropologists were in a position to assess the problem of these most primitive proto-agricultural civilizations on Indian soil. My book *The Reddis of the Bison Hills* (1945) dealt with a people of similar economic status living on the southern fringe of the Middle Indian culture-sphere, and Dr. Dube's work among the Kamars adds considerably to our knowledge of the nature and distribution of this particular ethnological stratum.

It is now becoming increasingly clear that throughout large areas of Middle India there exist side by side with such large and dominant aboriginial populations as Gonds, Oraons and Mundas tribes of a far more primitive style of life. The tribes are almost everywhere considered by the other local populations as the older and truly autochthonous inhabitants of the area and there can remain little doubt that they are representative of a very ancient and today largely sub-merged cultural and ethnic stratum. This stratum seems to have followed upon the even more ancient stratum of hunters and food-gatherers, remnants of which survive among such tribes as the Birhors of Bihar, the Chenchus of the Nallaimala Hills and the Malapantarams of Travancore. Although an exact correlation of archæological and ethnological strata is not yet possible, we can safely assume that the beginnings of agriculture coincided in India as elsewhere in the world with the coming of the neolithic age. Only peoples in possession of an effective cutting instrument could have developed a form of agriculture involving the periodical felling of forest; for the axe, be it of iron or polished stone, is the most essential and indeed indispensable implement of the shifting cultivator. In so far as their economy is concerned tribes such as Kamars, Reddis and Baigas have never advanced beyond the stage reached by early neolithic man. The acquisition of metal instruments from their neighbours did not bring about any radical change in their style of living, and they can thus be regarded as living respresentatives of an era which has long passed in the rest of India.

Let us briefly consider the economy common to these, the most primitive of Indian agriculturists. The cultivation of grain crops raised on forest

clearings constitutes everywhere the principal means of subsistence, but in no case does it suffice to provide the entire food-supply. Wild growing roots, fruits and herbs are regularly gathered, and at some times of the year they form the major part of the people's diet. Hunting, trapping and fishing play an important role among the economic activities. The keeping of cattle seems to be a more or less recent innovation among all the tribes of this class, but pigs and fowls are universally of considerable importance. Forest produce and baskets are used for barter with more advanced populations, while crafts other than basket-making do not seem to be anywhere of economic relevance.

It is the primitiveness of agricultural method and the uncomplicated nature of the general economy which distinguish these tribes from such aboriginal populations as Gonds or Nagas. Although shifting cultivation is practised also by many of the Gond and Naga tribes their agricultural methods based on the use of effective hoes are far superior to the digging-stick cultivation of Kamars, Baigas and Reddis, and are hence capable of supporting a more complex and advanced civilization. Developments in the social sphere parallel material progress and where a well established agricultural system guarantees a steady and ample food-supply communities increase in size and the accumulation of people in larger and more permanent settlements gives rise to the growth of more elaborate forms of social organization.

Neither among the Kamars nor among Reddis or Baigas, do we find any complex system of social organization. The economy of the tribe habitually dependent on the gathering of wild produce does not permit the formation of substantial village-communities, and the average Kamar settlement does not consist of more than a very limited number of families, which are usually connected by ties of blood or marriage. It is nevertheless this 'local group' which next to the family is for ritual and social purposes the most important unit. The clan, on the other hand, serves to regulate marriages but does not unite the members in any corporate activities. The idea of an original clan-land (*murmati*) persists, but few clans maintain any practical connection with this legendary home. Myths explaining certain totemistic taboos observed by individual clans conform so closely to the pattern of similar myths current among Gonds and other tribes of Middle India that we must reckon with the possibility of more or less recent borrowing.

A comparison of the social systems of other tribes living in similar style, may help to interpret the present position of the Kamars and at the same time throw some light on the organization common to these primitive

shifting-cultivators. Among the Kolams of Hyderabad, for instance, we find the same conception of the original home of individual groups, the groups being composed of all those who worship Ayak, their principal deity, under a name linked with a specific locality. The shrine of Ayak is the ritual centre of the group, and it is only there, on the traditional 'home-land', that members of the group may put up memorial stones or posts in honour of deceased relatives. Similarly the members of the group gather at the traditional shrine for the worship of Ayak and even those living at distant places undertake periodically the journey to their ritual centre. These customs indicate that at one time the Kolams were organized in local groups, each of which had a ritual centre, and that the memory of this territorial organization is still strong enough to preclude the erection of memorials to the dead in any locality other than the traditional home. While the living may be forced to abandon their home-land, the dead are believed to return to it and to stay with the deity of their hereditary domain. A similar territorial organization, is found among many of India's primitive hunters and foodgatherers and its existence among the Kamars supports the view that a system of territorial units is characteristic also of the early shifting cultivators. These units are not necessarily identical with the modern clans. Among the Kolams the clan-system is clearly copied from the Gonds and the clans do not coincide with the old ritual units. The confusion in the Kamars' ideas regarding the *murmati* of various clans is possibly due to the same reason. A clan-system linked with certain totemistic taboos and myths of origin seems to have been superimposed on an older system of territorial units. Several clan-names are indeed obviously of Gondi origin and occur also among Gonds. Netam, for instance, would seem to be derived from the Gondi word *nei* for 'dog' and Markam from the Gondi *marka* for 'mango'. Like the Netam or Naitam clan of many Gond tribes the Netam clan of the Kamars observes the taboo on eating tortoise and crocodile and explains the taboo by the well-known story of the river-crossing current among Gonds and several other tribes of Middle India.

If we contrast the slight ritual importance of the Kamar clan with the elaborate ritual organization of Gond clans, we can hardly escape the conclusion that among the Kamars the system of totemistic exogamous clans is of comparatively recent growth. Indeed it is likely that when the Kamars came in touch with Gonds and other more advanced tribes, some of their territorial units were identified with clans prevailing among these populations, and that in this way the Kamars adopted certain features of a totemistic clan-system without coordinating it completely with their traditional territorial organization.

Dr. Dube has found no support for Russell's and Hiralal's reference to two subdivisions of different social status, and there is no evidence of a grouping of clans into exogamous phratries. The absence of such phratries, which occur widely among Gondi-speaking as well as among Austro-asiatic-speaking tribes of the Central Provinces and Orissa, is not without ethnological interest. It strengthens the view that the organization of society into phratries, which are often associated with such animals as cobra, tiger and tortoise, is not a feature of the culture of the more primitive of the shifting cultivators, but that it has its origin in a different and more advanced stratum. No such phratries are found among Kamars, Baigas, Kolams and Reddis, and where they occur among populations of similar status, such as the Dires of Orissa, influence by neighbouring populations is evident also in spheres other than the social organization.

The emphasis on family and local group as the principal social units thus appears characteristic not only of the Kamars but of a whole stratum of primitive cultivators, and Dr. Dube's study of Kamar society illustrates the difference between the very simple social organization of the tribes of this type and the complex system of such advanced aboriginal races as the Gonds.

In many of the aboriginal tracts of Middle India tribes of different cultural level share one and the same habitat, and the variations in inter-tribal relations are of considerable interest to the student of the changing pattern of Indian tribal cultures. The Gond-Kamar relationship in Chhattisgarh for instance, is quite different from the Gond-Kolam relationship in Hyderabad and this again differs profoundly from the relationship of Koyas and Hill Reddis. The Kamars consider the Gonds as their social superiors, but nevertheless they do not countenance unrestricted social intercourse with their Gond neighbours. Sexual relations with a Gond is sufficient ground for excommunication and a woman who eats food cooked by Gonds is at once expelled from the tribal community. A man, on the other hand, may eat Gond food, but Kamars and Gonds do not freely intermingle at feasts and ceremonies. Relations between Gonds and Kolams are very different. These tribes form two strata of a composite aboriginal society. Kolams share freely in the food of Gonds and most Gonds have no objection to eating in Kolam houses. Sexual relations between members of the two tribes, though considered somewhat irregular, are not looked upon with any great horror, and the children of mixed marriages find their place in the one or other community. As the priests of certain local deities the Kolams function moreover at many Gond rites, and in this respect they resemble the Baigas of the Maikal Hills and Chhattisgarh. The Kamars

on the other hand, do not act as priests for any other tribe but on the contrary sometimes employ the services of Gond seers.

No less interesting than the study of inter-tribal relationships in the various areas is the examination of the relations between the tribal groups and the local Hindu populations. Here too we find no uniformity in the social and economic adjustments of aboriginal tribes on different levels of material development, and the status of a tribe in the caste system depends often on a more or less superficial compliance with certain Hindu customs and ideas. In the case of the Koyas and the Hill Reddis, for instance, it is largely the attitude of the two tribes to the eating of beef which has determined their social postion. The Hill Reddis, who did not originally keep cattle, found it easy to comply with the Hindu objection to cow-slaughter, whereas the Koyas, who traditionally sacrifice cattle on the occasion of their funeral rites, rank low largely on account of their beef-eating and are at present in danger of being classed with the local untouchable castes. To escape a similar classification the Kamars have already surrendered their drums to the Gandas, professional musicians of depressed status. Thus contact with the caste system of Hindu society sometimes leads to a certain impoverishment of an aboriginal culture, and there are cases where even such useful crafts as weaving and pot-making are given up because their practice lowers the status of the tribesmen in the eyes of their non-aboriginal neighbours. On the other hand aboriginals whom historic accident has placed in a favourable position continue to retain such customs without jeopardizing their status in rural society. The Raj Gonds of Hyderabad, whose past role as the ruling race still lends them a certain prestige, have continued to eat beef and play drums of all types and are yet classed among the respectable agricultural castes. It is only in areas where the loss of their land has deprived the Gonds of economic independence and non-aboriginals have established themselves in their villages that the pressure of Hindu opinion has forced them to forego cow-sacrifice and certain other tribal customs.

The Kamars, in whose own culture the keeping of cattle had no place, now conform to the Hindu taboo on beef-eating and they even penalize cow-killing as a serious offence. But while contact with Hindu populations has resulted in the acceptance of certain new ideas and the adoption of many Hindu festivals and ceremonies, it has modified the basic pattern of the Kamars' economic life only to a very limited degree. This brings us to the important problem of what we may call the 'selectivity' of primitive cultures. Wherever primitive tribes are brought into close contact with more advanced populations, it appears that they adopt only certain elements of the

dominant culture while disdaining or sometimes even resisting the introduction or incorporation of other traits. We are not yet able to diagnose with any certainty which motives actually determine the selection or rejection of cultural elements. Yet it is the transmission of specific cultural elements which lies at the root of both culture-change and diffusion. For culture-change is usually brought about not by spontaneous mutation—a process too slow to be observable by ethnographic methods—but by the impact of one culture on the other. And diffusion is ultimately nothing but repeated individual acts of transmission of one or more cultural elements from social group to social group.

The different reactions of various aboriginal tribes to rural Hindu civilization are in this context of considerable interest, and it is only by gathering records of many concrete cases of such acculturation processes that we can gain a picture of the gradual Hinduization of tribal populations. Chapter VII of *The Kamar* is therefore of particular interest not only to the anthropologist but to any student of culture-change in India. We observe here in a narrow field a phase of the process whereby originally independent tribal cultures are incorporated into the all-embracing frame-work of Hindu civilization within which they persist as sub-cultures retaining some of their specific characteristics while having shed others in the process of assimilation to the dominant Hindu pattern. The Kamars have as yet taken only the first step towards assimilation to the Hindu populations surrounding their habitat. Certain spheres of social life have been profoudly influenced by this contact, whereas others have shown themselves resistant to any radical change. Assimilation does not proceed with equal pace along the entire line of culture and it is the merit of the present book that we see quite plainly how extreme conservatism in regard to certain aspects of life co-exists with a rapid transformation of ideas and custom in other spheres.

Dr. Dube stands only at the beginning of his career as a field-anthropologist but the quality of his first book permits us to hope that his present research-work among the Bhunjias of Chhattisgarh will result in further substantial contributions to our knowledge of the aboriginals of Middle India.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

THE KAMAR COUNTRY

The five south-eastern districts of the Central Provinces known as Chhattisgarh, the land of thirtysix forts, are the home of many aboriginal tribes who are working out their tribal destinies at varying levels of primitive culture. The appellation *Mahakantar*, the great forest, given to this land in ancient Sanskrit literature is adequately justified by the numerous ranges of hills and the surrounding thick forests, which have provided shelter to the indigenous cultures of the land against the onslaught of the forces of more advanced civilizations. In the comparative seclusion of the mountain fastnesses and the thick forests surrounding them we come across a number of very interesting primitive folks, such as the Gond, Sawara, Binjhwar, Dhanwar, Kanwar, Bhunjia and Kamar.

The Kamars are concentrated chiefly in the Bindranawagarh, Suarmar and Fingeshwar Zamindaris and in the Nagri and Sihawa tract of the Dhamtari tahsil, in the Raipur district of the Central Provinces. In the Bindranawagarh Zamindari, the Kamars are evenly distributed all over, but they are found in larger numbers in the hills of Nawagarh and Mainpur and in the forest of the Chhura tract. Their population in the Suarmar and Fingeshwar Zamindaris is concentrated in the south-western areas of the estates. The hills and forests of Nagri and Sihawa, which touch the western boundary of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari, have also a considerable Kamar population. The Khariar Zamindari, which formerly formed a part of the Raipur district but has now been transferred to the province of Orissa, has a large Kamar population in its hills adjoining the bor-

ders of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari. A small fraction of the tribe is found in the neighbouring Kanker and Jeypore states now integrated into the Central Provinces and the Madras Presidency respectively.

The habitat of the Kamars lies roughly to the south of the great plains of Chhattisgarh in the belt of hilly country. Bindranawagarh and Khariar, the two large Zamindaris which share between them a very large portion of the Kamar population, are divided nearly into two equal parts by the Gauragarh pleateau which runs south and north in the middle. The important hills in this part are the Gauragarh hills, Milcowa hills, Ratti hills, Atang hills, and Kanda hills. In the southern part of the Dhamtari tahsil are the Sihawa hills, the different branches of which are associated with the names of some of the great sages of ancient India, such as Shringi, Angar and Machkund. Parts of the hilly tract are sufficiently high. In Bindranawagarh, the Deo-dongri is 3048, Atang 2678, Ranni-dongri 2488, Malewa dongri 2472, and Bamhni-dongri 1645 feet above the sea level. In Suarmar, the Chilikmotiyari-dongar is 2119, Hathi-dongar 2962 and Gubla-dongar is 1962 feet above the sea level. Ramaipat in Fingeshwar is 1313 feet above the sea level. Similarly in the Khariar Zamindari, the Musrangi-dongar is 2018, Deota-dongar is 2352 and Solhan-dongar is 2598 feet above the sea level. Throughout the area are to be found a number of springs and falls. In Khariar the springs of Behrani-dongar and Chandrasil are well known. Equally well known are the springs near Narripani and Gandhar in the Bindranawagarh Zamindari. Both Bindranawagarh and Khariar have a number of water-falls. In Khariar Zamindari the Kharaldhas fall has a steep descent of 150 feet, the Gaidhas of 80 feet and Parewadara of 70 feet. In Bindranawagarh at the Ranira fall water falls from a height of 250 feet and the famous Deodara descends from a height of 50 feet. Although the Mahanadi originates in the Sihawa hills, it does not water any considerable portion of the habitat of the Kamars. The important rivers of this tract are the Sondhul, Pairi, Sukha and Jonk which flow from south to north; and the Tel, Udanti and Sunder which flow from west to east. Besides these there are numerous other mountain streams.

The climate of this part in general can be said to be temperate. Yet the changes in the course of the seasons, mark out sufficient

diversity and variations in the climate. The winter is generally cool. The summer is considerably hot. The temperature during the winter months varies between 45°F. to 70°F. In the summer season the temperature shoots upto even 116°F. in Raipur; although the forests and hills in the interior of the district are comparatively cooler. This part receives most of its rain from the monsoons in the months of June, July, August and September. Showers are received in winter also. In general, the rainfall is moderately good, varying between 40 and 60 inches.

The forests of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari are reckoned to be some of the best in the Central Provinces. During the war the estate has supplied to the government unusually large quantities of timber, without any apparent deterioration of the forest. The other parts of the Kamar habitat also have equally good forests. These forests have an almost inexhaustible supply of sal (*Shorea robusta*), teak (*Tectona grandis*), and other useful timber. The Mainpur hills and the adjacent Khariar hills have a large supply of bamboo. Among the fruit-bearing trees the tendu (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), char (*Buchanania latifolia*) and mohua (*Bassia latifolia*) are important. Besides these, there are several different varieties of thick shrubs and a number of luxurious creepers in the forests. Here the jungle-folk find a number of edible roots, tubers and leafy vegetables which considerably add to their meagre diet.

The forests are full of carnivorous and horned animals. Tigers, panthers, leopards and bears are common in all parts of the Kamar country. In the heart of the Bindranawagarh forests bison and wild buffalo are still found in large numbers. Sambhar (*Rusa aristotelis*), cheetal (*Axis maculatus*), neelgay (*Dalmatis picta*), barking deer and mouse deer are in abundance in these forests. Wild hogs and wild dogs are also plentiful. The rivers and hilly streams provide a good supply of different varieties of fish. Seasonally various types of migratory ducks come to these parts. Green pigeons, rock pigeons, peacocks, jungle fowls and partridges are also found in abundance in these forests.

The population inhabiting this area is a mixed one. Aboriginal and semi-aboriginal tribes and agricultural castes live together in this area. In the Raipur district, according to the census of 1941 out of a total population of 1,525,686 the aboriginals numbered

358,578, that is, 197 per thousand. This shows a "drop of 58,176 or 38 per thousand since 1931", which is explained by the transfer of the large Khariar Zamindari to the province of Orissa.

The following table gives comparatively the figures of aboriginal population in the Raipur district, according to the census of 1911 and 1931:

Tribe	1911	1931
Gond	212,679	240,908
Kawar	27,817	31,973
Binjhwar	24,358	29,223
Sawara	21,702	28,701
Kamar	7,185	9,244
Bhunjia	6,913	7,258
Halba	4,499	6,068
Oraon	1,443	1,472

Of these, the Gond, Kawar, Binjhwar, Sawara and Halba are largely Hinduised and they now live more or less like the other ordinary Chhattisgarhi cultivators. The Kamar and the Bhunjia are yet very backward. Culture contacts have not yet destroyed the distinctive pattern of their tribal life. In close proximity of these aboriginal tribes, live a number of agricultural and professional castes such as the Teli, Kurmi, Raot, Kewat, Mahra, Ganda, Panka, Kumhar and Satnami. In more recent times have come the Brahmin, Bania, Marwari and Kachchi who have penetrated deep into the heart of the Kamar country.

II

The Kamar—Previous Accounts

In the ethnographic literature of India the name Kamar designates three or four different aboriginal and semi-aboriginal tribes and professional castes, distributed over widely separated areas. As Russell and Hiralal have pointed out, "In Bengal and Chhota Nagpur the term Kamar is merely occupational, implying a worker in iron, and similarly Kammala in the Telugu country is a designation given to the five artisan castes."[1] Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf has

[1] Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol. III, p. 323.

pointed out the existence of 'a few families of Kamars, aboriginal blacksmiths' in the country of the hill Reddis. About them he says, 'there can to my mind be no doubt that they are a purely aboriginal population'.[1] These aboriginal blacksmiths are different from the caste of Telugu blacksmiths known by the same name in the country. Not all of these aboriginal Kamars work at the forge. Many of them get their subsistence wholly or partly from their primitive cultivation with digging sticks.

There is nothing to prove the existence of any affinity between the Kamars of Chhattisgarh and the tribes or castes of the same name in the other parts of the country. The Kamar tradition does not give us any clue regarding the original home and the earlier migrations of the tribe. The mythology of the Kamars does not indicate any ancient association of the tribe with iron or smithery. To-day all the iron weapons, instruments and implements of the Kamar are made by the Lohars, the professional Hindu blacksmiths, living in the villages. The traditional occupations of the Kamar, according to one of their famous legends, are all connected with the axe, bow and arrows, *i.e.*, *dahi* and *beora* cultivation, collection of forest produce and hunting.

So far no anthropometric work has been done among the Kamars. Unless such a survey is carried out on a fairly extensive scale in a large number of cognate tribes it is difficult to establish the ethnic affinities of these tribes. Russell and Hiralal have classified the Kamars as a 'Dravidian' tribe and they regard them to be an offshoot of the Gonds. The basis of classifying the tribes into Dravidian and Kolarian groups is now regarded to be antiquated. Russell and Hiralal have not given sufficient reasons to substantiate their thesis that the Kamars are an offshoot of the Gonds.

The Kamars of Chhattisgarh have so far not received the ethnographic attention they deserve. But for occasional references in the settlement reports and district gazetteers, their conditions and institutions have not been fully described in any of the older works. John Ball's *Jungle Life in India* contains the following reference to the tribe :

"Proceeding along the bed of the valley I came upon two colonies of a wild race of people called Kamars by their neighbours. They were regular Troglodytes in their habits, dwelling in caves and existing chiefly on roots and fish. It is singular to observe

[1] Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Reddis of the Bison Hills*, pp. 243-244.

how little the people of these wild races do to protect themselves from the inclemency of the weather. In one of these caves I saw the sole protection from the air was a lean-to of loosely placed branches. The people seemed to be very timid, hiding themselves on our approach. I did not therefore like to attempt an examination of their dwellings. After some calling on our part one man was induced to make his appearance. He was a most wretched-looking leprous object, having lost several fingers and toes. He could not give very definite explanation as to his means of subsistence. All he could say was that he lived 'by picking up odds and ends here and there'. However, he seemed to afford himself the solace of tobacco. A few cocks and hens at one of the caves, and a goat at the other, were the only domestic animals which I saw."[1]

In their magnum opus, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Russell and Hiralal have devoted eight pages to a short description of the life and living of the Kamars.[2] Recent monographs on the other primitive tribes of the Central Provinces based on first hand scientific field investigations, have pointed out a number of serious inaccuracies both of method and fact in the accounts of the tribes contained in the volumes of Russell and Hiralal. Unfortunately, the account of the Kamar given by them in Volume 3 of the series is a piece of careless official compilation. From the footnote on page 323 (volume 3), we gather that this account of the tribe is based on papers drawn up by Mr. Hiralal, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Pyarelal Misra, ethnographic clerk, and 'a very full account of the tribe' by Mr. Ganpati Giri, manager of Bindranawagarh. From the general tone of the account and the many errors contained in it, it seems that no effort was made to check the data collected by the investigators.

There are some serious mistakes in the account given by Russell and Hiralal which need correction. From the version of the legend of Kachna Dhurwa given in the account one gets an impression that Kachna Dhurwa himself was a Kamar and that the Kamar tribe today traces its origin from him. The facts are, however, different. Kachna Dhurwa was not a Kamar; he was a Gond. A carefully checked Kamar version of the legend of Kachna Dhurwa is provided in the chapter on *Myth and Ritual*. The Gond version does not materially differ from it. Secondly, referring to Kamar marriage Russell and Hiralal say, "marriage within the sept is prohibited, but is permit-

[1] John Ball, *Jungle Life in India*, p. 588 (quoted by Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, p. 329).

[2] Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, pp. 323 to 330.

ted between the children of brothers and sisters or of two sisters". Marriages within the clan are certainly forbidden and cross-cousin marriages are enjoined by the tribal custom. But marriages between the children of two sisters are definitely prohibited. Such a union will certainly be regarded as incestuous. Detailed genealogical evidence and extensive village survey made by us, do not give any clue to prove the existence of such marriages. I think Russell and Hiralal were wrongly informed about the possibility of marriages of this type. At another place, they say, "The Kamars never divorce their wives, however loose their conduct may be, as they say that a lawful wife is above suspicion. They also consider it sinful to divorce a wife." The evidence which I have gathered during my field-investigations points to the contrary. Suspicion and jealousy are not alien to the Kamars. They lead not only to divorce but in rare cases to murders also. In fact, men do turn out their wives and women leave their husbands. It is not regarded to be sinful but as natural. Further, the authors say, "The liaison of an unmarried girl is passed over even with a man outside the caste, unless he is of a very low caste, such as Ganda." Liaisons outside the tribe, according to the evidence recorded by me, when brought to the notice of the tribal authorities are seriously penalized.

Besides the above, there are a number of other minor mistakes. Russell and Hiralal say, "During the period of her monthly impurity a woman is secluded for eight days." This period is not fixed; a woman remains out as long as her menstrual flow lasts. I have noticed Ghasnin taking up cooking for the household after her bath on the fifth day, *i.e.*, she was out only for four days. Referring to ceremonies attendant upon death, they say about the Kamars, "But they have no rules of abstinence, and do not even bathe to purify themselves as almost all castes do." This is wrong. After the funeral rites are over the menfolk do take their bath and return to the village in a file. The women then follow suit. Again, referring to the laws of inheritance they say, "sons inherit equally". The fact is that the eldest son gets a slightly larger share. Further, Dulhadeo is not the deity of the whole tribe. In the Mainpur tract the Kamars do not worship Dulhadeo, they worship Budha-raja. The Mata which the Kamars worship does not necessarily symbolize goddess Durga only. Further, even the oldest of my informants did not tell me that a person guilty

of a serious breach of tribal law or custom had to put 'a straw and a piece of iron between his teeth', and stand 'before the elders with one leg lifted in his clasped hands'. I have personally witnessed the proceedings of certain Panchayats from start to finish, but have not seen an offender 'promising never to repeat his offence nor permit his children to do so', and falling 'prostrate at the feet of each elder imploring his forgiveness'. At least today the procedure outlined by Russell and Hiralal is not followed in practice. In a subsequent chapter I have pointed out that the penalty differs in individual cases according to the nature of the offence, and is not uniform in all serious offences as Russell and Hiralal have suggested. Lastly, I could not get any evidence to suggest that the Kamars regard the hair of the head to be 'sacred'. According to some of my old and well informed informants, even their forefathers used to cut the hair of their heads occasionally, and that ceremonial hair-cutting was not occasioned only by the death of 'father or the other venerable relatives'.

The above errors have been pointed out not with any sense of disrespect for the pioncering authors of *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, who did much extensive and valuable spade work with the assistance of untrained subordinate officials. I have pointed out the errors simply because I feel that in the light of the new evidence it is necessary to correct past errors.

Miss Durga Bhagwat, a research student of the Bombay University, toured in the Bindranawagarh Zamindari and collected the folk-songs of the Kamars. From the specimens published by her[1] it appears that she mostly recorded Chhattisgarhi folk-songs from the Kamars and did not collect many folk-songs in their own tribal dialect. I have recorded over two hundred Kamar songs in their dialect from the various parts of the Kamar country. These songs constitute a different and distinct type by themselves and stand apart from ordinary Chhattisgarhi songs. However, Kamars are now bilingual, and the types of songs recorded by Miss Bhagwat are fairly common among the Kamars, specially in the Chhura and Gariaband tract of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari.

W. V. Grigson's admirable report, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar*, contains a few brief references to the

[1] Durga N. Bhagwat, *Folk-Songs from the Satpura Valleys*, Journal of the University of Bombay, Vol. III, part 4, Jan. 1940, pp. 131 to 193.

tribe, specially with regard to its shifting cultivation. I will have occasion to refer to it in a subsequent chapter.

The author of this monograph has contributed a number of preliminary articles on the poetry and the social life of the Kamar in various anthropological journals. A collection of the folk-songs of Chhattisgarh containing some representative specimens of Kamar poetry has been published in English.[1] The present monograph is the first detailed study of some aspects of Kamar life and culture.

III

Physical Appearance, Dress and Decoration

The photographs given in the monograph give an idea of the appearance and physical features of the Kamars.

The Kamars are generally of a medium stature, though tall individuals are not uncommon. Their bodies are well-built and limbs are well-proportioned. Constant use of the axe, and bow and arrows in the forest gives a good shape to their muscles. Specially the muscles on their shoulders are very well-developed.

Their skin colour varies from light brown to dark brown and even light black. A few individuals are found to possess golden brown or wheat colour, but they do not represent the typical Kamar complexion. Their hair is generally coarse, straight and black or dark brown. Often, wavy and curly hair is also met with. They have a very thick growth of hair on their heads, but generally have scanty moustache and beard and other bodily hair. The eyes are generally black or dark brown.

Young men look very impressive with shapely, strong and slim bodies. They retain some of the dignity of their bearing and appearance even when they grow old. In their youth the women are delicate, comely and beautiful. If Sonsah of Chikhli can be pointed out as a model of perfect manly physique, there should not be any difference of opinion in regarding Thanwarin and Sukwaro as beautiful for their gait, perfect figure and delicate features. Strenuous work in the field and forest and constant child-bearing, however, sap most of the charm of their youthful bodies and as they grow old a dull coarseness replaces the freshness of the delicate features of their youth.

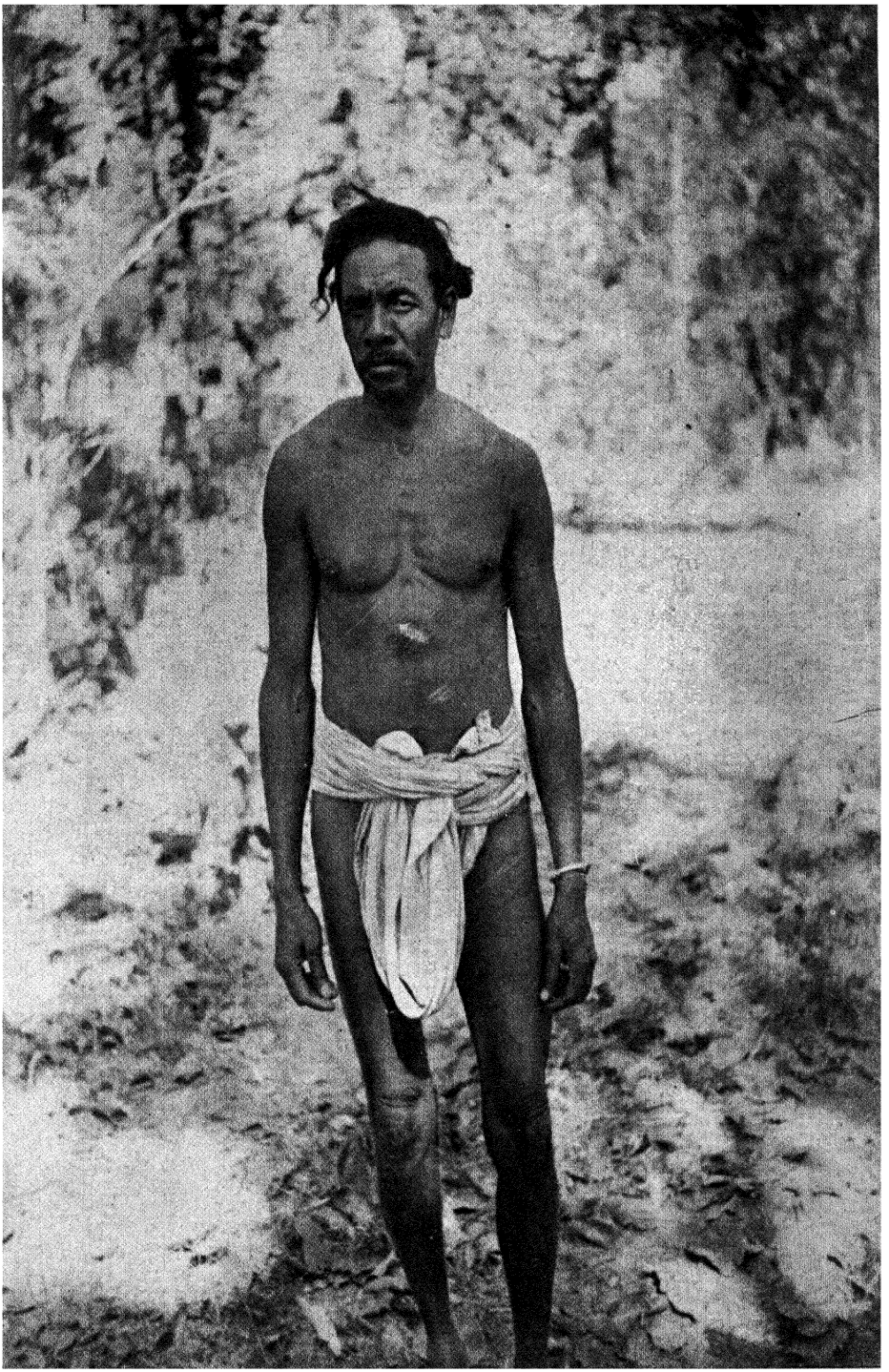
[1] S. C. Dube, *Field Songs of Chhattisgarh*, p. 34 ff.

The dress of the Kamars is very simple. They require very few clothes. The men often put on a *patuka* or a very small *dhoti*. Generally they put on only a *lingoti*, the broad flap of which hangs down in front. The *patuka* is at first put on like a *lingoti* and then the remaining part of it is tied like a skirt round the waist. Above the waist they do not generally put on any other clothes when they are at home. Some of them, when they go to the court or to the weekly markets, put on a *fatuhi* or a *salukha*. A few of them now put on shirts also. Bhainsa of Garbhantora accepted a coat from me as a present and began putting it on, but declined when he was offered a pyjama as he thought that he might be penalised by the tribal Panchyat for putting on this characteristically Muslim garment. Except the persons belonging to the Sori clan no other Kamars wear shoes.

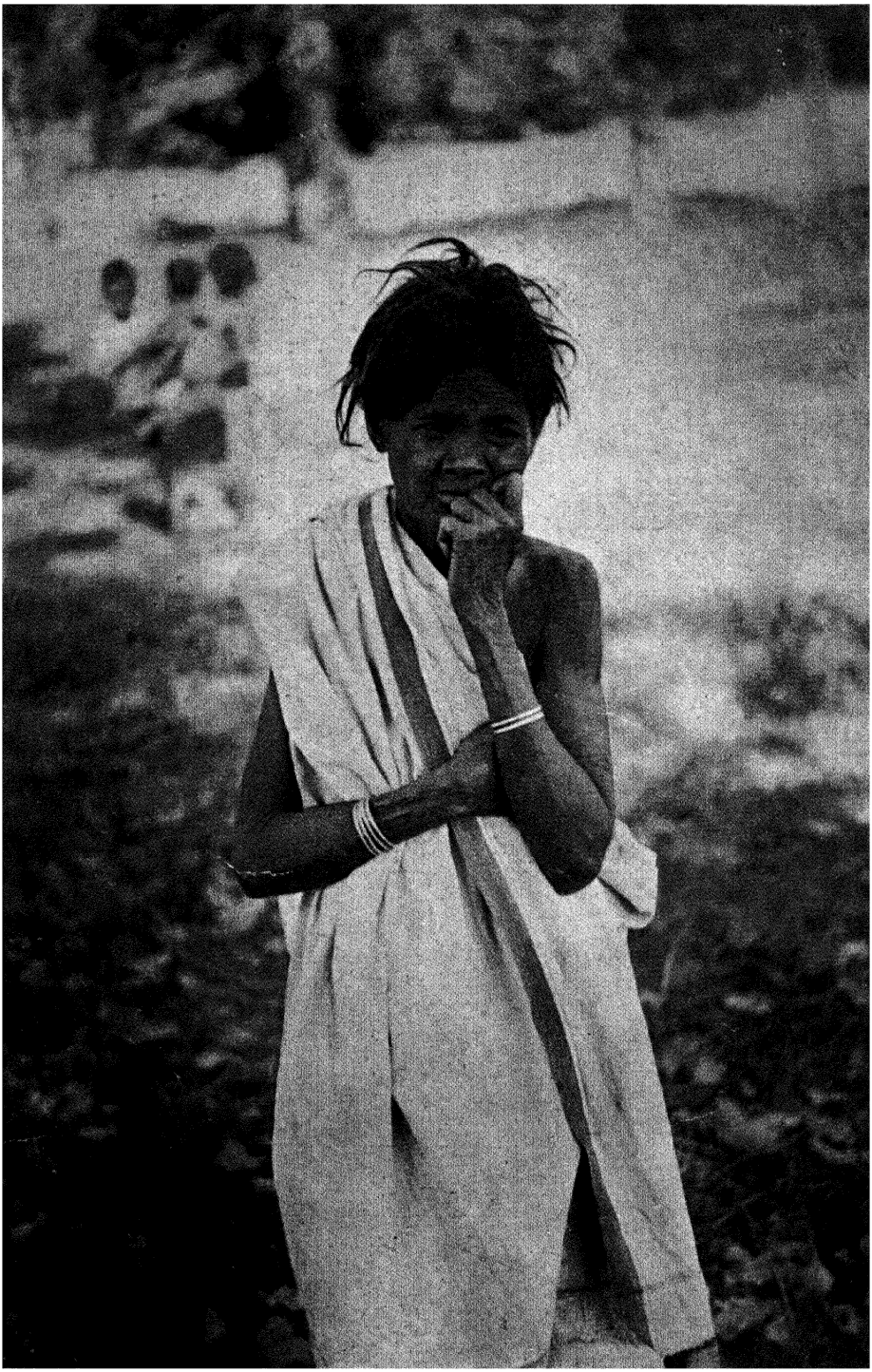
The dress of the Kamar women also cannot by any means be said to be elaborate. They generally put on only a *lugda* which is tied round the waist and carried to the right shoulder across the breasts. The skirt formed by tying the *lugda* in this fashion hangs down only upto the knees. The legs are left uncovered. The women do not put on any bodice or blouse.

Round their loins the boys put on a small rag. Similarly, the young girls also tie a small piece of cloth round their waist.

Among the Kamars both men and women put on very few ornaments. Some men put on bracelets on each wrist. They also put on rings on their fingers. But the bracelets and rings are by no means universal among the Kamars. In rare cases they may be of silver, but generally they are of aluminium or any other cheap metal. The ring may be even of copper or brass. In a few stray cases ear-rings are also put on by men. It is customary for them to put on metal chains or bead necklaces around their necks. The women also put on bracelets on their wrists. They use a number of bead-necklaces. They tie their hair with woollen or ordinary cotton *fundra*. In the ears they put on flower or umbrella shaped *khilwa*, the latter type being more popular. The *khilwa* are made either of light wood and lac, or of brass or silver. The wooden and brass *khilwa* are very common; but it adds to the social status of a woman if she can put on silver *khilwa*. On their legs the women put on *pairi*. Besides these they also put on a number of glassbangles on their hands. In the Mainpur circle the Kamar women have now begun



Dukalu of Chikhli



Desir of Garbhantora

the practice of nose-boring and put on a small nose-pin. But perforation of nose and use of any ornament is prohibited in the other tracts of the Kamar country.

The Kamars do not have any ceremonial or special dresses for dances. For the *Chherchhera* dance, however, they put on gourd-masks and cloaks of bear's skin.

For protection from rains the menfolk put on *khumri* and the women use *mora*. These rain-hats are made of split bamboo and leaves.

For keeping money nearly all men, women and children have a *gupti* which hangs to a thread tied round their waist or neck. The menfolk have a leather bag in which they keep their tobacco, flint and steel. In the hollow of a small dried *bel* fruit they keep some cotton or *semar-rui*. This *bel* is either kept separately or it is kept in a leather bag which constitutes the Kamar's complete out-fit for smoking.

When they are young, the Kamars bestow considerable amount of care to their hair, but as they grow old they gradually become indifferent to it. They share the task of hair-dressing and shaving among themselves as the utilization of the services of a barber is prohibited by the tribal custom. Some Kamars allow their hair to grow unhampered; others shave off the front portion of the crown. The long hair at the back is then tied into a bun. Some Kamars do not tie their hair; they simply comb and allow it to hang backwards. Some others completely shave their heads, only leaving a small *choti*. Others still, get their hair cropped in the ordinary style. The women comb their hair carefully and part it in the middle. Then they make a *juda* (bun) and tie it with a *fundra*. The women often decorate their hair with bunches of wild flowers. As a rule all Kamar women are tattooed. This is done merely for the sake of decorating their body. The tattooing is done by a professional woman belonging to a different caste, who regularly visits the weekly markets and occasionally goes round some of the remote villages. Only some standard designs are comonly used. I have not found any tribal or esoteric significance in the tattoo marks. Menfolk on the other hand have cicatrization marks on one or both of their arms.

With the Kamars bathing is not a regular habit. But when they go for their bath they wash themselves thoroughly. Nor are they very particular and regular in washing their clothes. Yet their bodies are fairly clean. Their clothes, however, emit a peculiar smell, and their breath gives out an odour which is caused by regular and constant smoking.

When a Kamar stands both his legs are seldom straight. Often one of his knees is a little bent. Instead of sitting cross-legged the menfolk either squat or sit on their hips drawing up their knees. The women, besides squatting or sitting on their hips, sometimes sit only on one thigh, bending and drawing up both their legs to one side. While sleeping they either lie on their back or on one side, in each case their knees being a little drawn in.

In the performance of bodily functions women observe considerable privacy, but the menfolk are seldom very modest. They just 'go a little distance and do it'. All squat to defecate. It is now thought necessary that all, specially the women, should squat to urinate. But even today, before urinating the common practice for them is to look round to see if anybody is observing, and if there is none, even women urinate standing.

The Kamar feels at home only in his natural surroundings. He is an expert climber of trees. He can toil for long hours in the forest felling or shaping the trees. He readily undertakes strenuous and arduous journeys on rugged and rough hilly tracks and can cover long distances without any apparent signs of physical exhaustion. Even the women cover long distances while going to and coming back from the weekly markets with heavy loads on their heads. The Kamar cannot very readily adapt himself to ways and methods which are alien to his culture. When he is required to work in a way to which he is not accustomed, he invariably displays a little indifference. The Kamar is averse to ordinary agricultural labour. Similarly, he cannot work very efficiently when he is called for forced labour to the Zamindari headquarters by the Zamindar or the Court of Wards officials. Yet, it will be unfair to call the Kamar a lazy worker. No body who has seen the Kamars felling trees in the forest, working at *dahi*, engaged in fishing and hunting or transporting timber by floating, can form such an opinion about their quality as workers.

The transition from their old virtually self-sufficient tribal economy to the new partly exclusive and partly interdependent economy has greatly changed the status and outlook of the Kamars. The 'children of the soil', who were once the 'Kings of the jungle' are now degenerated and are gradually becoming human drudges. The exploiting money-lenders and rapacious petty officials have combined to bring about the economic collapse and psychic apathy commonly found in the Kamars today. Yet, even today the Kamars retain some of their ancient dignity. To an officious outsider the Kamar will always be a dull and sullen creature who does not know speaking anything beyond 'what concerns his business' and who can never have 'a good-humoured expression' on his face. Yes, the Kamar is unhappy in the company of officials and money-lenders; indeed, in the company of all those who regard him as a 'lowly creature'. He can never break his reserve with a person who displays scepticism regarding his tribal ways and makes fun of his habits, customs and institutions. I have had the unfortunate experience of the temporary company of excise and police officials in one of my tours. On the basis of that experience alone I can fully justify the sullenness and indifference of the Kamar at the approach of these uniformed *huzurs*. However, if we can take him into our confidence and break his initial reserve the Kamar reveals himself as a very different person. Occasionally he displays keen intelligence, ready wit and a developed sense of humour. His company is never dull or monotonous. On the contrary, it is very lively and pleasant. Some of them are very inquisitive and talk a good deal. During the long periods of my stay in the Kamar country, I could always relax myself adequately in the company of the Kamars. Very often children came to me and woke me up from my sleep only to ask me to show the illustrated monographs and the photographs of the Kamars to one of their guests who had come from the neighbourhood. Of their own accord the children often accompanied me on my morning and evening walks and freely talked with me on different subjects. Men and women alike displayed a keen interest in our own customs and institutions. When we made inquiries from them regarding certain aspects of their life we were generally met with counter queries of a similar nature. When my wife asked the Kamar women questions of a delicate and personal nature she had later herself to answer similar questions asked by the Kamar women.

Answering their questions on our own marriage, when my wife and myself told them that we were married within a few minutes only by reading and signing a pledge, they were incredibly surprised. 'How could that be ? How can you people have a marriage without *baja* (band) and a *pandit* (priest) ?' asked Bhainsa's wife, showing as if she knew better.

The ordinary village-folks of Chhattisgarh today despise the Kamars as an uncivilized people, somewhat low like the inferior castes in the traditional hierarchy of Hinduism. The Kamars, however, refuse to accept any such classification. They regard themselves to be a free and pure tribe. Among themselves they very critically discuss the manners and customs of the caste people. They always happily take an opportunity of pointing out any irregularities which they happen to notice in the lives of the people of the higher castes. The Kamars in Nawagarh narrated to me numerous scandals about a Brahmin who had become notorious for his intrigues and liaisons with low caste women. They greatly resent the numerous governmental restrictions on their freedom of the forest in the jungles which were their *very own* in the not too distant past.

CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC LIFE

I

THE BACKGROUND OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

TRIBAL SETTLEMENTS

The Kamars have very few villages of their own. Exclusive village-settlements of the tribe like Chikhli, Sinhar and Kulharighat, where twelve to twenty families live together, are not many. In general the tribe lives in scattered and small settlements in groups of four to six families. While the former type of villages are slowly and gradually breaking up with increased contact with the neighbouring Chhattisgarhi village-folk, the Kamars are adapting themselves more and more to the latter type and are setting up their tiny tribal settlements in the neighbourhood of normal Chhattisgarhi villages.

As a rule, the Kamars do not live in the regular Chhattisgarhi villages mixed up with the other tribes and castes. They always build their separate tribal settlements. In the Fingeshwar Zamindari, they will not even pass a night in any village which is not *their* exclusive settlement. If perchance they cannot return home, rather than staying in an alien village, they would go out and sleep under the trees outside the village boundary. In the Bindranawagarh Zamindari, however, there are no such strict rules. A Kamar settlement is generally at a distance from the normal Chhattisgarhi village and is separated from it by a small patch of forest. In the Fingeshwar Zamindari the Kamars do not allow a person belonging to a different tribe or caste to construct his house within the limits of their settlement. In Bindranawagarh, however, one comes across a few Gond or caste-Hindu houses built in the immediate vicinity of the Kamar settlements. Even in such cases all the Kamar houses are built on one side in a compact group.

The larger settlements are situated on the hilltops or in the heart of the forest. The smaller settlements, on the other hand, are built in

the neighbourhood of the villages in the interior of the plains of Chhattisgarh.

No definite system is followed in the lay out of the larger settlements. A sufficiently long and broad space is left, and on its two sides and extreme ends the houses are built. When new immigrants want to build their houses, they seek some space for themselves either on the side of the open space or construct their houses behind the already existing houses parallel to the open space. The accompanying rough ground plan of village Chikhli illustrates the type of such settlements. The first houses to be built were those which stand on the two sides of the open space which now serves as a street. Simultaneously two houses were built on the two extreme ends of this open space. Naturally, those who came to settle here afterwards had to construct their dwellings behind the already existing houses more or less parallel to them.

In the comparatively wilder forests and hills of the Mainpur tract, scattered houses are constructed in groups of two or three separated from one another. For example, in village Kulharighat the houses are scattered in the jungle in clustres of two or three dwellings, separated from one another by distances of about a furlong or so. These scattered and isolated huts do not present the picture of a corporate village.

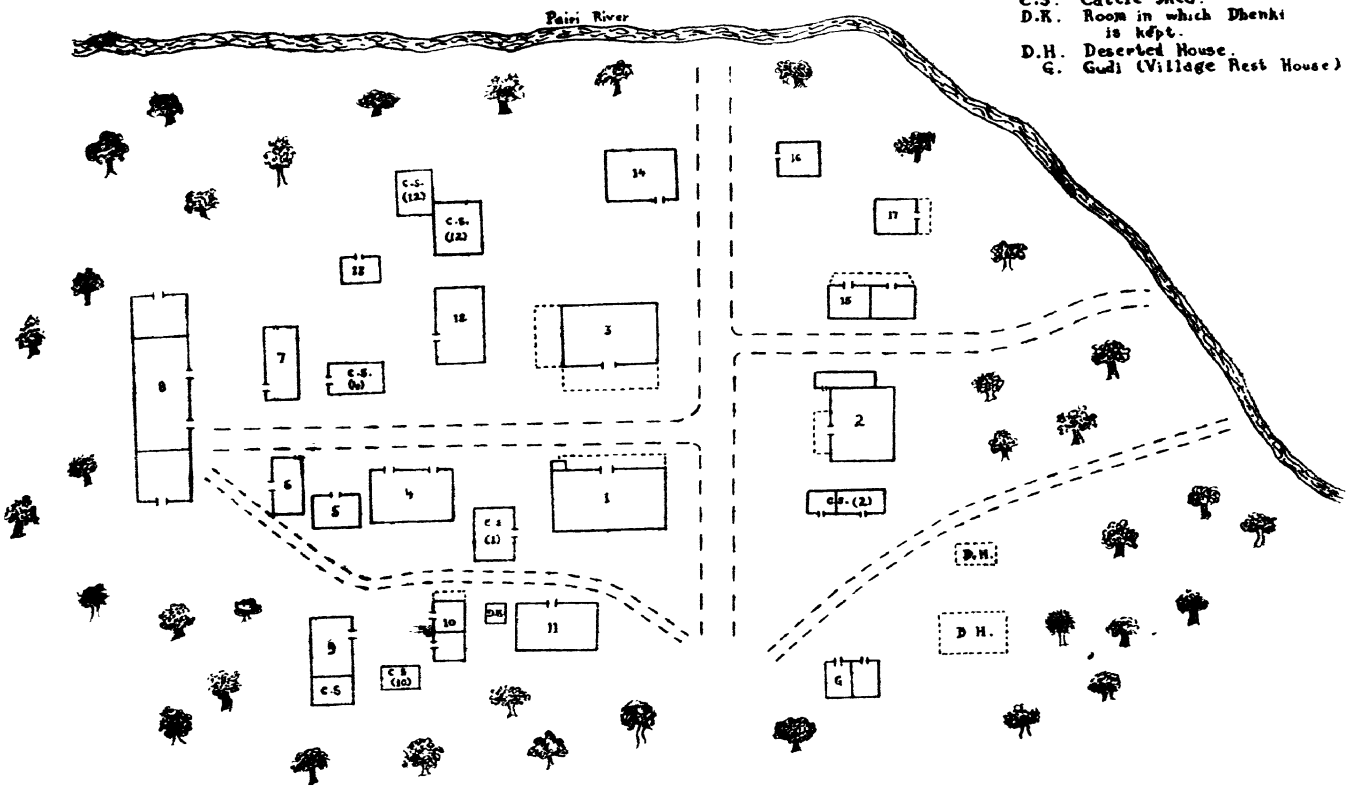
In their smaller tribal sttlements in all parts of the Kamar country one common pattern is in evidence. Different families chalk out small square pieces of land for themselves, at a certain distance from one another. To begin with, on one side of the square a room with a shed or two is constructed and gradually as the family enlarges more rooms are added till the square is enclosed. In the description of the Kamar houses that follows, the sketch and details of two typical Kamar houses have been provided. A small tribal settement of the Kamars presents the picture of a few such scattered houses built without any plan. The accompanying rough ground plan of village Bamhni is illustrative of this type of settlements.

In the matter of the selection of a site for their settlements, both natural and supernatural considerations play their part. Nearness to water, sufficient supply of wild roots, tubers and fruits in the neighbouring forests, comparative nearness to market coupled with a certain degree of seclusion and exclusiveness to evade the repeated

SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE CHIKHLI.

(Numbers correspond to the numbers of houses in Village Census.)

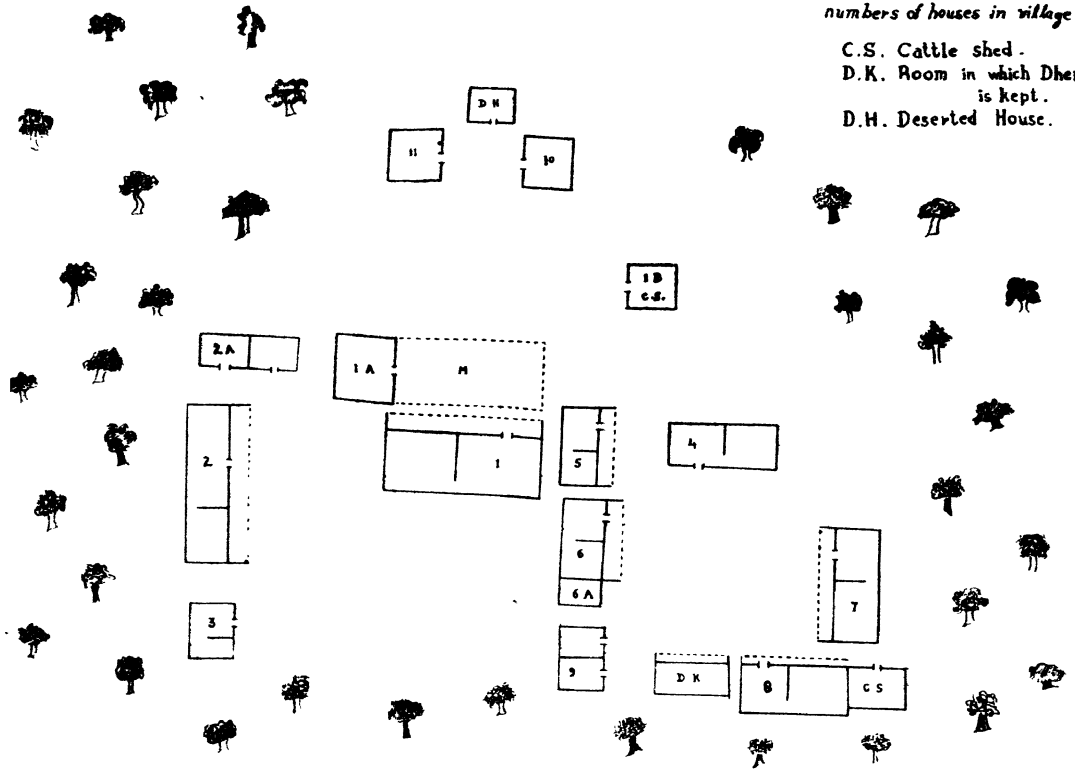
C.S. Cattle shed.
D.K. Room in which Dhenki is kept.
D.H. Deserted House.
G. Gudi (Village Rest House)



SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE BAMHNI

(Numbers correspond to the numbers of houses in village Census)

C.S. Cattle shed.
D.K. Room in which Dhenki is kept.
D.H. Deserted House.



visits of officials, provide the ideal conditions for a Kamar settlement. A large number of *dahi* cutting Kamars still prefer the seclusion of the Mainpur hills, bordering on the Khariar Zamindari, where they can continue the practice by stealth. Those who have specialized in bamboo craft want to live at such places where there is an ample supply of bamboo. Others who are now partially dependent upon forest or agricultural labour want to live in the neighbourhood of such villages where they can easily find occasional work. Their choice of a site for settlement from the point of view of its natural scenery also, is indeed remarkable. Kulharighat situated in a cup surrounded by hills on all the four sides, Amamora on the high hill-top and Sinhar with a beautiful hill and forest in the background will easily satisfy the aesthetic taste of even those who belong to more developed cultures.

Before the final selection of the site is made, the Baiga is called upon to see whether the site would be suitable for settling or not. The Baiga through one of his three ways of seeing the flame, counting rice grains and *supa bajana* tries to know whether the site is haunted by any ghosts, evil spirits, etc., or if it is the abode of any deities. The ghosts and evil spirits inevitably yield to the Baiga when he counts rice grains. If he gets a positive result indicating the presence of evil spirits and ghosts, the idea of settling on that site is given up and consideration is given to alternative sites. The presence of deities can always be known by the method of *supa bajana*, and their presence on the site is not often considered as a hindrance. They can be kept pleased by occasional gifts, sacrifices and *hom-kuhra*; the first being required to be made before they begin clearing the ground for constructing their houses. In general, therefore, they seek the help of the Baiga only to make sure that the site they are choosing is immune from evil spirits and ghosts.

Once the final choice is made, they begin clearing the ground for constructing their houses. All trees within a rectangular plot which they mark out are cut and the grass covering that area is burnt. Then the construction of separate houses is taken in hand. The *guri* or the village rest house and the shed of the village *mata* are constructed by common co-operation. In the construction of private houses the individuals concerned have themselves to share the major responsibility, although for more difficult tasks such as fixing the upper beam, help readily comes from others. No labour is hired for assistance

in house construction and whatever help is necessary is mutual and reciprocal.

Generally one finds a *mata-guri* outside the village, although a few individuals may have their personal *mata-guri* adjoining their house. Besides the *guri* in a village there may also be a long rectangular shed open on all the four sides belonging to the whole village for use at the occasion of the meetings of the Panchayat and at other communal gatherings. Their settlements do not have any bachelors' dormitories or corporate houses, have no communal granaries and no common menstruation huts.

Very few Kamars have substantial houses built in mud and covered with earthen tiles. Daya, Tingali, Sunhar and a few others who have now successfully adapted themselves to settled plough cultivation and are cultivating a sufficient area of land, have constructed rather spacious mud houses in the Gond style. But the bulk of the Kamars inhabiting the wild Mainpur and Nawagarh tract, who still eke out their meagre subsistence from the forest, shifting cultivation and occasional labour, have not yet begun constructing substantial houses and remain satisfied with their lowly dwellings. Often they have to leave their villages and have to construct temporary sheds near their *dahi* and *beora* fields to live there. They rarely have stable attachments to their houses and village sites and frequently migrate from place to place. Travelling a few miles in the wild tract of Mainpur, one can easily spot one or two deserted villages with all their houses in a tumbled down state. Frequent migrations seem to be in the nature of the Kamars. Many of their popular folk songs bear testimony to their migratory instinct, where they have often been described to have left one *raj* for settling in another. In the Fingeshwar Zamindari, when it came under the Court of Wards administration, recognizing the importance of Kamar labour for the departmental working in the forest, the Manager of the Court of Wards followed a policy of encouraging the Kamars to settle in the estate. They were given free land and wood for constructing their houses and were permitted to bring specified areas of land under cultivation. In the earlier stages the response was encouraging, for many Kamars even from Bindranawagarh Zamindari came to settle there. In the first two or three years, they cleared the forest for making their fields and after burning the trees which they had cut down they cultivated *dahi*

in their ashes. Naturally, after a certain period they were not allowed to cut new forest and were asked to cultivate their fields. Although they were promised the help of bullocks from the Zamindari cattle-breeding farm, the Kamars gradually began deserting their newly established settlements. Epidemics or a number of deaths after short intervals within a period of three or four months make them suspicious, and fearing the wrath of deities or hostile spirits, they desert their villages and set up other settlements. With the approach of cholera and two sudden deaths in the settlement, all the twentyseven Kamars of Parchhatti deserted it and settled at a distance of about thirteen miles. In the plains, however, with their gradual adaptation to settled plough cultivation the frequency of such migrations is gradually diminishing. It is difficult to believe that the Kamars of villages like Sandholi, Amjhar or Birodar will now so easily leave their fields and settlements to migrate to other parts. At present they show no disposition to leave them.

HOUSES

A Kamar family generally lives only in one room which is the most important part of the house; the other parts being a cattle-shed, a pig-sty, a little box like house for fowls and a *madwa*, *i.e.* a shed open on three sides. All these other parts are appended to the main living room. In the Kamar settlements in the vicinity of Chhattisgarhi villages a square piece of land is marked out for itself by every family and it is gradually enclosed by the houses that are built around it. To begin with, the main house is built with necessary sheds and pig-sty, etc., but gradually as children grow up and marry, separate houses for them are constructed enclosing the remaining sides of the square. In the wilder parts, however, no definite system seems to be followed. Independent individual houses are first constructed and then sheds are appended to them.

The rough ground plan of Manjhi's house on page 20 illustrates a typical Kamar house.

A Manjhi's house.
B House of Heera, Manjhi's first son.
C House of Budhram, Manjhi's second son.

H House of Phulmat, Manjhi's widowed daughter.

a The door.

b Stand for keeping earthen pots full of forest produce, *tendu*, *char*, etc.

c *Lotna*, grain bin made of paddy straw for storing small quantities of rice and sufficient supply of *mohua*.

d Partition wall.

e *Chulha* or hearth.

f Grain bin made of bamboo and leaves.

g Earthen water-pots.

G.D. Corner dedicated to *Gata-Dooma*, *Mata* and ancestor-spirits.

x Place for sleeping.

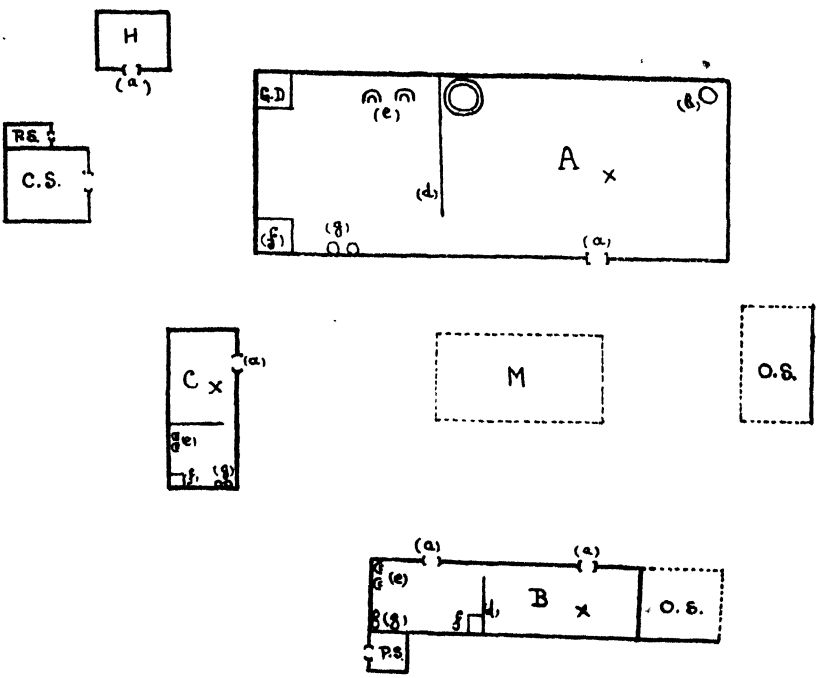
C.S. Cattle Shed.

P.S. Pig-sty.

O.S. Open shed.

M *Madwa*, or a shed where people sit for work or smoke in leisure.

MANJHI'S HOUSE.



In this group of four houses, 'A' the house of Manjhi was the first to be constructed. It has only one room which is divided by a parti-

tion into two for the sake of convenience. The room with the entrance is used for sleeping, but it has in one of its corners a big earthen pot which is used for keeping *char*, *tendu* and other forest produce and in another corner there is a *lotna* in which are kept modest quantities of rice and dried *mohua* flowers. The extreme corner in the adjoining room is dedicated to *Gata-Dooma*, *i.e.* Mother Earth, ancestor-spirits and Dulhadeo. In another corner there is a large grain bin in which provisions are stored. This corner also has stands for keeping the earthen water-pots. In still another corner of the same room stands the hearth. In front of the house is the *madwa* where they sit for work in the morning or gather round a fire for chit-chatting in winter evenings. On the left is an open shed where occasional visitors may pass a night and which is generally used when the tribal Panchayat is summoned. To the left there is a little house which was specially constructed for his widowed daughter when she came back from her deceased husband's village. Being sickly she cannot find another husband, and therefore she is living with her father. When Manjhi's eldest son Heera was married, house 'B' was constructed for him and his wife. The pattern of this house is the same as that of his father's house. House 'C' was constructed for Budhram and his wife. Both Manjhi and Heera have little enclosures of land where they grow tobacco, brinjals and a few other vegetables. Manjhi's cattleshed and pig-sty are separate. But Heera has got a pig-sty attached to his house. In all the three houses bows and arrows, axes and a number of other things are either hung on the wall or they are thrust in the narrow space between the slanting roof and the wall.

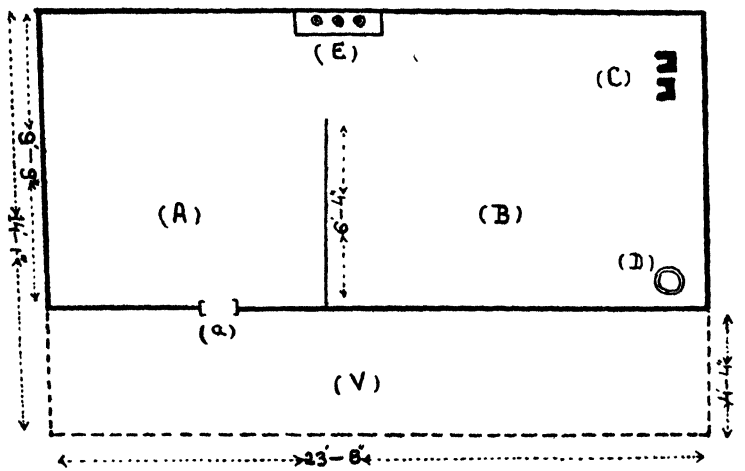
Another type of house commonly met with in the Kamar country is illustrated by the accompanying rough ground plan of the house of Dukalu Kamar of Chikhli.[1]

Houses of the pattern described above are common in all tracts of the Kamar country. However, as has been pointed out earlier, in the larger villages the different houses are not built enclosing small square patches of land. But there also houses conform to the two common types. In the hilly Kamar villages of the Mainpur tract the houses are comparatively smaller and dirtier but the general pattern followed is the same. The arrangements inside the houses depend

[1] See page 22.

upon the personal equations of the people occupying them. There are no hard and fast rules governing them.

HOUSE OF DUKALU
(VILLAGE CHIKHLI)



INDEX

(A)...LIVING ROOM
(B)...COOKING ROOM
(E)...STAND FOR WATER POTS
(C)...HEARTH
(D)...GRAIN BIN
(V)...VERANDAH

The Kamar technique of house construction is nearly the same in all parts of the Kamar country. A rectangular piece of land is selected. The four sides on which the walls are to be raised are marked out. In the four corners four poles of a uniform height ranging between four feet and five feet are fixed. Then, on the two sides, in between the poles two stronger poles about six to seven feet in height are fixed. In the centre of the rectangle in between the two central side poles, another stout and large pole with a forked top is fixed. Over these three large poles they fix a long pole. Then the poles on the four corners are joined with the central pole on each side. The front and the back corner poles are then joined by two poles running parallel to each other. The skeleton of the roof is completed by fixing rafters between the horizontal, central and side poles. The roof

is then thatched with grass, *parsa* leaves or with *chhind* leaves. It is common to thatch it with leaves first and then cover it with *khadar* grass. For making the walls, small branches of trees are neatly tied with bark or roughly interwoven in split bamboo in the shape of *tatti*. A number of such *tatti* are tied to the poles, enclosing all the sides leaving room only for the entrance. These are then plastered with mud. When these walls dry up they are washed with cow-dung mixed with water. They may later be washed with *chhui*, *i.e.*, white, red or yellow clay. The smaller rooms are also constructed on the same model, but in them the large central pole is not used. The *madwa* and the other sheds stand only on four poles. The doors are generally made of bamboo wicker-work, but wooden doors of two leaves are also used. The floor inside the room is plastered with mud. The *madwa* and the other open space in front of the house is kept clean and dust, rubbish etc., is thrown behind the house or in the *bari* where it serves as manure.

In the wilder parts one rarely comes across any decorations in the Kamar houses. But in the Nawagarh, Chhura, Gariaband and Fingeshwar tracts, a few designs and pictures done in yellow and red clay are met with. Only a few remarkable wood-carvings came to our notice during our tours and stay in the Kamar country.

HOUSEHOLD POSSESSIONS

Carefree and backward as the Kamars are, they generally do not have much worry about the future and, as such, possessions in their household are meagre. They own only the barest equipment necessary for their primitive life. A few utensils for cooking and eating their meals, bows, arrows and axes, *bongi* for digging wild roots, equipment for basket-work and fishing, a few rudimentary implements for their primitive agriculture, some bamboo mattresses for sleeping and a few other sundries of every day use are all that they possess.

The following list of the household possessions of Dukalu, recorded in Chikhli, gives an idea of the possessions in a comparatively well-to-do Kamar's house:

1. Three earthen pots for keeping water.
2. One *handi* for cooking rice.
3. Three *kalaunji* for cooking vegetables.
4. One wooden *karchhul* (large spoon) and two *tooma*.

5. One *moosal.*
6. Four large baskets.
7. Three small baskets.
8. Three *tant* (bamboo mattresses).
9. One *bongi* (digging stick)
10. Three knives (one for cutting vegetables and meat and two for splitting bamboo).
11. Four sharp arrows.
12. Two wooden arrows.
13. Two *batki* (pots from which rice is eaten).
14. One brass *lota* (jug).
15. One *ghodi* (stand for splitting bamboo).
16. One grinding mill.
17. Two *supa* (winnowing fans).
18. One *choriya* (fishing trap).
19. One *dandar* (another type of fishing trap).
20. Two *khumri* (rain-hats for men-folk).
21. One *mora* (rain-hat for women-folk).
22. One *thaili* (leather bag for keeping tobacco).
23. Flint and steel.
24. One *bel-bori* (a hollow dried *bel* fruit for keeping cotton).
25. One *singha* (hollow buffalo horn for keeping oil).
26. Three *peedha* (small wooden seats).
27. One *lotna* (grain bin).
28. Two bamboo combs.
29. Two ploughs.
30. Three ploughshares.
31. One field leveller.

The possessions in other Kamar households are similar, with slight variations according to the taste and economic status of the owners.

THE KAMAR AT HOME

The house and the settlement alone do not form the complete background of Kamar life, for they have to spend a major part of their day either in the forest in their food-quest or in the *dahi* and *beora* fields raising meagre crops for their subsistence. To their food-gathering pursuits and agriculture we shall come later. Here it is necessary

to have a picture of the Kamar in his every day life, in the setting of his house and the village community.

The first crow of the jungle cock rouses the Kamar village from slumber, and marks the beginning of its activity. The women clean the house and its adjoining sheds. Then taking their earthen pots they go out to fetch water. The menfolk come out of the house, and if the mornings are cool they sit by fire-side under the *madwa* and smoke their *chongi* leisurely. After a while, they prepare to go out for their day's work. If the work for the day is such that they can easily return by noon, they generally do not wait for the womenfolk to return back and cook for them. Taking their axe, bow and arrows they start for their work. However, if they have to go for work in the forest at a distance or if they feel that they cannot return back to the settlement before dusk, they wait till the womenfolk come back and cook for them. The Kamars do not like *basi*, *i.e.*, rice left over from the previous night, but prefer as long as they can get it, freshly cooked warm rice.

With the departure of menfolk only women, children and aged persons are left in the village. If there is something to eat in the house it is given to the small children. The older boys take out the cattle for grazing in the nearby forest. The women then clean the cattle-sheds. If the menfolk are to return at noon the women prepare meals for them, and in the short intervals which they get, they engage themselves in basket-making etc. But if the men have gone for work after having taken their meals, the women go out into the jungle with their *bongi* and basket to dig out edible roots and tubers and to collect other forest fruits, vegetables, etc. When the men are working at the *dahi* or *beora* fields the women take food for them at mid-day and while on their way back they search out food in the forest.

The Kamars generally like to return home by about mid-day. It is at this time that they want to take their meals and also a little rest. As far as possible they try to adjust their work in such a manner that they can conveniently return home by this time. While on their way back, they answer the call of nature, wash their mouth and may take their bath. The children tending the cattle also return by this time and all together—except the women—sit to take their meals. But there are no hard and fast rules about it. If the children come back earlier and feel hungry, they can take their meals without wait-

ing for their elders. Similarly, it is not necessary for the menfolk to wait for the children for taking their meals.

Hazards of their life do not leave them with much leisure for rest. Resting for a short-while after meals, the men have to return to their work again. The women, if they have not already spent their morning hours in food-quest in the forest, have to go out into the jungle with their digging sticks. The children also take a minor share in the food gathering pursuits.

When the weekly market day approaches, the families dependent upon bamboo-craft change their normal routine and concentrate all their energies on the manufacture of baskets.

At dusk people gradually begin returning home. They rest their tired limbs in the courtyard in front of the house and have the comfort of their *chongi*. In winter evenings they sit round fires in small groups. This is the time for gossip and chit-chatting when the news of all significant and insignificant events passes from house to house. If there is delay in the meals, a young man may begin telling a folk-tale or may begin singing a song. The elderly people discuss the frowns and fortunes of their lives and narrate to one another their experiences of corrupt and atrocious officials, rapacious merchants and monstrous money-lenders. A call from the inside breaks up these groups and hungry Kamars go in to partake of their modest meals. After the meals they spend half an hour or so in talk and gossip and then retire to their rooms for rest and sleep.

This is the general routine of life in a Kamar village. The nature of their work differs from season to season but the general routine of their life remains nearly the same. It does change on certain special days of festivals and ceremonies and on such occasions the usual drabness and monotony of life in the Kamar settlement is temporarily broken. On such days it throbs with a new life.

The following table shows the main features of the annual round of the Kamar's activities.

Name of the local month	Name of the corresponding English months	Work of the month
1. Jeth	May-June	Burning trees in *dahi*, *beora* and *guhad* fields or levelling fields where they have taken to settled plough cultivation, repairing houses, fishing in ponds and pools which

Name of the local month	Name of the corresponding English months	Work of the month
		are rapidly drying up, hunting and gathering wild roots and fruits, basket-making.
2. Asar	June-July	Sowing maize, beans, pumpkins, etc. in the *dahi* and other small fields, ploughing the fields and sowing rice, digging out edible roots, collecting tender edible leaves from the forests, basket-making.
3. Sawan	July-August	Transplantation from *pharha* plots, first weeding in the fields, collection of roots and vegetables from the forest, floating the timber to railway stations or market centres and basket-making.
4. Bhadon	August-September	Early varieties of millets and rice begin to ripe, floating timber to railway stations and marketing centres.
5. Kuar	September-October	Early varieties of rice and millet are harvested and stored, labour in Government and Court of Wards forests, floating timber to railway stations and market centres.
6. Katik	October-November	Rice is harvested and stored, labour in forests, basket-making.
7. Aghan	November-December	Labour in forests, gathering food from forest, basket-making.
8. Pus	December-January	Labour in forests, food-gathering from forest, basket-making.
9. Magh	January-February	Labour in the forests, hunting, fishing, food-gathering from forest, basket-making.
10. Fagun	February-March	Labour in the forests, fishing, hunting, basket-making.
11. Chait	March-April	Clearing ground for *dahi* and *beora*, food-gathering from forest, hunting, fishing, basket-making.
12. Baisakh	April-May	Hunting, fishing, work in forests, arranging *dahi* and *beora* fields, food-gathering from forest, basket-making.

II

Kamar Economics—Sources of Livelihood

The economy of the Kamars today is in transition. As a result of the impact of alien cultures and their complicated economic systems, the virtual self-sufficiency of the tribal economy of the Kamars has broken down. They have been forced to adapt themselves to new economic standards and techniques.

Certain psychological traits of the Kamars bear their unmistakable mark on the economic life of the tribe. In his economic pursuits the Kamar is concerned primarily and almost wholly with the present. The motive of making provision for future needs although not alien to him, plays a very minor part in his economic life. This lack of thought and foresight regarding his future economic needs is one of his cultural traits. If he has enough to satisfy the needs of today, he would seldom worry about the morrow. When his *dahi* crops are harvested, for a time, he gives up his other economic pursuits such as food gathering from the forest, basket-making, etc., sits at home and eats the fruit of his labour. When he gets an advance for some forest labour, he drinks and merrily passes a couple of days till he exhausts a major part of the money he has received. He thinks of the morrow, only when he finds that his meagre resources are soon getting exhausted. This has created an impression in certain circles that the Kamar is a lazy, careless and indifferent worker. But in the new economic surroundings the Kamar can certainly give up his characteristic indifference to future needs and can often act with foresight. When he takes to settled plough cultivation and domestication of animals, he does not remain contented with a hand to mouth living—just a little above starvation level, but begins making provision for future.

Anybody who has actually seen the Kamars at work would not call them lazy. In ordinary agricultural work they are no doubt very indifferent, for there they perhaps do not feel at home. But when we see them working in the forest, transporting timber by floating, cutting *dahi* and *beora*, judging by the quality, quantity and output of their work, we cannot call them lazy. When they are in their natural

surroundings the Kamars work with an unequalled vigour and zeal, which easily marks them out as some of the ablest forest workers.

The officers of the forest department and the Court of Wards often deplore the Kamars' attitude of extreme wastefulness which they occasionally demonstrate. To have a little convenience for themselves they would not mind doing considerable damage to the forest. They can easily lop off branches in order to pick the ripening fruit in comfort. Similarly, they would cut down the whole tree to take out the honey from a comb in an inaccessible part. This attitude of the Kamars was amply demonstrated to us in Chhindola where we requested a Kamar friend to bring some *tendu* fruit for us. He went to the jungle with his axe, and after a while returned back dragging a whole branch of a *tendu* tree. On being questioned on his act, he said, '*Lutur lutur ek ek than la kon girahi. Du tangiya men to ehar gir ge.*—Who will pluck them one by one? The branch itself fell down with only two strokes of the axe." While I was at Gariaband, the Deputy Ranger produced before the Manager Court of Wards, a batch of Kamars who had cut down a tree about two feet in girth only to take out the honey from a comb at the top of the tree, which they could not reach easily. For their *dahi* and *beora* also they indiscriminately cut down and destroy valuable timber.

Some of the economic pursuits of the Kamars are individualistic; others are communal.

Dahi and *beora* cultivation, food gathering from the forest, house construction, etc., are individualistic, but even in these tasks when a person is unable to complete his part individually he readily gets the help of his neighbours. While engaged in cutting *dahi*, dragging the trees to the field, burning them and spreading the ashes evenly on the field, the Kamars help one another on the basis of mutual and reciprocal co-operation. For food-gathering from the forest Kamar men and women go in batches. When a family is in difficulty, and none of its members can collect food from the forest, their neighbours supply their needs without expectation of any payment. Even in the more difficult aspects of house building such co-operation can be easily found. But it is largely in their organized communal economic pursuits, that we find a definite system of concerted action, clear-cut division of labour and recognized leadership. In their communal hunting expeditions we find all these features admirably illus-

trated. The entire hunting party has to act in a concerted way as a team, more or less under the leadership of one man who is generally the most experienced *shikari* in the team. It is this leader who locates the track of the animals and directs the *shikaris* to take particular positions. He then gives detailed instructions to the beaters regarding the distance and direction from where the beat is to begin. The more experienced Kamars who have a reputation for their aim are selected and posted for actual shooting; while the others are required to go for beat. Division of labour in organized fishing expeditions is also well-marked. While the women prepare the *manj*, the young men throw it in the water, and the best positions where the bigger fish is most likely to be found, are given to those who have established for themselves a reputation for their good shot. Functional specialization, in such economic pursuits as honey-taking, manufacture of *jhapi* and special types of baskets, making musical instruments, etc., can also be easily marked out. Thus we find that co-operation, concerted action, recognition of leadership, division of labour and functional specialization are all present in varying degrees in the primitive economics of the Kamar.

LIVELIHOOD

In the olden days, when the Kamars had their freedom of the forest, they got their livelihood partly from their primitive methods of agriculture and partly from hunting, fishing and food collection from the forest. The stoppage of shifting cultivation, and the numerous restrictions on hunting, fishing and food collection, imposed upon them by administrative agencies, forced the Kamars to seek new outlets for earning their livelihood. When the isolation of their tribal life was broken, they came out from the seclusion of the hills, and although they could not absorb themselves completely into the social life of the neighbouring villages, they sought new avenues to earn their living. Trade and barter, basket-making, etc., increased. Gradually as the Government and the timber contractors recognized the immense possibilities of the exploitation of virgin forests with the help of cheap aboriginal labour, many Kamars got work in the forest on wages which looked rather lucrative to them. Shortage of agricultural labour induced the neighbouring substantial cultivators to hire Kamar labour which they could always get for a petty wage in

cash or kind. Thus after the break up of their old economy the Kamars have adapted themselves to a new economy which is partially exclusive and partially dependent upon the neighbours.

The following are the important sources of Kamar livelihood :—

1. Agriculture.
2. Hunting.
3. Fishing.
4. Food-collection.
5. Basket-making.
6. Trade and barter.
7. Occasional labour for wages.

In the pages that follow, have been given brief descriptions of the technique and methods employed by the Kamars in the various occupations through which they get their subsistence.

AGRICULTURE

Dahi and *beora*, the two chief forms of shifting cultivation, are inextricably interwoven with the economic life of the Kamar. According to the Kamar tradition, after the creation of the Earth, when God Mahadeo had assigned to the people their different crafts and professions, the Kamar was given his *tangiya* (axe) and bow and arrows, implying thereby that he should eke out his subsistence by shifting cultivation and hunting. But the Kamar today has to practise *dahi* by stealth, for it contravenes Section 202 of the Land Revenue Act. The efforts to wean the Kamar from his ancient methods of cultivation have only partially succeeded; for even today a large number of Kamars continue the practice notwithstanding the fines imposed upon them whenever they are detected. Even the others who have half-heartedly taken to settled plough cultivation would gladly return to *dahi* if they are allowed the freedom to do so.

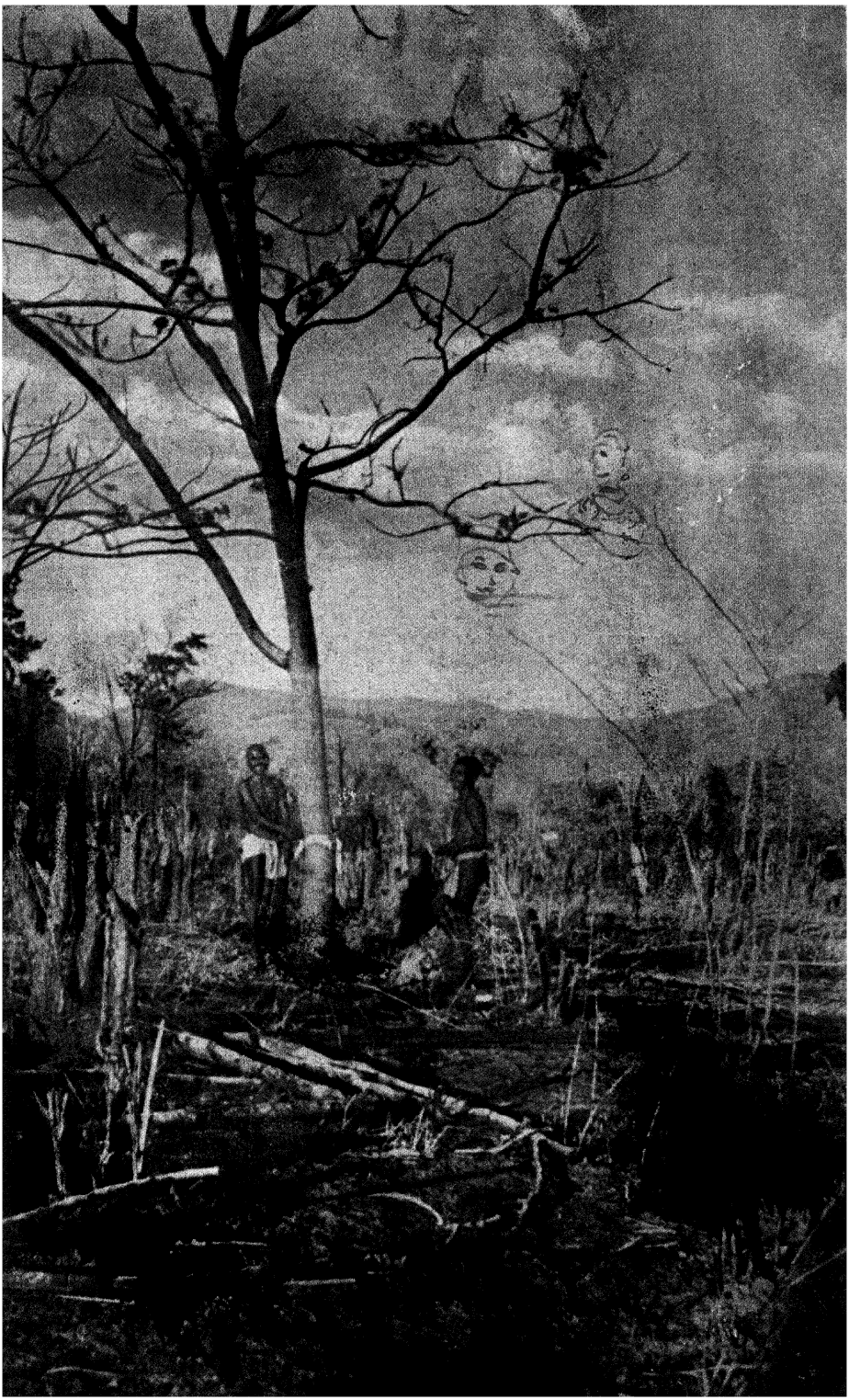
W. V. Grigson's *The Aboriginal Problem in Central Provinces and Berar* contains the following brief account of their shifting cultivation :

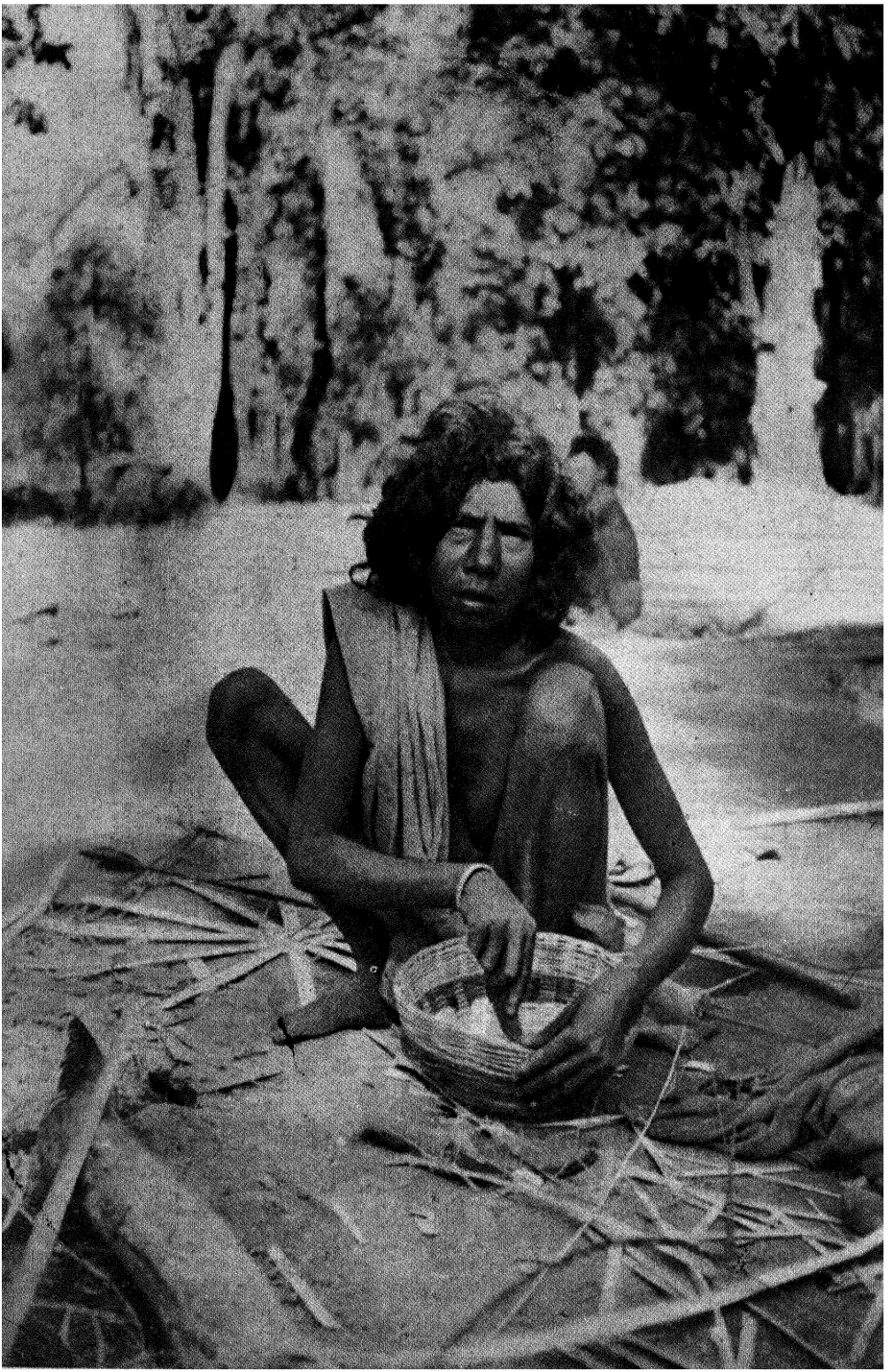
"Dahya cultivation by the Kamar tribe in South Raipur has been mentioned in paragraphs 281, 283, and 382. Mr. Lall and Mr. Noronha investigated it. Being practised in contravention of Section 202, Land Revenue Act, it is done by stealth by about 100 Kamar families and occasionally by one or two Bhunjia families also; apart from occasional cuttings in Gariaband revenue inspector circle, it is almost confined to the Mainpur revenue inspector circle of Bindranawagarh Zamindari, and there

to Mohda and Jarandih villages of patwari circle 16, Satnar, Thupenga, Patharri, and Themli villages of patwari circle 17, and Pharsara, Chhindola, Sihar, Jadapada, Deodongar, Tohmeta, Kamarams, Narripani and Amli villages of patwari circle 18. The method is *dahya* and not *bewar*; about two acres of Zamindari forest are cut, and the trees and forest growth are dragged to a field a quarter or a half mile away, there piled over about an acre of land and fired when dry. The ashes are dug into the soil with pick-axes before sowing, either light rice, *mandia* (*eleusine coracana*) or Kodon. About 200 acres in all are felled annually, and the forest recuperates sufficiently to permit of a fresh cutting after from 7 to 10 years. The trouble over any attempt to segregate the Kamar in and confine their *dahya* to one area is the fequency with which they shift their settlements; but that frequency may at present be due at least partly to the knowledge that *dahya* is illegal and best concealed by frequent flittings. The Raipur Divisional Forest Officer suggested that if a rotation of 14 years were allowed for each clearing a reservation of 5,000 acres would suffice. But this assumes that each clearing would provide ashes enough to fertilise the field for two years in succession; Kamar practice assumes that the ashes are enough for one year only and probably based on age-old experience. Moreover forest cut for one year at a time recovers more rapidly than forest cut for successive years. The remedy would seem to be to permit *dahya* in the three patwari circles mentioned, but to prohibit the cutting of trees of prohibited species, fruit-trees or trees above a certain girth and to require the leaving of a minimum unfelled forest. *Dahya* can well be carried out by cutting undergrowth and boughs only. It is worth while trying in this limited area to help the survival of this very interesting and wild tribe."[1]

Mr. G. K. Tiwari, Deputy Commissioner, Raipur, very kindly gave me a manuscript copy of the *Report on Conditions among the Aborigines in the Zamindaris Under the Court of Wards in Raipur District*, by Messrs K.B. Lall, I.C.S. and R. C. V. P. Noronha, I.C.S., from which the above description has been condensed by Mr. Grigson. I have studied it very carefully. The description of *dahi* as far as it goes is fairly accurate, but it needs a few corrections. Firstly, it is not correct to say that the Kamars practise only *dahi* and not *beora*. In fact, their practice of shifting cultivation assumes three important forms: *dahi*, *beora* and *guhad*. Occasionally they take recourse to *pharha* also. All these methods are briefly described in the pages that follow. Secondly, the report under-estimates the number of families practising *dahi*. Many other villages can be added to the list of dahi-cutting villages contained in the extract quoted above. We have ourselves witnessed the Kamars of Kathwa, Kulharighat. Nartora, Kolpara and Jagda in the Mainpur circle, continuing the practice of *dahi*. Further, in the villages in and arround Nawagarh, the Kamars of Bhiralat, Pandripani, Urtuli, Hasoda, Pendra, Timanpur, Marda, Maragaon, Toribhui, etc. also continue the practice on a res-

[1] W. V. Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar*, p. 345.





Basket-making

tricted scale. In Amamora, Kukrar and Od also the practice is continued. Occasionally even the Kamars of Chikhli, Garbhantora, Satdhar and Bhainsatara also cut *dahi*. The records maintained by the Court of Wards reveal that there are sporadic cuttings for *dahi* cultivation in the Kamar villages of Gariaband and Chhura circles also. In the Khariar hills adjoining the Mainpur tract the Kamars are reported to be continuing the practice on a fairly extensive scale.

It is needless to say that settled plough cultivation has been taken up only by a comparatively smaller section of the tribe inhabiting the Gariaband and Chhura tracts in Bindranawagarh Zamindari, Khalsa tract of the Dhamtari tahsil, and by a few Kamars in the Fingeshwar Zamindari. The others, who constitute the larger and comparatively wilder sections of the tribe, still practise their age old methods of *dahi*, *beora* and *guhad*.

Dahi is the most popular form of shifting cultivation practised by the Kamars. A Kamar who works hard and efficiently, can work on a patch of land which will be enough for sowing about five *katha* of seed. A family contributing three workers can cultivate *dahi* on a plot of about one and a half acre on which they sow about twelve *katha* of seed. Before starting the felling of trees in the forest, the Kamars select suitable fields i.e. levelled patches of land lying in between two slopes having a regular supply of water. In the neighbouring forests, then, they start their cutting operations. They cut down small trees and bushes and also the branches of the bigger trees. These trees, branches, bushes and shrubs are then dragged on to the field which may be at a distance of half a mile or even a mile from the forest. These trees and branches are then evenly spread over the whole field and are allowed to dry there. As soon as they find that the leaves and branches are sufficiently dry, a day for burning the *dahi* is fixed. To inaugurate the operations the services of the local Baiga are requisitioned. We witnessed the first *dahi* burning in the forest near Sinhar in Mainpur, where Chuniya Baiga initiated the burning. In one corner of the field he piled some dry trees and branches and making fire with fire-drill he burnt them. Next, taking a handful of rice he threw it in all directions all over the field, saying loudly, "Budharaja! O, Budharaja !! Today we begin our burning. All of us begin our burning today. Give us your protection. Let no wild beasts destroy our crops. Let the yield be good. Budharaja!

O, Budharaja !! We start our burning now". The whole team then disperses, and the Kamars begin burning the *dahi* in their respective fields individually. As the fire spreads they take care to see that all the wood which is evenly spread on the field catches it and is burnt. By the middle of May, generally, the *dahi* fields are burnt.

Sowing operations start immediately after the first rains. Some Kamars plough the ashes in the *dahi* field. But many of them being too poor to afford a pair of bullocks still use digging sticks. On the *dahi* fields only *dhan*, *madia* and *kodon* are sown. The seed is simply broadcast in the field. Afterwards there is neither *biasi* nor weeding. The *dahi* fields are not fenced. The Kamars have to keep a continuous watch over their fields and for this purpose many of them build temporary huts near their *dahi* sites. On one side of the field they construct a high platform over which they sit making loud noises and throwing missiles so that no damage may be done to the crops by wild beasts and birds. To frighten the birds during the day time, scare-crows are set up. During the nights fires are burnt at several points around the field to keep the wild animals away. The *haruna dhan* is ready in *Bhadon*; other varieties follow suit. As the crops become ripe, they are harvested and are slowly consumed; only small quantities are stored for future needs.

Beora is another variant of the Kamar practice of *dahi*. In this method of cultivation all trees except those with a girth of about one and a half foot and more, standing on a fairly level patch of land covering an area of one to two acres are cut down. The bigger trees are allowed to stand but their branches are lopped off. All these trees and branches are then evenly spread there over the whole area. These operations start by the end of February and continue till the middle of March. The leaves and the branches dry up in a month or so, and at about this time they burn them. The trunks of the bigger trees largely remain unburnt as they can not become sufficiently dry within such a short period. They are collected together and are burnt by the end of May or the beginning of June. The ashes are then carefully distributed evenly over the whole field. These *beora* fields do not require any poughing. When the rains start, seeds are sown in them. In these fields the Kamars sow mixed seeds of *sanwa*, *kang*, *kosra*, *madia*, *bhejra*—all lesser millets, and also *urid*

and a local variety of cotton. It is in these fields that the use of Kamar digging sticks is particularly in evidence. When the crops begin to grow, the fields are carefully fenced. Near these fields also they construct platforms for keeping a watch on the crops. With the exception of *madia* and *urid* all the other items sown in these fields are consumed from standing crops as they become ready. *Kapsa* is sold to the weavers. *Madia* and *urid* are stored for some time. The earliest crop which they get from their *beora* fields is that of *sanwa* which ripens in the month of *Sawan*. *Kang* and *kosra* last till the Dasera festival. They begin eating the *madia* after Dasera.

Guhad is restricted only to those villages of Mainpur and Khariar tract which have an ample supply of *katai* bamboo. In *Fagun* the bamboos are cut. By the middle or end of April fire is set to them. In the first rains seeds of *jhunga*, *kheera* and *kosra* are sown in the fields. These fields are then immediately fenced. Menfolk keep a watch over the fields during the day time and light fires around them in the night. The yield in the *guhad* fields is believed to be unusually large.

Pharha, spelt as Pharar in W. V. Grigson's *The Aboriginal Problem in Central Provinces and Berar*, is not very popular with the Kamars. Occasionally the Kamars who have now partially taken to settled plough cultivation take recourse to it. It is a compromise between their age old practice of *dahi* and the comparatively modern methods of settled plough cultivation. Near their fields they would cut down nearly half a dozen small trees and the branches of the other larger trees, burn them and prepare with the ashes a seed-bed. The seed is originally sown in these beds, and when the plants grow about one to one and a half feet, they are transplanted into the regular fields.

These methods of shifting cultivation, although they constitute an integral part of the culture of the Kamars, have been adversely commented upon by critics from many different quarters. Officers, both of the Revenue and Forest Departments have in the past expressed unfavourable opinion regarding these practices. In his report on Assessment-cum-Takoli of Bindranawagarh Zamindari, 1921-24, Mr. C. F. Waterfall, I.C.S., has made the following remarks regarding the extent of damage done by unrestricted shifting cultivation of the Kamars:

"It might be thought that the summit of the Gauragarh plateau, which has good

soils and a fairly copious water supply would be covered with virgin forest affording a vast timber reserve for coming generations, but this is not the case. It is true that there are some patches of sal and other timber but the better part of it is open champaign carpetted with coarse grass, often 10 feet or more in height through which run the narrow foot-paths made by the aboriginal; the most important of these foot-paths are cleared of grass for a distance of a yard or so on each side to make easier to follow and to afford some chance of escape from wild animals. This state of affairs in my opinion is due to the practising of *dahia* from time immemorial. The removal of the leaf canopy by felling and burning has given the grass an opportunity to get a firm hold, so that it now chokes any tree seedling springing up. Planting and weeding or tanngya would seem to be the only remedy but this is out of question at any rate for the present. There are scores of Viran villages in the central portion of the Zamindari; perhaps they were many years ago inhabited by *dahi* cultivators".

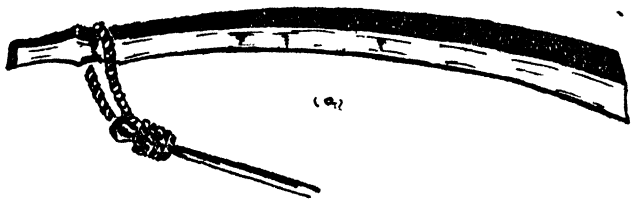
Appreciation and understanding of the delicate problems of aboriginal culture, have brought about a change in the attitude of the administration towards these agricultural methods of the aboriginals. In his admirable report, W. V. Grigson has made a definite suggestion in favour of permitting *dahi* under certain conditions in a limited area 'to help the survival of this very interesting and wild tribe'. But so far no further steps have been taken in this direction.

I have already pointed out that a small section of the Kamars have now taken to settled plough cultivation; specially in the Chhura and the Fingeshwar tracts they have achieved a marked degree of success in this form of cultivation.

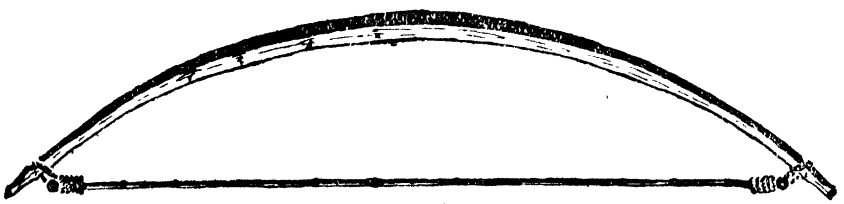
SHUNTING

The Kamar has a very well-deserved reputation for being an expert hunter. He carries with him his bow and arrow whenever he goes out into the jungle. Although he occasionally supplements his diet with the *shikar* he brings from the forest, hunting cannot be regarded as a regular source of his food supply. Since the introduction of the new Forest Games Rules, the Police and Court of Wards officials have increasingly checked his freedom of the forest, and today whatever little hunting he does, he has to do it by stealth. This governmental interference in his food quest has deprived the Kamar of one of the most important and ancient sources of his livelihood. The ritual hunt which the Kamars used to organize annually is gradually disappearing, and unfortunately even organized communal hunting is being stopped now. However, even now they organize a symbolic ritual hunt annually and occasionally go out for hunting in parties.

Hunting is one of the traditional occupations of the tribe. The Kamar boys get regular training in the use of bow and arrow. In their childhood they practise shooting small birds, squirrels, hares etc. with small wooden arrows. As they grow older and acquire some experience, they begin accompanying their elders to the jungle where they make their maiden efforts at shooting larger animals.



Fastening the bow-string.



The Kamar bow.

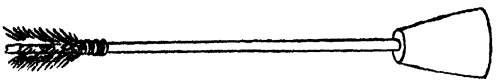
The Kamar adults go out for hunting both individually and collectively. When they go out individually they do not enter very thick forests and as a rule avoid entering such parts of the jungle where they are likely to encounter carnivorous animals. In these individual efforts they merely wish to get hare, barking deer or spotted deer but occasionally they may even kill a *sambhar* or wild boar.

The Kamars are well versed in animal lore, and are fully acquainted with the habits of the various animals. From their foot-prints they can easily locate their tracks and the portions of the forest frequented by them. Having wounded an animal they spare no pains to trace it out. In the summer season they locate the streams where animals generally come to drink water. They dig small trenches near by, cover them with green branches of trees and lie in ambush. They shoot the animals with their arrows when they come for drinking water.

When they go collectively for hunting in an organized party, generally all the adult male members of a number of neighbouring settlements participate in it. They first try to locate the part of the forest in



An ordinary arrow.



Wooden arrow for shooting birds.

which they are most likely to find the game. They then post four to six *shikaris* at strategic points from where the animals are most likely to pass. The others go in a team for the beat. Covering a distance of over a mile or so, they begin the *kheda* of the area in which they expect to find the game. They yell at the top of their voices in different ways and make various other peculiar sounds. Throughout the beat their constant endeavour remains to frighten the animals, and put them on the track on which the *shikaris* have already been posted at favourable positions. They try their utmost to check the animals from breaking through their cordon. In their respective positions the Kamar *shikaris* are very alert. From the sound produced by the movements of the animal they easily know the direction from which it is coming. Instantly they get ready to shoot. As soon as the animal comes within their range they aim and shoot at it. They follow the wounded animal for long distances, and generally return home only when they have got their much prized *shikar*.

The Kamars eat field rats with great relish. A common method used by them for killing a mouse is that of filling the hole of the mouse with smoke. Unable to bear the suffocation as it comes out, the Kamars either kill it with a stick or shoot it with an arrow. They occasionally set up a *ghutku* trap also to catch field rats.

The Kamars do not trap birds, nor are they very much interested in shooting them. They may occasionally shoot a peacock. In the thickets near the villages jungle fowls are plentiful; but the Kamars seldom shoot them. Traps are set up for panthers; and in these occasionally even tigers are caught.

When they go out for *shikar*, the Kamars do not so much seek adventure as they seek food. Naturally, therefore, if they come across any carnivorous animal, bison, wild buffalo, etc. they generally allow them to pass peacefully. Yet occasionally they demonstrate great courage and hunting skill. A party of Kamars who were working in the forest near Timanpur in the Mainpur circle shot with their bows and arrows an unsually large tiger. Chuniya proudly claimed that with the help of his friends he had killed not less than three bears. Paltan of Bangaon in the Fingeshwar Zamindari is reputed to have shot one tiger and two panthers. A number of Kamars in the Mainpur tract claim to have shot bison with their bows and arrows.

When they shoot an animal, the Kamars tie it to a large pole with a rope and forming a team of four to eight persons carry it from the jungle to their village on their shoulders. The procedure of distribution is fixed by their tribal conventions; the person or persons who actually shot it get the choicest share and the rest is then divided into three equal parts. Of these, two parts are equally distributed among those who participated in the hunt, and the remaining third part is then distributed among the families of those who did not participate in the hunt. All settlements taking part in the expedition are entitled to get a share.

Earlier it has been pointed out that the new Games Rules have greatly interfered with the Kamars' freedom of the forest. As a result of this their annual ritual hunt is gradually disappearing. In the Nawagarh and Mainpur circles, however, the different groups of settlements still secretly organize this hunt every year. After the rains, on a Saturday previously fixed for this hunt by the adults of the various settlements which participate in it as a group, in consultation with their Baiga, the Kamars leave their bows and arrows in the jungle. The next day they go in a team to the jungle, pick up their bows and arrows, and come to the bank of a river. There they put the bows and arrows into the water. The Baiga brings with him two chickens and an egg. Breaking the egg he invokes the deities of the jungle. He then spreads a handful of rice in all directions and leaves the chickens free. As soon as a chicken picks up and eats a grain or two of rice, it is instantly sacrificed. The other chicken is also similarly set free and sacrificed. They then offer *hom-kuhra* by burning *sarai* gum. They carefully note the directions in which the

chickens pick up and eat the rice grains, for it is in these very directions that they expect to find good *shikar* all through the year. Taking out the bows and arrows from the water they then proceed forward for the *kheda*. They believe that if they get some good *shikar* on this day they will continue to be successful in their expeditions throughout the year. This ritual hunt is organized only once every year.

FISHING

Fishing is yet another important source of Kamar livelihood.

Rivers like Pairi, Sondhul, Sukha and the other numerous mountain streams which flow from the Kamar country, provide them with ample opportunities for fishing.

Among them all men, women and children are interested in fishing. They have a fairly extensive knowledge regarding the various types of fish, and can distinguish as many as twenty-four varieties.

A common method very often employed by women and children is to dam up a stream with sand, throw the water out of the little pool and catch the fish. By this method they cannot catch large fish; they only get small *chingri*. In late winter and early summer when the womenfolk go for their bath or for fetching water they try to get fish in this way. When their parents are out, small children also catch fish by this method, but they rarely take their catch home. They light a fire on the bank of the stream, roast their catch and eat it immediately.

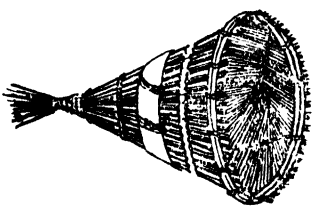
In Chhattisgarh the privilege of using fishing nets belongs traditionally to the Kewats only. Although non-Kewats have now begun using nets, the Kamars do not use them. Their tribal custom prohibits its use.

The Kamars make bamboo fishing traps of various types. *Choriya* and *dandar* are very commonly used by them. In early rains these traps are fitted at such places on field embankments from where the main streams of water flow. The fish coming in the stream naturally get trapped. These traps are allowed to remain in the fields for four to six hours. They are then cleared and fitted again. The catch thus obtained is wholly consumed by the family of the person who fitted the trap. In summer the Kamars dam up the streams leaving only two or three outlets for the current to pass. In each of

these outlets they fit a trap. These traps do not disturb the flow of the water in any way and the fish coming in the stream is thus easily trapped.



Choriya, a fishing-trap.



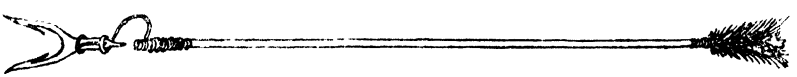
Dandar, a fishing-trap.

The Kamars often organize communal fishing. At such occasions nearly all the members of the local group participate. If they select a large water area for fishing, they extend invitations to some of the neighbouring settlements also. Such expeditions are possible only in late winter and summer when the currents in the rivers are not strong. First of all the area marked out for fishing is closed by a dam. All then proceed to prepare the *manj* which is used for intoxicating the fish. The following objects are used by the Kamars as *manj*: *manihar* fruit, *karra* bark, *kaya* fruit. *genjimudi* tubers, fruit of the *kharhar* tree, fruit of the *bedi* tree, roots of *kumhi* tree, *godari* creeper, *chil* creeper and bark of the *timsa* tree Some time after the putting of *manj*, the fish get intoxicated and come up to the surface. Distributed all over the area the Kamars with their bows and arrows keep themselves in readiness to shoot the fish the moment they appear on the surface. The children shoot the smaller fish with small bamboo arrows. The adults await the bigger fish and shoot it with large iron arrows.

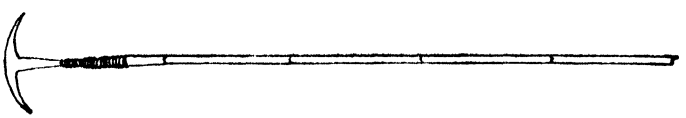
In Chikhli, I was present at the occasion of an organized communal fishing expedition. Members of Chikhli village mainly participated in it; but they had issued invitation to the neighbouring Tewari settlement also.

A sufficiently large water-area had been closed with a huge dam which was constructed at about 1-30 p.m. In the construc-

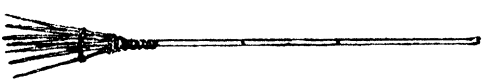
tion of this dam, sand from the river, branches of trees freshly cut from the forest, and a small amount of earth dug from the bank of the river were used. When we reached there at about 3 p.m. a large number of men, women and children of the two settlements were present at the spot. A number of well marked groups were visible. The adult menfolk were sitting on one side smoking leisurely; the younger men were sitting in a separate group. On the bank of the river the young girls were thrashing the *manj* with a rice-husker. Children formed a separate group of their own. In about half an hour the *manj* was ready. Five young men filled large baskets with it; and spread it in the water. After a short interval, they put some more *manj* in the water. Actual fishing started after an hour. Under the intoxication of the *manj*, the fish came up on the surface of the water. Children attempted shooting the smaller fish with their little bamboo arrows; while the adults used their larger *dohla* and *chobha* arrows for shooting the bigger fish. All had their *dhuti* ready with them. Whenever they succeeded in shooting a fish they kept it in their *dhuti*.



Chobha, an arrow used in fishing.



Dohla, an arrow used in fishing.

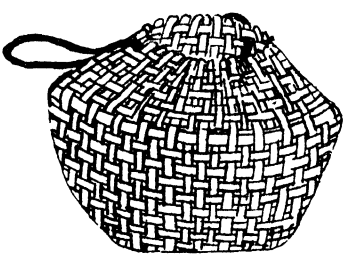


Bamboo arrow, used by children in fishing.

The night-fishing which we witnessed in Sinhar was a very different type. A sufficiently large water area was closed with dams. This area was divided into three parts. In between these three different parts several outlets were left in the embankments dividing them and large *dandar* were fitted in every one of these outlets. Very strong *manihar* fruit *manj* was spread in the water in the evening; and all people returned to the village to take their meals. After nearly two hours at about 8 p.m. in the night a large number of men, women

and children came to the bank of the river. They collected large quantities of dried leaves, branches and other wood. With these they burnt *hola* at over sixty places just near the water. The whole area was aglow with these fires. The intoxicated fish coming up became clearly visible, thus allowing the children and adults an opportunity to shoot at them. Inside the water itself, they had constructed at different places five bamboo platforms. On each of these platforms two experienced Kamars sat with their bows and *dohla* and *chobha* arrows. With them also sat two boys on each of the platforms to hold a burning piece of wood for providing light. Here also the children used their small bamboo arrows, and adults used either larger bamboo arrows or *dohla* and *chobha* arrows.

Throughout the Bindranawagarh Zamindari the procedure of the distribution of the catch is simple. After the fishing is over, all persons assemble together at a place on the bank of the river. All those who participated in shooting then come forward and show to all the fish they got. From their catch the individuals keep half for themselves and the other half is deposited by everyone in a common basket. The fish thus collected by common contribution is divided into nearly two



Dhuti.

equal parts. From it, one part is distributed among those who contributed to the expedition in various ways; for example by constructing the dam, or by bringing, preparing and spreading the *manj* etc. It is customary to give small quantities of fish to such other persons of the settlement also who did not actually participate in the fishing. The other part is sold in the market and the money it fetches is kept in a common fund. From this fund the fishing dues are paid to the Court of Wards or the Zamindar.

For assuring success in fishing expeditions the Kamars feel that

it is necessary for them to keep the water-gods pleased. For this purpose they offer a chicken and an egg and some *hom-kuhra* to the water-gods once every year.

FOOD-GATHERING

In the wilder parts the produce of *dahi*, *beora* and *guhad* cultivations is hardly enough to keep the Kamars free from want even for four months in the year. They have therefore to seek other supplementary sources for their livelihood. Food-collection from the forest is a very important source of their subsistence. Even the Kamars of the plains who have successfully adapted themselves to settled plough cultivation, have not abandoned their *bongi*. Their womenfolk still use it occasionally for food gathering from the forest.

Wild fruits, plants, roots and tubers form an important part of the diet of the Kamars. The supplies from the forest vary from season to season. Most of the food-stuff they collect from the forest is consumed immediately; only a little quantity of it is stored for use in times of need.

The most important wild fruits which seasonally break the monotony of their diet are the *tendu* and the *char*. The *mohua* flowers provide another very substantial item of their diet. The ripe *tendu* fruit is either eaten fresh or it is dried and stored for subsequent use. The *char* is also a great favourite with them. They enjoy its sweet and very pleasant pulp; and then break the hard shell and take out the kernel i.e. *chirounji* which they equally relish. *Char* fruits are also dried and stored. Often they squash the dried fruit and eat them. Since there is a great demand for *chirounji* in the market, the Kamars now break the fruit one by one and take out the kernels for selling them in the market. The other fruits which supplement their diet are mangoes, various figs, *Tamarindus indica*, and *Eugenia jambolana*.

More than all the varieties of fruits mentioned above, the *mohua* flowers provide an important item of Kamar diet. The much welcome *mohua* season starts when its first corollæ begin falling to the ground. Day after day these flowers are gathered by the Kamars. The fresh flowers are boiled and eaten. They are also dried and stored in large quantities. These dried flowers are necessary for distilling liquor. When no other food is available they are boiled and eaten. Fortunately for the Kamars there is an abundance of *mohua*

in their country. For a people who are, even in the years of plenty, only a little above the starvation level the importance of an item like the *mohua* cannot be over-emphasised. It has gone a long way in solving the food problem of the Kamars.

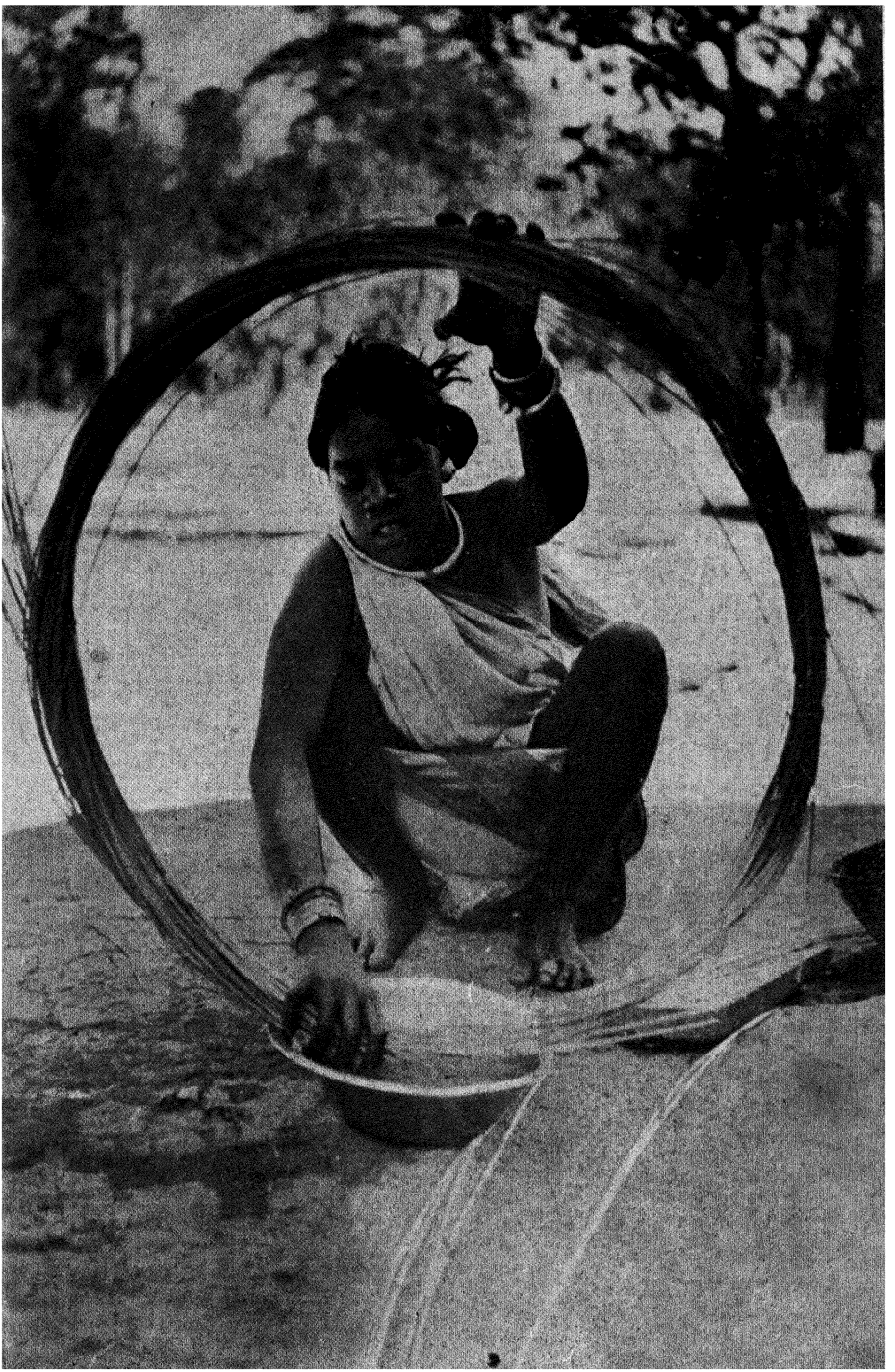
The Kamars relish various kinds of mushrooms. Fresh leaves of *pipal, buhar,* and tamarind are cooked as vegetables. *Khedha, chench, lal* and *bhiri* vegetables are all eagerly eaten by them. Similarly, edible roots and tubers also occupy an important place in their diet. The *keu kanda* is brought from the jungle, roasted and eaten. The *kundru kanda* is cooked in boilling water for about an hour and is then eaten. Similarly, *peeth kanda* is also only boiled and eaten. *Karu kanda* being very bitter in taste presents considerable difficulties. It is left boiling in an earthen pot for the whole night. The next morning some ash of the *karu* tree is put in the pot and the tubers are kept boiling. After about an hour the tubers are taken out and are washed in the river. They are then finally boiled for about an hour and are eaten. The *baichandi* tubers are washed very carefully and then their thick skin is removed. Then with a knife the tubers are cut into thin round chips. These chips are boiled in an earthen pot for about three hours. Later they are taken out in a bamboo basket and are very carefully washed in the river. After the wash the basket is fixed at a place in the stream from where the current flows. It is left there for the whole night. The next morning the slices are spread on the sand and are left there to dry in the sun. When they are dried they are ready for sale in the market. Occasionally the Kamars fry the *baichandi* in oil and eat it with great relish. On very rare occasions they may prepare it with jaggery. This preparation is esteemed by them as a delicacy. The *tikhur* after it is brought from the jungle, is thoroughly cleaned and is left in the sun for two days to dry. It is then left in cold water for three to four hours. Afterwards they make a paste of it, and filter that paste with a thin cloth. It is then left to dry in the sun. When it dries up, it is cut into small pieces and taken to the market for sale. Mixed with milk it is utilized for making a number of sweet preparations. Since *baichandi* and *tikhur* fetch a good price in the market the Kamars now do not generally consume them as food; instead they sell them in the market.

HONEY-TAKING

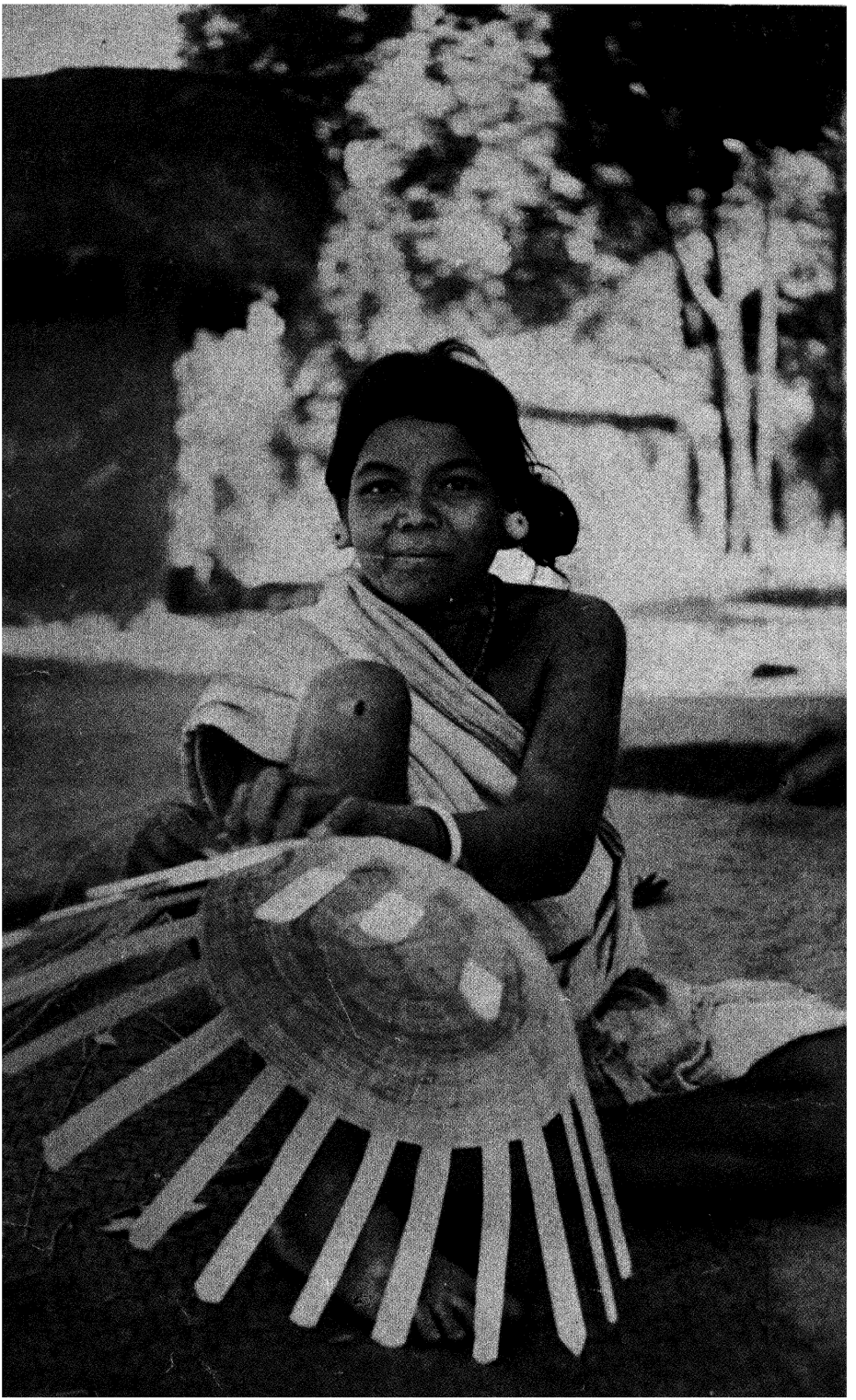
Although honey does not form a regular part of their diet, many Kamars are experts in honey-taking. Honey readily fetches a good price in the market and it is primarily for this reason that the Kamars sell nearly all the honey which they take out from the combs in the jungle.

When they have to take out honey during day time the Kamars make a large heap of half-dried leaves and branches under the comb, and set fire to it. This produces a column of smoke. Naturally because of this smoke the bees will fly away. To keep up the smoke, the Kamars continue to put more and more leaves in the fire. In the meanwhile an experienced person will climb the tree keeping his axe on his shoulder. With his axe he will cut the comb from the branch of the tree and carefully throw it on a broad piece of cloth which his friends will be holding under the tree. The comb will then be immediately kept in an earthen pot.

The method employed during night time is slightly different. Spotting out one or a group of large honeycombs in the forest during the daytime a party of four to six Kamars may decide to go out in the night to take that honey. When they reach the tree, one of them will stealthily climb up with an axe and a long rope. Reaching near the comb he will tie the rope on the branch and will slowly throw it down. His friends will tie three things to this rope; a long piece of wood to the ends of which *khadar* grass is tied, a *luthi* i.e. a piece of wood one end of which is burning and an empty leaf packet, which would be large enough to hold the comb. The person who has climbed the tree will then slowly pull the rope up, and taking the *luthi* he would burn the *khadar* grass tied to one of the ends of the other wooden stick. The moment the grass catches fire he touches the comb with the burning grass. Because of the heat and smoke it produces, the bees fly away. With the help of his axe the person on the tree immediately cuts out the comb. He keeps it in the empty leaf packet tied to the rope and slowly releases it. His friends under the tree getting his signal keep themselves in readiness to catch the comb when it reaches them. The person on the tree then slowly comes down and together they all return to their settlement. If the comb is in some inaccessible part which cannot be



A Phase in Basket-making



easily reached by them, in order to take the honey, the Kamars will not mind cutting a branch or the tree itself, only if they are sure that no police or forest official is likely to detect it.

At suitable places, the Kamars often make hollow cavities on the upper portion of the trees, and make steps also on the trunks of those trees. The Kamars keep an eye on these trees to watch if the bees are making their combs in the cavities made by them. They know the seasons during which they are likely to get the maximum quantity of honey from the combs of the bees of different varieties. At the right time they go to the tree, produce a high column of smoke to drive away the bees, easily climb up the tree through the steps previously made and bring down the comb.

When they bring home the comb, they put it in an earthen pot. It is kept on fire for a little while, and then the honey is filtered. The wax is kept and sold separately.

BASKET-MAKING

Basket-making is another important source which contributes substantially to the subsistence of a section of the Kamars. Bamboo is available in large quantities in Nawagarh, Mainpur and Khariar circles and a part of the Khalsa tract of the Dhamtari tahsil. There the Kamars have specialized in bamboo craft and manufacture baskets on a professional scale. The Kamars of non-bamboo-producing tracts also have a fair knowledge of this craft.

The Kamars have a reputation for their skill in working out beautiful patterns of baskets. With the help of a *chhuri* and a *ghodi*, they split bamboo into fine threads and then work it out into various sizes and patterns of *tokna*, *supa*, etc. Besides baskets of various sizes and designs, they also specialize in making beautiful bamboo *jhapi* which are very useful as large all purposes boxes. Similarly, they also make strong bamboo mattresses which are very durable. They enjoy a considerable local reputation for their *tatta* (bamboo screens) and other wicker work. The *choriya*, *dandar* and other fishing traps made by them are also remarkable for the quality of their workmanship and the durability of the traps. The Kamars also make very good *khumri* and *mora* rain hats with split bamboo and dried *tendu* or *parsa* leaves. These hats are commonly used in Chhattisgarh during the rainy season.

Men, women and children, old and young alike, participate in this work. In the Bindranawagarh Zamindari they have to make an annual payment of one rupee per family for the bamboo which they use in this craft.

In general, *jhapi*, *tatta* and fishing traps are made to order. Occasionally, one may find them brought for sale in the Mainpur, Nawagarh or Gariaband markets. The usual price charged for a *jhapi* of medium size is ten annas, and for a tatta or medium sized fishing trap is six to eight annas. Baskets and winnowing fans are manufactured on a fairly extensive scale and are regularly taken to the nearby weekly markets for sale. To attend the weekly market at Gariaband even the Kamars of Chikhli and Garbhantora come all the distance of over sixteen miles on foot. The women bring with them a head-load of thirty to fifty baskets of various sizes. The prices charged depend mostly upon the respective size of the baskets and vary from one anna to six annas. A winnowing fan is generally sold for two annas and a rain hat is sold for six to eight annas. The above prices were recorded in the weekly market at Gariaband in April 1945, and were verified in April 1946.

The profits which the Kamars make from basket work are not very large. Even in this sphere the middleman has come to exploit the illiterate aboriginals. These middlemen advance a few rupees to each of the Kamar families, and make an unwritten contract with them for the supply of large quantities of baskets. Dhiraj Teli had liberally advanced money to many Kamars in the Nawagarh circle on condition that in return they would supply him with large and medium sized baskets at the rate of twenty per rupee. The Kamars clearly realize that this is exploitation; yet, in times of need they have to take recourse to the middleman.

DOMESTICATION OF ANIMALS

Kamars have not yet taken to domestication of animals on an extensive scale. Even for their agricultural needs they do not have enough cattle. They are now beginning to keep bullocks and buffaloes. Not many Kamars have cattle for milk although the cow is now becoming popular. In Birodar village in the Chhura circle, when we visited it in May 1945, there were eight cows out of which five were giving milk. Individuals who are comparatively substantial make it a

point to keep one or two cows. Tingali of Jhablibehra has three cows, Dukalu of Chikhli has one and Satmasi of Bhainsatara has three. Daya Kamar owned two she-buffaloes. Among the Kamars, goats are now becoming increasingly popular. Even in the remote hill villages of Deodongar and Kulharighat in the Mainpur circle some Kamars have kept goats. Itwari proudly told me that he had a herd of not less than forty. Pigs are also very popular. Each Kamar family invariably owns a number of fowls. In this connection, it is interesting to note that pig and fowl are eaten only by men and not by the womenfolk.

The other domestic animal which is universally popular among the Kamar is the dog. Rarely one comes across a Kamar having a cat. Bhainsa had a large *karan* parrot. Sundarsingh has a *maina*. Chuniya had kept a young bear cub for over two months.

TRADE AND BARTER

A small fraction of the Kamars' livelihood comes from occasional trade and barter.

It has been pointed out that the Kamars of Nawagarh and Mainpur circles carry on basket-making on a professional scale. These baskets are either sold for a cash price or they are occasionally exchanged for small quantities of salt, paddy, vegetables or cheap ornaments.

The other forest produce which they bring to the market for sale includes *harra*, *tikhur*, gum, *dhup* (resin), honey, *baichandi* and *chirounji*. The contractor who generally takes the contract of the forest produce of the Bindranawagarh and other neighbouring Zamindaris, buys all these products through his various offices.[1]

[1] Mr. Sheo Bhushan Lal Pande, the agent of Seth Sheodas Daga, informed me that their firm bought forest produce from the Kamars and other jungle-folk at the following rates:

i.	*Harra*	.. Rs.	-/5/- per measure
ii.	*Tikhur*	.. Rs.	-/1/- per *katha*
iii.	Gum	.. Rs.	-/4/- per seer
iv.	Honey	.. Rs.	-/14/- per seer
v.	*Dhup*	.. Rs.	-/14/- per seer
vi.	*Baichandi*	.. Rs.	-/6/- per seer
vii.	*Chirounji*	.. Rs.	-/6/- per seer

These prices were current during the later years of war. Corresponding retail prices of these things to the consumers in the markets of the neighbouring towns were considerably higher.

Young *tendu* leaves are also collected and sold by them to the contractors in large quantities. They are required for the manufacture of *bidi* (country cigarettes). Occasionally the Kamars bring to the market cast off *sambhar* horns and peacock feathers.

Formerly, some Kamars used to make good money by propagating lac on *parsa* trees. But now the lac business is not very profitable and therefore the Kamars have nearly abandoned it.

The forest products are generally sold by the Kamars for a cash price. But sometimes they exchange them also for the goods they require in their every day life. In return for about a seer of *tikhur*, Matwar Kamar got from Sonsah Teli in the Gariaband market three *katha* of paddy and a seer of salt. Desir, the wife of Sukhdeo, exchanged a seer of *chirounji* for a pair of brass *khilwa* and three *fundra*. For half a seer of *dhup* and about a seer of honey a Marwari seth gave a small cloth *patuka* to Nandram. These stray examples, recorded in the weekly market at Gariaband, indicate the nature of the Kamars' exchange by barter.

Labour for Wages

The Kamars have to take recourse to occasional labour for supplementing their livelihood.

They do not like to work as agricultural farm servants; instead, they prefer to work in the forest. Yet, many of them have to accept occasional work with the neighbouring cultivators during the agricultural season. The pre-war wages generally used to be two annas per day for a woman and three annas per day for a man. Because of the war the wages have risen to three annas per day for woman and four annas per day for man. Occasionally, a Kamar may accept work as a regular farm servant on an annual contract basis. Nandu of Bamhni is working as a farm servant with a Teli cultivator. In return for his labour he gets seven *khandi* of paddy and his daily meals from his master. But in general it may be said that the Kamars do not like this type of work. They are more at home in the forest.

Although the work in the forest is hard and exacting, it is only there that the Kamars find an opportunity of displaying their intrinsic abilities. The remuneration that they get from this work is also slightly higher. In the forest work, the daily wage of an adult

male labourer ranges between eight to ten annas. Occasionally, the Kamars also agree to take short term contracts on a piece wage basis. During the course of the second World War, the Court of Wards administration of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari made a record supply of timber to the Government. A large share of the credit of this distinguished service would go to the Kamars, but for whose help in the felling and transport of timber the task would have been exceedingly difficult and far more costly.

The Kamars enjoy considerable local reputation for being great experts in the river transport of timber and bamboo. The Kamars of Bindranawagarh Zamindari float timber from the interior of the Zamindari through the Pairi river and deliver it at the Court of Wards forest depot at Rajim which is a railway station. On an average the floaters carry thirty *miyal*, one hundred and fifty poles or one thousand bamboos in each *bhira* (float). Each *bhira* is floated by two or three Kamars and generally ten to twelve *bhira* are floated simultaneously. The distance being sufficiently long the Kamars take time to reach Rajim. From Malgaon Ghat they take four days, from Kochbai Ghat five days, from Tewari Ghat ten days and from Satdhar, Bhainsatara, Dauka and Khilur Ghat about twelve days to reach Rajim.

Transport of timber by floating is possible only from July to October. If the rivers are highly flooded, the Kamars do not take their floats. If the spate of the river increases while they are on their way, they tie the floats with ropes to the trees on the bank of the river and wait for the flood to subside. Occasionally their journey may be delayed by the sudden decrease of water in the river.

The Kamars generally take a group of about ten to twelve floats together. Each such group has one or two experienced persons who are called upon to give proper guidance at critical moments. Their journey being long, they have to keep their food with them. Once every day, when the weather is clear they tie their floats on the bank of the river, cook and eat their meals, rest for a while and start on their journey again. When the nights are moonlit, they continue their journey in the nights also, but they consider it unsafe to carry their floats in the dark nights.

Transport of timber by this method is by no means easy. Those who are acquainted with the steep and dangerously situated rocks

of the Khilur Ghat can easily understand what tremendous risk the Kamars encounter by agreeing to take their floats over these rocks. Indeed they demonstrate a great amount of ingenuity and organizing skill in averting accidents at critical turns. The payment made to them for their labour cannot be said to be proportionate to the risks they encounter. The following are the rates of the wages paid to them by the Court of Wards administration of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari for carrying floats to Rajim :

From	Bamboo Rate per hundred	Poles Class I, Class,II, ClassIII (Rate per pole)		
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Khilur and Dauka Ghat	1/1/6	-/2/-	-/4/-	-/4/3
Chikhli and Bhainsatara	1/1/6	-/1/9	-/3/3	-/3/9
Tewari Ghat	-/15/-	-/1/9	-/3/3	-/3/9
Malgaon and Bhilai Ghat	-/7/-	-/1/3	-/1/9	-/2/-

For transport of teak from Khilur Ghat wages are paid at the rate of one anna per cubic foot. These rates were prevalent during the course of the Second World War. The above information has been kindly supplied by the office of the Manager, Court of Wards, Bindranawagarh.

Before they take the floats the Kamars are given money in advance liberally. When they reach Rajim they hand over charge of the bamboo or timber transported by them to the Depot Officer, and get a receipt from them to that effect. On producing this receipt in the Court of Wards Office at Gariaband, they are paid the balance of their wages.

Every year, during the rains a number of Kamars make a good income from this river transport of timber and bamboos.

EXPENDITURE

Food quest is the central theme in the life of the Kamars. They have not yet been able to rise much above the starvation level. Subsisting partly on the produce of the forest, the Kamars have never faced actual famine conditions although they have also not known the fortunes of plenty.

Most of the food that they collect is consumed immediately. Bar-

ring a certain quantity of *mohua*, the Kamars do not store any of the forest produce for a long time. The other wild vegetables, leaves, roots, tubers and fruits that they gather, are all consumed within a short time. Most of the yield from their *beora* and *guhad* cultivations is consumed from standing crops. They, however, store *madia* for a longer time. Even the yield of their *dahi* fields does not last more than four, five or at the most six months.

Whatever meat they get occasionally, is consumed almost immediately. Some varieties of small fish are preserved and stored, the others are consumed.

Food is the most important item in the expenditure of the Kamars. Annually they have also to spend a considerable amount of their earnings on clothes. Normally, a woman's *lugra* used to cost only a rupee or two at the most and a man's *patuka* six to twelve annas. For six to eight annas a man could even buy a *salukha*. Things, however, changed during the war. It became impossible for the Kamars to get any mill cloth. He had to depend exclusively on the Mahara and Koshta who charged exorbitant prices. The prices of cloth in the Gariaband market in April 1946 were the following :

1. *Lugra* .. Rs. 8/- to 10/-
2. *Patuka* .. Rs. 4/- to 6/-
3. *Salukha* .. Rs. 3/-

These prices were literally too high for the Kamars.

Further, the Kamars have also to pay a part of their earnings as taxes. They pay annas two per house as *mohuari* to the Zamindar, which entitles them to collect *mohua* and other forest produce. All Kamars engaged in basket-making have to pay one rupee per family for the bamboo they require in basket-making. All non-agriculturists have to pay commutation at the rate of one rupee per house per year. The agriculturists have to pay land revenue at scheduled rates. Chamru Kamar of Kosampani holding 17·22 acres of land pays an annual land revenue of Rs. 4/1/3. Murha Kamar of Amjhar holding 20.26 acres of land pays Rs. 10/4/3 annually. Darbari of Gahandar holds 51.48 acres of land and pays an annual revenue of Rs. 15/13/3. Bakharia of Toiamuda holds a plot of 8.85 acres and pays Rs. 4/11/6 annually.

Liquor is another important item of expenditure with them. They illicitly distil sufficient quantities of it. Even then they are often re-

quired to buy it from the Kalar contractors and have to pay them a considerable part of their earnings. With the males, tobacco is a necessity of life. They produce some tobacco in the courtyard of their houses. The rest of their requirement of tobacco is bought for a cash price.

Special occasions such as child-birth, marriage, death, expiation of tribal offences, etc. necessitate a considerably larger expenditure. Anticipating child-birth and marriage, the Kamars begin acting with a little foresight and make small savings from their every day earnings. At the time of death they do not generally have any ready cash with them. They often ask for time to prepare for the funeral feast. Even for the expiation of their offences they are given time to save enough to defray the cost of the penalty feast. It is only in some very rare cases that they can meet these abnormal expenses without borrowing money from others. They have to approach invariably a local money-lender for a loan. The interests charged are unusually high. For small amounts of money the borrower has to repay double the amount after the period of one year. Sukhru Kamar borrowed six rupees from the Kachhi money-lender in Mainpur, and after one year he had to pay him back twelve rupees. For bigger amounts the rate of interest varies between thirty to forty percent. When Lalsah borrowed money at the marriage of his son, the rate of interest was thirty per cent per annum. Grains borrowed this year must be returned the next year in double the quantity. For the marriage of his son, Jhitru borrowed from Dhansah Teli of Barula one *khandi* and four *katha* of paddy and at the end of one year returned two *khandi* and eight *katha*. Occasionally for the payment of a part of the loan the Kamars agree to work with the money-lender for a fixed period of time.

Notwithstanding the legal restrictions on the maximum rate of interest which can be charged the Kamars are required to pay unusually high rates, because their transactions are nearly never on legally valid documents. Since in times of difficulty the Kamars have no alternative but to choose one such money-lender, nearly all of whom are ruthless exploiters, they have inevitably to fall in their grip.

In extracts quoted by W. V. Grigson in his *Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* Messrs R. C. V. P. Noronha, I.C.S., and K. B. Lall, I.C.S. have made the following remarks regarding the manner in which aboriginal indebtedness arises:

"The *Sahukar* sets up in a village with a stock of clothes, bangles,

trumpery jewellery, sweets (especially *gur*), etc. He encourages the aboriginals to buy on credit. Thereafter the taking of loans (both cash and grain) is facilitated and the vicious circle of debt, repayment, debt is started."[1]

So far as a part of the indebtedness of the Kamars is concerned, I would also ascribe it to the above process. But Messrs Noronha and Lall are certainly misinformed when referring to the Kamar marriages ; they say, "The Kamar raises the cost by subscription from relations and the village." I have firsthand knowledge regarding Kamar marriages. Whatever meagre presents which the bride and bridegroom get from their friends at the time of *tikan* are not enough even to defray a minor part of the expenses of the wedding. At the occasion of the marriage of his son Dukalu took a loan, so also did Lalsah. I made detailed enquiries in Chhura and Mainpur circles also. The results confirm the view that marriage expenses are an important source of the Kamar's indebtedness. Similarly, feasts after death and expiation feasts also contribute towards the Kamars' burden of debt.

[1] W. V. Grigson, *The aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar*, p.189.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

I

Divisions of the Tribe

Writing on the divisions of the Kamar tribe, Russell and Hiralal have said, 'They have two subdivisions, the Bundhrajiya and Makadiya. The latter are so called because they eat monkeys and are looked down on by the others'.[1] That there was a Makadiya section of the tribe which ate monkeys and consequently was regarded as low by the other section is probable because Kamars in all tracts of the Kamar country seem vaguely to know about the existence of such a sub-division. Yet none claims to know anything definite about it nor can anyone exactly locate it. Mr. G. K. Tiwari, Deputy Commissioner, Raipur, kindly helped me by instituting a search for this section in the Raipur district through the Court of Wards administration of the Bindranawagarh, Fingeshwar and Komakhan Zamindaris. I have personally visited the hill villages of the Kamars in the Fingeshwar Zamindari, and have toured extensively in the remote hill settlements of the Kamars in the wild Mainpur circle of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari. I have also visited a number of Kamar settlements on the neighbouring hills of the Khariar Zamindari in Orissa. The Kamars in the last two regions mentioned above style themselves as *Paharpatiya* (dwellers of the hills). But this appellation can by no means be taken to be descriptive of an endogamous division. The *Paharpatiya* Kamars of Mainpur do intermarry with the Kamars of Khariar, Nawagarh circle and Gohrapadar circle. The Kamars of these circles freely intermarry with the Kamars in Gariaband, Dhamtari, Chhurra and Fingeshwar tracts. As distinguished from the hill-Kamars, the Kamars of these tracts are called *Bundhrajiya*. Thus, so far as the Raipur district is concerned our extensive search has failed to locate an endogamous monkey-eating section of the tribe.

[1] Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, (London, 1916), p. 324.

Keeping in view the fact that the Kamar tribe itself is very small and is predominantly concentrated in the Raipur district, I think that such a section is now non-existent among the Kamars of the Central Provinces.

The belief in the existence of a monkey-eating section among the Kamars provides a parallel to the Gond-waina and Kondwan Baiga sections of the Baiga tribe who are also believed to eat monkeys and beef. About them Verrier Elwin says, "The Gond-waina and Kondwan Baiga of Balaghat ate monkeys and beef, and are looked down on by the other Baiga in consequence. These two *Jat* are said to live in Baihar and on the Kawardha border, but I have been unable to locate them. Exhaustive enquiries by the Deputy Commissioner and Forest Officer failed to discover any in Balaghat. Yet all Baiga talk about them though they generally admit that they have not themselves seen them." [1] In the tribal code of the Kamars killing a monkey is not regarded as an offence. During our stay in Chikhli, Sukhdeo (Sori) while on his way back to the village after an unsuccessful search for game in the forest, killed a monkey in anger. This did not invoke any criticism from the Kamars of the many different settlements who had come to visit us on their way to a nearby market. They repeatedly assured me that 'killing a monkey is not an offence; but eating it certainly is.' I could not record any concrete case in which a Kamar was alleged to have eaten a monkey and penalized for it. However, I have a very interesting case of love-magic on record, in which a Kamar cooked some rice in the skull of a monkey and gave it to his wife for eating. The tribal opinion took a very serious view of the case and penalized the offender heavily.[2] Some Kamars in the Nawagarh circle alleged that the wild *Paharpatia* Kamars of Mainpur within the memory of their grandparents used to eat monkeys; but the two Kamar carriers from Pharsara of the Mainpur tract who had come with us and were present at the occasion very emphatically denied it.

The existing sub-divisions of the tribe are only territorial; they are not endogamous. The Kamars of the Nawagarh tract are called *Nawagarhiya*, those of the Mainpur tract are called *Paharpatiya*, and those living in the Gohrapadar tract are called *Deobhogiya*.

[1] Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), p. 7.

[2] The details of this case are given in Chapter V.

Those who live in the Gariaband and Chhura circles are known as *Gariabandiya* and *Chhura-rajiya* Kamars respectively. The Kamars in the Dhamtari Tahsil outside the Zamindari area are known as *Khalsa-rajiya*. The Kamars of Khariar, Fingeshwar and Komakhan Zamindaris are known as *Khariar-rajiya*, *Fingeshwar-rajiya* and *Komakhan-rajiya* respectively. These different territorial divisions constitute more or less independent units of tribal administration.

These divisions among the Kamars are by no means exclusive. People freely intermarry and often migrate from one *raj* to another. Yet in many cases even after their migrations the people are addressed with territorial appellations referring to the tract to which they formerly belonged. Samaru who migrated from the Nawagarh tract to Kharkhara in the Fingeshwar Zamindari over thirteen years ago is still addressed as *Nawagarhiya*. Phuli originally belonging to the Khalsa tract in the Dhamtari Tahsil, but now married in Bengarpalli, is still known as *Khalsarajin*, although she has become the mother of seven children and grandmother of a girl. In matters of tribal administration the above mentioned territorial units and their various sub-divisions are virtually independent.

Although the Kamars are a little individualistic by nature and have no centralized tribal organization, they do recognize the unity of the tribe as a race, different and distinct from the neighbouring castes and tribes. A Kamar visiting other Kamars in tracts different from his own will readily get their hospitality even if he is not related to them in any way. This courtesy will be shown to him primarily because he belongs to *their* tribe. The Kamars are ignorant about the geographical distribution of the different sections of their tribe, but they can hardly be said to be indifferent towards them. During my tours of investigation, in nearly all the Kamar villages I showed to the people the pictures of Kamar life which I had taken. All were generally interested in them. Later I showed them the photographs from C. von Furer-Haimendorf's The *Chenchus* and *The Reddis of the Bison Hills*. About the Chenchus they all thought that they were the Kamars of some distant *raj* and being under that impression even some women who were otherwise reticent made a number of enquiries about them. They were not interested in Grigson's *Maria Gonds of Bastar* and Elwin's *Maria Murder and Suicide*, for they could clearly make

out from the pictures that the people who were photographed could not possibly be Kamars. They made only a few stray remarks about the bare breasts of the girls but did not make any enquiries about their social life and customs. People were always interested when I discussed concrete cases of incest, divorce and polygyny from the Kamar villages of the different tracts. None seemed to be interested when I tried to discuss the possibility of grandparent-grandchild marriage on the basis of the concrete instances recorded by Verrier Elwin in his monograph on the Baiga. But when I narrated to them how Dokra Kamar of Boriyagarh had married his own classificatory grandmother related to him very closely, all at once became interested.

In general it may be said that a 'tribal feeling' does exist among the Kamars; at least they are conscious of the identity of their tribe as a distinct unit, but there is no indication to point out that this tribal feeling is in the nature of a sense of common destiny. It is equally true that this consciousness is not strong enough to express itself in the establishment of a strong and centralized tribal administration. In the social and religious spheres of life there is no central agency to organize and co-ordinate the activities of the tribe. The nucleus of social organization in the Kamar society is the family, and the other principal units are the local group, clan and kin-group. Tribal laws and customs are enforced and their breaches are punished by the various regional Panchayats of the local groups formed by the elders from the neighbouring village communities.

II

The Family

The family among the Kamars is patrilineal and patrilocal. It is a unilateral social group, consisting of parents and their children; only unmarried daughters being regarded as the members of the family. Although the patrilocal family is the normal type, in a few rare cases we find some stray examples of patrilineal but matrilocal families also. Such families arise because of the custom of 'serving for a wife'; when a *lamsena* or *gharjawai* settles with his prospective father-in-law and continues to live with him even after his marriage. Jogi Kamar in village Kosampani had no male issue, so he kept *lamsena* boys for his daughters. Even after their marriage the boys continued to live

with him to cultivate his land. Jogi is now dead but the sons-in-law are living in his house and cultivating his land.

Among the Kamars one does not generally come across a joint family in which parents and two or more of their grown-up sons with their wives and children live together. The house to house census of five Kamar settlements provided as an appendix gives an idea of the size and composition of the average Kamar family. Each family has a different household of its own. The usual practice for the married people is to separate from their parents shortly after their marriage. The periods for which the married boys continue to live with their parents or one of their elder brothers, differ from person to person, but separation generally takes place within a period ranging anywhere between four months to one year. Sonsah, son of Dukalu Kamar of Chikhli, was married during our first visit to Chikhli in April 1945, and was still living with his parents when we revisited the village after one year in April 1946. In the same village Bisram, son of Sukalu, had taken early initiative in separating from his parents almost immediately after his marriage. It is customary for the people to criticise this tendency of the new-weds. Complaining about her sons Deonath and Deosingh, Sukli the wife of Bhainsa Kamar of Garbhantora said, 'So long as they are *didwa* (unmarried), they hear us; once we bring girls to cook for them their ways change.' Notwithstanding this critical attitude, the Kamars themselves realize the economic and social advantages of this practice. 'If many utensils are huddled in one place,' said Latti in Kulharighat, 'they are bound to make noise.' 'Rather than quarrelling morning and evening, we always like to separate. Even after separation we continue to meet on several occasions,' said Bhainsa to us, explaining the current Kamar practice. Separation in time saves economic friction within the family and does not let the social relations of the members of the family itself get strained.

Separation from the family involves the boy's duty to set up an independent house for himself. In this he is helped by his friends and also by his parents or brothers from whom he is separating. From his parental house he brings with him only those articles which were in his exclusive personal use. For the rest, he and his wife have to work hard in the first few years of marriage, to earn sufficiently to equip their home with the bare minimum essential for their

life. His wife has now to do her own cooking. For *dahi* or *beora* cultivation he marks out his own piece of land and cultivates it in cooperation with others. When occasions for help, such as pregnancy, child-birth or sickness arise, assistance from near relatives and friends comes very readily. Separation does not involve total severance of connections from the main family. For all important rituals and ceremonies, for example, for *Nawakhai* (the new eating ceremony), the worship of family gods and ancestral spirits etc., all the different branches of the same family have to assemble in the *mai-ghar* i.e. the main house. As a general rule it is the eldest brother who is privileged to inherit the family gods and the *Gata-Dooma* from his parents. Of necessity, therefore, the younger brothers and their children who live in separate households assemble in the *mai-ghar* for important rituals and religious ceremonies. However, as time passes and families enlarge, the *mai-ghar* also breaks; and separate *Gata-Dooma* are instituted in the different houses. Dukalu, Sukalu and Sukhdeo of Chikhli are three brothers who live separately but have common *Gata-Dooma*. They and their children assemble together for their worship at one place. But the three brothers feel that after their death their children will keep their *Gata-Dooma* at three different places.

Old parents form another important link between the various units of the same main family. Very old people who are wholly dependent for their maintenance on their children are rare. Yet some people do live sufficiently long and in the closing years of their lives they have to depend upon their sons. If one of their sons is well-to-do and his wife is well-behaved, both father and mother may live with him. Old Machhlu and his wife Soni live with their second son Phulsing only, although their two other sons who are also quite well-to-do are living in the same village in their independent houses. In other cases the father may live with one son and the mother with another. As it will be clear from the census of village Bamhni, Mahajan lives with his third son Samdu; while his wife Kari, lives with her two unmarried sons Nandu and Chhannu. If the sons are poor they mutually fix up the periods for which their old parents are to live with them. Old Tijru (Netam) of Kharkhara lives with each of his three sons for three to four months every year. Regard is generally shown to the old people but it is expected that they should not greatly interfere in domestic affairs. If the mother has been unduly harsh to her

daughter-in-law in the earlier period, the daughter-in-law may, in her turn, now put her to little inconveniences. As a popular Hana song puts it:

She was her servant,
When she came here first;
Now look! how Gondri orders,
And the old woman obeys!

But the daughter-in-law is not expected to cross the limits of tribal decency. If she does, she has to face a strong social censure. When old parents unable to stand by themselves find that they are not being properly supported by their children, they can always take recourse to the tribal Panchayat which can force the sons to give them shelter and support. Tingali of Jhablibehra informed me that in one of their tribal Panchayats they had to admonish Jhabru and his wife for not treating his old and ailing father, Birjhu properly. Such instances, however, are rare and the sons are generally not unwilling to share their responsibility towards their parents. The parents also even in their old age continue to do odd jobs and also take charge of their grand-children. On many an afternoon a visitor to a Kamar settlement will find only some young children playing under the sheds in front of the houses, and a few old people sitting in the courtyard outside smoking leisurely or making small baskets etc.

The property of the family, in a formal sense, belongs to the man who is the head of the family. The women themselves, however, exclusively own all property which they may acquire from their parental homes. Their clothes, cheaper ornaments and digging stick, etc., are also regarded to be their property. The menfolk do not concede exclusive rights of ownership to women in silver ornaments which are comparatively more costly. Although the husband is believed to be superior to the wife from the point of view of ownership he will rarely dispose off any property without consulting her. The question of inheritance and distribution of property never assumes a problematic form among the Kamars; for they have, if ever any, very little to leave at the time of their death to be inherited by their children. Most of the articles which were in the personal use of the deceased individual are required to be kept near his grave after his burial, and are never brought back. If any other property, e.g., cattle or land still remains, it may have to be disposed off to defray the cost of the feast

that is required to be given after death. In the end not much remains to be inherited by the children. The property, if there remains any, is distributed among all the sons—all brothers sharing it nearly equally, except the eldest who gets a slightly larger share. In rare exceptions, when the deceased has no son the set procedure is that the property should be distributed equally among his brothers. If the deceased has no brothers even, his property should be shared by his whole *kutum* i.e. the kin group, in the form of a feast. The practice is, however, a little different from the above theory. Girls in some cases get a share in the property of their parents. Jogi's property after his death went to his daughters and sons-in-law and was not claimed by any of his brothers or blood-relatives. Similarly, if a widow does not take another husband and continues to live under the roof of her deceased husband she will also get a share. Disputes over the inheritance of property are extremely rare, and since there is always very little to be distributed, the rival claims are generally settled in an admirably amicable manner without recourse to the tribal Panchayat.

As in other primitive communities, among the Kamars also, apart from catering to the elemental biological instincts of sex and race perpetuation, the family performs certain other important functions. It is a distinct economic unit, performing important functions of food-gathering, providing shelter and giving at least a minimum of material comfort to its members. Socially, it has to look to the conservation and transmission of the tribal traditions and heritage, folk-ways and folk-customs, folklore and folk-songs. The father is undisputedly the most important figure in the unit. He is charged with the duty of providing shelter and food to his wife and children. But many of his economic pursuits are largely communal, and in many others his wife and children also help him considerably. The division of labour between the different members of the family, on the basis of both age and sex, is well-marked. The old people share the responsibility of taking care of the small children and do other odd bits of work. Men take charge of hunting, a major part of fishing, *dahi* and *beora* cultivation, water transport of timber, honey-taking, etc. The womenfolk take charge of the home, cook food, fetch water, collect wild fruits and dig out edible roots and tubers. Both men and women participate equally in basket-making. The children share a lighter part of the work of their parents.

POSITION OF WOMEN

The Kamar woman is not a family drudge but still her position is markedly inferior to that of man. Tribal custom has imposed upon her a number of economic and socio-religious disabilities. Although she shares the economic pursuits considerably with the menfolk, in that sphere it is always the man who has the upper hand. She owns only her clothes, a few cheap ornaments and some other articles of everyday personal use. Women do not inherit property. Whereas men may use cots, they too use them rarely, the tribal custom does not permit women to sit or sleep on them until they are sufficiently advanced in years. With the exception of the Paharpatiya tract of Mainpur and Khariar, in all other parts of the Kamar habitat, liquor is prohibited to women. In the Mainpur tract, however, the women freely drink. In the other areas an exception is made to the general rule at the time of marriages when the womenfolk are also permitted to drink. Then there are a number of food taboos on women; certain foods are allowed to men but denied to women. According to the tribal customs fowl, pig, bear and wild cat are forbidden to women. Apart from the normal restrictions of the periods of menstruation and child-birth, the women suffer from a number of other socio-religious disabilities. They are not allowed to perform any religious worship, nor can they themselves offer any sacrifices to the gods. No woman can ever become a Baiga and even her presence in the proximity of the Baiga while he is engaged in divination is believed to be inauspicious. 'If her shadow falls on us while we are at work,' said Chuniya in Sinhar, 'our power will become ineffective.' All other Baigas hold identical views. When paddy is being taken out for the first sowing it should not be seen by any woman. Notwithstanding these disabilities and restrictions, the major responsibility for the management of the household still remains on the women who are treated with understanding and friendliness by the menfolk.

In the tribal organization of the Kamars, the family, and not the individual, is regarded as the primary unit. Invitations for marriages, feasts etc., are sent not to individuals but to families. In the tribal Panchayat, when occasion arises, the family is represented by its head. For a breach of tribal custom it is not the individual offender alone who is excommunicated, along with him his

whole family is excommunicated. Thus, in the structure of Kamar society, the family enjoys a considerably exalted position. But the family alone as a unit is not equal to the immense cultural task of transmitting the social heritage. This function is shared with it by the larger units of local group and the kin-group.

III

The Local Group

The local group, next in importance to the family, is also a distinct social unit. It comprises a number of different families living in a common settlement and performs certain functions which the family alone can not adequately perform.

Tribal settlements of the Kamars have been described at length elsewhere. Here we shall briefly analyse their sociological structure. The smaller settlements of the tribe like Kodohardi, consist of only four to six families; while the larger ones like Chikhli are inhabited by ten to twenty families. It is rare to find a tribal settlement exclusively inhabited by the members of one clan only. In our tours of investigation, we came across only one such settlement, Amadar, where four Netam families only were living. The other settlements are, in general, inhabited by families of two or more clans. In Garbhantora, there are three Markam, three Chedaiha, one Sori and five Netam families. In Chikhli, there are ten Sori, one Marai and five Netam houses. In Bhainsatara, there are eleven Sori and two Netam houses. In Bamhni, there are ten Netam and three Markam houses. Similarly Kochena has three Sori and four Netam houses. The details of the houses and the families living therein have been provided in an appendix. The tribal custom does not prohibit marriages within the same village settlement; and in fact we find that a large number of marriages actually take place within the same settlement. Mathura, daughter of Sukalu Sori has been married to Thanwar in Chikhli. In Kochena, Heerasingh's daughter Thanwarin has been married to Lalsah's son Kuarsah. In the settlement itself there is a tendency in people related to one another, specially those related by blood, to build their houses close to one another. The general atmosphere of the village community is democratic, and all the members who constitute it participate on a basis of equality in working out their tribal destinies.

There is no well-marked hierarchy and social gradation in the Kamar society, and the only persons who seem to enjoy a special position are the Baiga and the Mukaddam. Each settlement of the Kamars has, as a rule, a *dih* Baiga of its own. But even all Baigas do not hold a very exalted position. The only individual who can be said to be enjoying considerable prestige within the group is the Mukaddam. He owes his appointment to the government. Although he is only a petty village official, within the village community itself his position is invariably unique. The prestige and respect accorded to Dukalu, the Mukaddam of Chikhli, is indeed remarkable. In the Gariaband and Dhamtari tracts, the Mukaddam generally arrogates to himself the powers of the *Sirpanch* also.

The local group is not a very permanent unit, and occasional changes in its composition are not uncommon. Among the *dahi* cutting Kamars of Mainpur, Nawagarh and Khariar, during the agricultural season, the different families leave their settlements temporarily to live in huts built near their *dahi* and *beora* fields. Families residing in one settlement are free to sever their connections with it and can migrate to another settlement at will. Yet, the migrations of this type are not so frequent as to leave no attachment in them for the local group.

In the social and economic life of the Kamars the local group plays a considerably important part. Although there is no definite system of rights and obligations which formally binds together the members of the local group, a close observation of its life and activities reveals that within this group itself there is a great degree of economic and social co-operation. Much of this co-operation is voluntary, mutual and reciprocal. We have seen earlier how in the construction of houses individuals are helped by one another. In the hunting expeditions which are occasionally organized, all adult male members of the settlement participate. Similarly, when *manj* is thrown for intoxicating the fish in larger water areas, the whole local group participates in fishing. The Kamar technique of the cultivation of *dahi* and *beora* involves the co-operation of a whole group. For the collection of forest produce and for the purpose of digging roots and tubers women of the village invariably go in groups of three or four. In social matters also, the basis of mutual and reciprocal help is distinctly discernible. During periods of difficulties,

a family naturally looks forward to the assistance of its neighbours. When a woman is in her menses, a friendly woman from one of the neighbouring houses will surely go to help her and cook for her family. During pregnancy and child-birth also women are helped by their neighbours. We have witnessed how Dharmu's family was helped by his neighbours during his serious illness when his wife Jasi, the only other adult member of his family had to attend on him continuously and there was neither any food in the house, nor was there any other earning member. Similar was the attitude of the neighbours towards Manglu who was slowly sinking. The Baigas had lost all hope. A small quantity of milk for the patient and grain and *mohua* for the family were being supplied every day by the other residents of the settlement. In fact, such assistance during periods of difficulties is looked upon as a moral duty by their tribal code of ethics. At the occasions of marriages, deaths etc., the members of the local group readily co-operate with one another.

In certain other ways also, the local group acts as a distinct unit. Wherever Bhainsa went during his long tours in the different tracts of the Kamar country reciting his mythological legends, he was treated as a guest of the whole village. The expenses of his meals and parting present were met from common contribution. On the evenings of the days of festivals and ceremonies, when the drums are beaten and the Kamars sing and dance, the village settlement throbs with a new life, and its corporate unity becomes marked. For the transmission of tribal lore and culture, the village community, more than any other social group is responsible. Whenever folk-songs are sung or folk-tales are told the children of the whole village assemble together to hear them.

With growing culture contact and adaptation of the Kamars to the changed environment, the nature and problems of the village community are changing. Exclusiveness in the building of tribal settlements is maintained only in the Fingeshwar Zamindari. Elsewhere the other tribes and castes of Chhattisgarh are beginning to settle in the immediate neighbourhood of Kamar settlements. This has created new problems. The Kamar children play with the children of other castes, possibilities of contact between Kamar men and other women and Kamar women and other men resulting in complications are increased, and for the purpose of the settlement of disputes with other

tribes and castes the Kamars have to participate in Panchayats other than their own.

To conclude, in the general scheme of the social organization of the Kamars the local group has been assigned a very important place by the traditional standards of the tribe. By according social approval, the local group encourages its members. In other cases by expressing social disapproval it forces recalcitrant members to act in conformity with the standards of tribal ethics. A Kamar youth demonstrating some special skill in hunting, showing more than average ability and efficiency in honey-taking or composing a new song, is sure to get appreciation, encouragement and recognition from the members of the local group. A son not giving proper attention to his old parents, a quarrelsome wife who neglects her house-hold duties, young men and women neglecting the tribal standards of behaviour are sure to meet with the frowns of the elders of the local group. The local group has to keep an eye on the conduct of its members and has to report and penalize all breaches of the laws, customs and traditions of the tribe. If the village community itself is negligent in the proper discharge of its duties, the larger tribal Panchayat of the tract may penalize the whole village for its negligence. In village Kochena, a Lohar from a neighbouring village indecently assaulted Samaru's wife Budhiyarin. The local group was not prompt in taking proper action, and did not immediately excommunicate Samaru's family. When the Panchayat of the neighbouring villages met, it reprimanded and temporarily excommunicated the whole local group for its negligence. The village had to give a nominal penalty feast before it was admitted into the normal fold of tribal life. Thus the local group has a significant role assigned to it in the general scheme of the social organization of the Kamars.

IV

Clan Organization

The Kamar tribe is divided into a number of *got* or clans. These *got* are totemistic but their totemistic significance is gradually being lost. They are all exogamous units and their primary function in the social structure of the Kamars, today, is the regulation of marriages.

Kamar folklore is poor in respect of myths and legends about

the origin of the various clans. Regarding the origin and names of their clans the Kamars themselves can throw very little light. In fact, they are not very much interested in their *got*, and are never keen on emphasizing the relative superiority, noble origin or antiquity of their clans. The clans do not possess separate organizations of their own, and institutions such as Clan Elders, Clan Council etc., are alien to them. There is no ritual or ceremonial occasion on which the members of a particular clan meet together as a distinct unit. No group mentality is discernible in a Kamar *got*, which has no collective responsibility and which never acts as a corporate unit. In the social life of the Kamars, in general, considerations of *got* are brought in mainly on the occasion of negotiating marriages. In the normal course of life no sense of solidarity among the members of the same clan is visible. Clan members are not expected to help one another in quarrels.

The following is a list of the *got* as they obtain today among the Kamars of the Central Provinces:-

i. Jagat
ii. Netam (also called Maitam)
iii. Markam
iv. Sori (a) Wagh Sori, and (b) Nag Sori.
v. Kunjam.
vi. Marai
vii. Chedaiha

The following legend gives an account of the traditional origin of the various clans:

After the creation of the world, there was another deluge, not as great as the first one which had preceded the creation of this Universe. Water was rushing into their habitat and the Kamars had to run for their lives. The deluge sent by the gods was faster than the jungle Kamars. By the time they got ready to fly, there was water all around their settlements. The only way left open for them was to save their life by swimming across the water. But could they swim across that endless ocean?

One group of the Kamars mounted the back of a tortoise and crossed the water. They are known as Netam today, and as a mark of their gratitude towards the tortoise they do not kill or eat it.

Another group was crossing the ocean on the back of a crocodile. In mid-ocean the crocodile turned treacherous. 'I am hungry. I must eat you all,' he said. Terror-stricken they all jumped into the water. Some of them were eaten by the crocodile, but others reached the tortoise who was carrying the Netam group. 'O, tortoise! take us across on your back,' they said. 'No, I have enough load on my back!' replied he. 'Be kind, maternal uncle! save our lives!' they entreated. 'O, you are my nephews! Come on,' replied he. This group was later known as Markam. Even today it retains the hostility of its forefathers towards the crocodile and reveres the tortoise.

The Soris crossed with the help of a *bela nar*, a jungle creeper. The others devised their own means. Having crossed the water they all halted in a jungle and the different families built temporary huts for themselves there.

A Sori woman was pregnant. To her two children were born. One was a tiger and the other was a snake. From that day there are Wagh and Nag Soris.

An old Kamar had brought a bride for his son. The boy had not yet slept with his wife. Because of the deluge they all had to run for their lives. Having spent a night in the new settlement the bride woke up early in the morning and began sweeping the courtyard. She was scantily clothed as she had lost all her clothes in the deluge. Her young body looked very attractive. While she was sweeping the courtyard, Budhadeo's black he-goat came there. Through the rags which the girl was putting on, her private parts and breasts were visible.

'Nobody has enjoyed her,' exclaimed the goat when he saw the girl. He came near her. *'Hat, Hat!'* said the girl, 'why have you come here?' 'I have come to take yours, to taste the thing which nobody has tasted!' said the goat.

The goat took out his penis. It was large. The girl was also tempted.

'What will happen if any children are born?' asked the girl.

'They will all belong to the Kunjam *got*', replied the goat.

The girl went with him to the jungle. There the goat enjoyed her. They lived there for three days. On the fourth day some people found the goat and the girl sleeping together. The woman became pregnant. Her Children now belong to the Kunjam *got*.

One section of the tribe staying in this settlement wandered about all over the world. This section was given the name of Jagat *got*.

Another group of people who were very much fatigued and exhausted by this flight, started eating a carcase as they were very hungry. They were called the Marai and were strictly forbidden to eat anything that had died a natural death.

A number of youngsters, who were unable to stand by themselves, were assigned the Chedaiha *got*.

The Kamar tradition does not give us any clue to the historical origin of the clans. Nor is it possible to study their territorial distribution as they are all scattered and spread over the entire territory.

All the *got* mentioned above are regarded as nearly equal. Some members of the Jagat *got* in the Chhura tract, however, suggested that they were slightly superior to others. In support of this view they argued that whereas all other clans have some special clan taboo attached to them, the Jagat *got* has no such restrictions. But in the other circles no such claims to superiority were made by the Kamars belonging to the Jagat *got*. The fact remains that no food taboo or other totemic complexes are observed by this *got*. The Netam and Markam are regarded as *mama-bhacha got*, i.e., maternal uncle and nephew clans. Neither of them will kill or eat a tortoise. Unlike the Netam, the Markam do kill and eat crocodiles, in order to avenge their early ancestors, who were betrayed by it. As the term *mama-bhacha got* itself suggests, members of the Netam and Markam clans freely intermarry and their unions are regarded as very appropriate. The Wagh Sori do not kill the tiger. In the Mainpur tract whenever they hear that a tiger has been killed they go through a number of observances associated with death, as if a relative belonging to their clan has died. They throw away some of their earthen pots, sprinkle water in the house and have a formal shave, bath and purification. We were told in village Patharri, that about two weeks before our visit the Wagh Soris of that settlement had undergone a formal purification because a *shikari* from the neighbourhood had shot a tiger. The Nag Sori do not kill the *gouha* snake. The goat is never killed or eaten by persons belonging to the Kunjam *got*. If a goat enters their house and touches any of the earthen pots used in cooking, the pots will be defiled and will have to be thrown away. They are then

required to clean the whole house by sprinkling water both inside and outside. In Amethi we witnessed how the unwelcome entry of a goat caused great embarrassment in the house of Kendu who had to throw away two earthen pots and clean the whole house. On the Marai *got* there is a strict food taboo. They should not eat any animal, bird or fish, which has died naturally. Unless an animal or bird is specially killed for the purpose, the Kamars belonging to the Marai *got* are not expected to eat it, e.g. a *sambhar* killed by a tiger in the jungle may be eaten by the Kamars of all other *got* except the Marai.

Closely allied with their clan organization is the Kamar conception of *murmati* or original earth. This has probably reference to the earlier settlements of the clans, from where they gradually migrated to the different parts of the Kamar country. Although the original earth was left by their forefathers, they still maintain a sentimental tie with it. To that earth are attached the spirits of some of their ancestors and their family gods.

The following is a list of the various clans and the respective places of their *murmati*, compiled from a legend which refers to the original allotment of lands to the various clans by the gods :

i. Jagat	...	Od Pahar
ii. Netam	...	Tori Bhui
iii. Sori		
a) Wagh Sori	...	Amamora
b) Nag Sori	...	Sinhar hills
iv. Markam	...	Dadaipani
v. Marai	...	Tuhameta
vi. Kunjam	...	Dongarkhol

Bhainsa, Latti and Chuniya, the three leading Baigas of the tribe, accept the above list as correct. All the places mentioned above are either on hill-tops or they are somewhere near them. In Amamora, Sinhar hills and Dongarkhol we have seen the sheds under which are housed the gods and the *murmati* ; they are all in a tumbled down condition.

Long distances and comparative isolation have broken up the old bonds and a large number of Kamars have now lost touch with their original homes. Subsequent migrations of the different families have added new territorial gods and deities to their family pantheon.

It is because of this reason that we sometimes get conflicting answers from the Kamars of the same clan if we make enquiries regarding the place of their *murmati*. Few Kamars are well-versed in their tribal lore and mythology, and so with the passage of time they have forgotten the places of their original earth. When questioned on the subject, they sometimes give the names of other places where perhaps some of their forefathers, having migrated from the place of their original earth had probably lived for a long time and had incorporated the local deities in their family pantheon. Thus the Kamars' knowledge of their *murmati*, today, is confused and does not play a significant part in their social and religious life. But the organization of their clans as exogamous units is still important and occupies a very significant place in their social organization.

V

The Relationship System

The table of kinship terms (Appendix I) obtained by the genealogical method and arranged according to the generation and the sex of the person addressing, contains the terms of relationship as they obtain at present among the Kamars. The Kamars as a tribe do not have a good memory for names, and their knowledge of their own family genealogy, generally does not extend beyond the third, i.e., their grand-father's generation.

The Kamar System of Relationship follows in broad essentials all the important features of the classificatory system. For many relatives of the same generation and sex, although not for all, the same relationship term is used. Rather than between individuals relationship is traced more or less between groups. The distinction between kins-folk and affines is not blurred and collateral lines do sometime merge into the lineal.

The identity existing between some of the kinship terms and the terms used for affines among the Kamars is indeed very striking. The term *dadi* is used for father's father, father's father's brother, mother's father's sister's husband, mother's maternal uncle and spouse's mother's father.

The term *ajo* is used to denote mother's father, mother's father's brother, father's father's sister's husband, father's maternal uncle and spouse's father's father.

Bapi is used for father's mother, father's mother's sister, mother's father's sister and spouse's mother's mother.

Similarly, *bai* is used for mother's mother, mother's mother's sister, father's father's sister and spouse's father's mother.

The term *mama* is used for mother's brother, father's sister's husband, father-in-law, and brother's or sister's father-in-law.

Ata is used for father's sister, mother's brother's wife, mother-in-law, and brother's or sister's mother-in-law.

The term *dada* is used to denote brother, father's brother's son and mother's sister's son—elder to the speaker. The corresponding term for the same relatives younger to the speaker is *nona*.

The term *bai* is also used to denote one's own elder sister and father's brother's daughter and mother's sister's daughter elder to the speaker. The corresponding term to denote one's own younger sister and father's brother's daughter and mother's sister's daughter younger to the speaker is *noni*.

The term *beta* is used to denote one's own son. A man will use this term to denote his brother's son, wife's sister's son, female cross-cousin's son and sister's daughter's husband. Similarly, a woman will use this term to denote her sister's son, her husband's brother's son, her maternal uncle's son's son, her paternal aunt's son's son and brother's daughter's husband. The corresponding term to denote one's own daughter is *beti*. A man will also regard his brother's daughter, wife's sister's daughter, female cross-cousin's daughter and sister's son's wife as his *beti*. Similarly, a woman will regard as her *beti*, her sister's daughter, husband's brother's daughter, maternal uncle's son's daughter, paternal aunt's son's daughter and brother's son's wife.

The term *bhacha* is used to denote one's son-in-law. A man will use it for his sister's son, wife's brother's son, maternal uncle's son's son, and paternal aunt's son's son. A woman will use the same term for her brother's son, husband's sister's son, maternal uncle's daughter's son, and paternal aunt's daughter's son.

The term *bhachi* is used to denote one's daughter-in-law. A man will use it for sister's daughter, wife's brother's daughter, maternal uncle's son's daughter, and paternal aunt's son's daughter; a woman will use it for brother's daughter, husband's sister's daughter, maternal uncle's daughter's daughter, and paternal aunt's daughter's daughter.

The term *aju* is used for man's daughter's son, man's brother's daughter's son and man's sister's son's son.

The term *nati* is used for son's son, man's brother's son's son, woman's brother's daughter's son, woman's sister's son's son and sister's daughter's son. A woman will call her daughter's son and brother's son's son *beti-nati*.

The term *natnin* is used to denote son's daughter, daughter's daughter, brother's son's daughter, brother's daughter's daughter, sister's son's daughter and sister's daughter's daughter.

RULES OF MUTUAL AVOIDANCE

A few strict relationship taboos separate some relatives from each other in the Kamar society. Among them, marriage or any other type of sexual relationship is strictly prohibited. More than that, they are expected to avoid all close contacts.

The first set of such rules of mutual avoidance govern a woman and her husband's elder brothers, and a man and the wives of his younger brothers. A woman should avoid all the real or classificatory elder brothers of her husband. A man should similarly avoid the wives of his younger brothers. This taboo is strictly enforced among the Kamars. The relatives coming in these categories should not talk to each other nor should they have any direct communication with each other. The two should not be alone in a room at any time. The woman should neither clean the leavings from her husband's elder brother's meals nor should she wash his clothes. She should also not mention him by name. As far as possible they should avoid 'each other's shadow.' She may serve him food or water, but this also must be done with an air of indifference, indicating the absence of any direct contact between the two.

A second set of such taboos governs the relationship between a man and the elder sisters of his wife, and a woman and the husbands of her younger sisters. As a rule, a man should avoid the elder sisters of his wife and similarly a woman should avoid the husbands of her younger sisters. In this case, however, the rules are not so rigid and strict as in the former. The relatives coming in this prohibited category should avoid touching each other. They should also not joke, jest or talk with each other in a way that may indicate intimacy or undue familiarity between them.

JOKING RELATIONSHIP

Between certain relatives a privileged familiarity is permitted and encouraged by the Kamar tribal custom. These relatives may indulge in jest and banter, and may make obscene jokes to each other. Such relationships exist, firstly, between a man and his wife's younger brothers and sisters. Secondly, a man may also joke with his elder brother's wife and her younger brothers and sisters. A woman can joke with her husband's younger brothers and sisters, and also with the elder sister's husbands and their brothers. The *dewar-bhauji* relationship has a special tinge of romance attached to it. Lastly, a joking relationship exists between some grand-parents and grand-children. A man will regard his son's son as his *dadi* and will treat him as his brother. Similarly, he will regard his son's daughter as his sister. As such he will have no joking relations with them. However, he will regard his daughter's daughter as his *sakhi* and his daughter's son as his *samdhi* and will joke with them. In the case of women, the relationship is just the opposite. She will regard her son's sons and daughters as her *samdhi* and *sakhi* respectively and will joke with them. However, she will regard her daughter's sons and daughters as her brothers and sisters respectively and will not joke with them.

In all the above relationships where privileged familiarity is permitted, on an analysis of the rules of exogamy we find that the relatives of opposite sex who are permitted to joke with each other by the tribal custom can enter into matrimonial alliances. A man can, and does very often marry his deceased elder brother's wife; so also he can marry the younger sisters of his wife. A special feature of the Kamar system of grand-parent and grand-children joking relationship is that it is restricted only to such grand-parents and grand-children as may marry each other, at least theoretically, without any breach of the rules of clan exogamy. Marriages between grand-parents and grand-children, however, are very rare. Genealogical evidences of a few marraiges between classificatory grand-parents and grand-children recorded by me are provided elsewhere in this monograph. Although such marriages are uncommon, the privileged familiarity permitted between grand-parents and grand-children is very real and they do frequently joke with each other.

RULES OF ETIQUETTE

Complex rules of etiquette govern the behaviour of certain relatives towards each other. Rules regarding the use of proper names, traditional salutations and those relating to the eating and removal of leavings of food from plates, deserve special attention as they illustrate some important aspects of the Kamar relationship system.

A man will not call by their proper names his father, mother, grand-parents, uncles, aunts, father-in-law, mother-in-law and elder brothers. A woman will not use the proper names of her father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband's elder brothers and their wives and husband's younger brothers. Even husband and wife do not use each other's personal names. The mutual and reciprocal term of address for them is *na*. It is impolite for a wife to utter the name of her husband.

The rules regarding salutations among the Kamars are also complex and are regulated to a great extent by kinship usages.

When a son returns home, he will bend down before his father, touch his feet slightly with his fingers and then slowly draw his hands towards his chest. The father in his turn will touch him under his chin and make a slight clucking noise. A man will follow the same procedure of salutation when he meets his mother, uncles, elder brothers, elder sisters, father-in-law and mother-in-law, and they will, in their turn touch him under his chin and respond by making the clucking sound. A woman will similarly touch the feet of her father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, elder brothers and their wives and elder sisters and in return will get a response similar to the one referred to above. A woman will not touch the feet of her husband's elder brothers and sisters; she will simply bend down before them at a distance and touch the earth with her hands. In the presence of others she will bend down to her husband at a distance and touch the earth with her fingers. The husband, however, will give no response to her and will all the time pretend as if he has taken no notice of her. A man or woman will not touch the feet of his or her elder brother's wife; instead the elder brother's wife will touch their feet and will then herself touch them under the chin. When two friends meet, they catch each other's hands and say *johar*

saga. When *samdhi* meet in the period which falls between the engagement and the actual marriage ceremony each will first touch with his right shoulder other's right shoulder and then the left and then catching each other's hands they will say *johar saga*. After the marriage ceremony is performed, they simply greet each others as friends.

The rules regarding the eating of relatives from each others' plates and leavings and of cleaning the plates are also to some extent governed by the laws of kinship. A man may eat the leavings of his parents, uncles, elder brothers and elder sisters, but he will not eat the leavings of his wife, his elder brothers' wives, younger brothers and their wives, and younger sisters. A woman will remove the leavings of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, but she can eat from the leavings only of the latter. She can neither eat nor remove the leavings and plates of her husband's elder brothers and elder sisters. A man can eat with his *sala* but not with his *sakhi*. *Samdhi* often smoke each other's *chongi* but they never eat from the leavings of each other's plates.

VI

Rank and Authority

The general tone of Kamar social life is unmistakably individualistic. So far, there has been no stratification in the Kamar society, and a hierarchy of classes is alien to it. Many years of their contact with the other Chhattisgarhi cultivators of the plains, have not succeeded in attracting the bulk of the Kamars to the normal life of settled plough cultivation. As I have already pointed out, great many of them still practise *dahi* by stealth and gather food from the forest. These two main sources of their livelihood are supplemented by them by occasional labour in the forest. Even among those who have adapted themselves to permanent cultivation, over eighty percent are poor petty cultivators. Substantial farmers among them can well be counted on fingers. Similarly, very few Kamars have taken to domestication of animals on a large scale. Thus, the background for the emergence of a hierarchy of classes based on the ownership of wealth is nearly absent from the socio-economic life of the Kamars. Other motives creating rank and class divisions have not operated on a considerably wide scale to have left their impress on Kamar social organi-

zation. Today, a democratic spirit pervades all the aspects of their socio-economic life.

The Kamars have no centralized tribal authority for the tribe as a whole. No powers have been placed in the hands of any tribal chiefs; nor have any powers been concentrated in the hands of a body like a 'Council of Elders.' In fact, there is no common authority for the whole tribe. In the various territorial units, a number of tribal settlements, close to one another, join together and form a group. Each such group has a Panchayat of its own. The decrees of this body are binding and final in all socio-religious matters. For example, the Chikhli group includes Bhainsatara, Satdhar, Garbhantora, Hatbay, Tewari, and Kodohardi. Occasionally, Milcowa and Timanpur are also invited for the Panchayat. Similarly, the Gahandar group includes Baruka, Naginkonha, Kosampani, Kharkhara, Toiamuda, Pachpedi and Deona. If there is a serious case of extraordinary complexity, persons from other neighbouring villages, constituting other groups, may also be invited. Two to six elders from each of the settlements constituting a group participate in the Panchayat. Occasionally a village may be represented by one only or by none at all. Composition of some typical Panchayats has been described in a subsequent chapter where I have discussed some concrete cases of the breaches of tribal law and custom. Here it will suffice to point out, that the proceedings of the Panchayat are always held in public, and such other members of the tribe as are present at the occasion are never debarred from expressing their opinions. Infact, in the proceedings of the Panchayats witnessed by us, we have noticed that very often all people who assemble, express freely what they feel about the matter in dispute. Young people, however, who have 'no children' or 'no grown up children' should not interfere in the proceedings; if they do so, it is regarded as impolite. Decisions are always arrived at by a majority. Although votes are never taken the general consensus of opinion always decides the issue ultimately.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Kamars of Gariaband, Dhamtari and a part of Chhura tract have hierarchy of tribal officers. Ghasiram of Pendra is regarded by them to be their *Kurha* or the chief. Next to him, each group of villages has a *Sirpanch* or presiding officer of the tribal Panchayat and a *Chaprasi* who is required to go from village to village informing people the date,

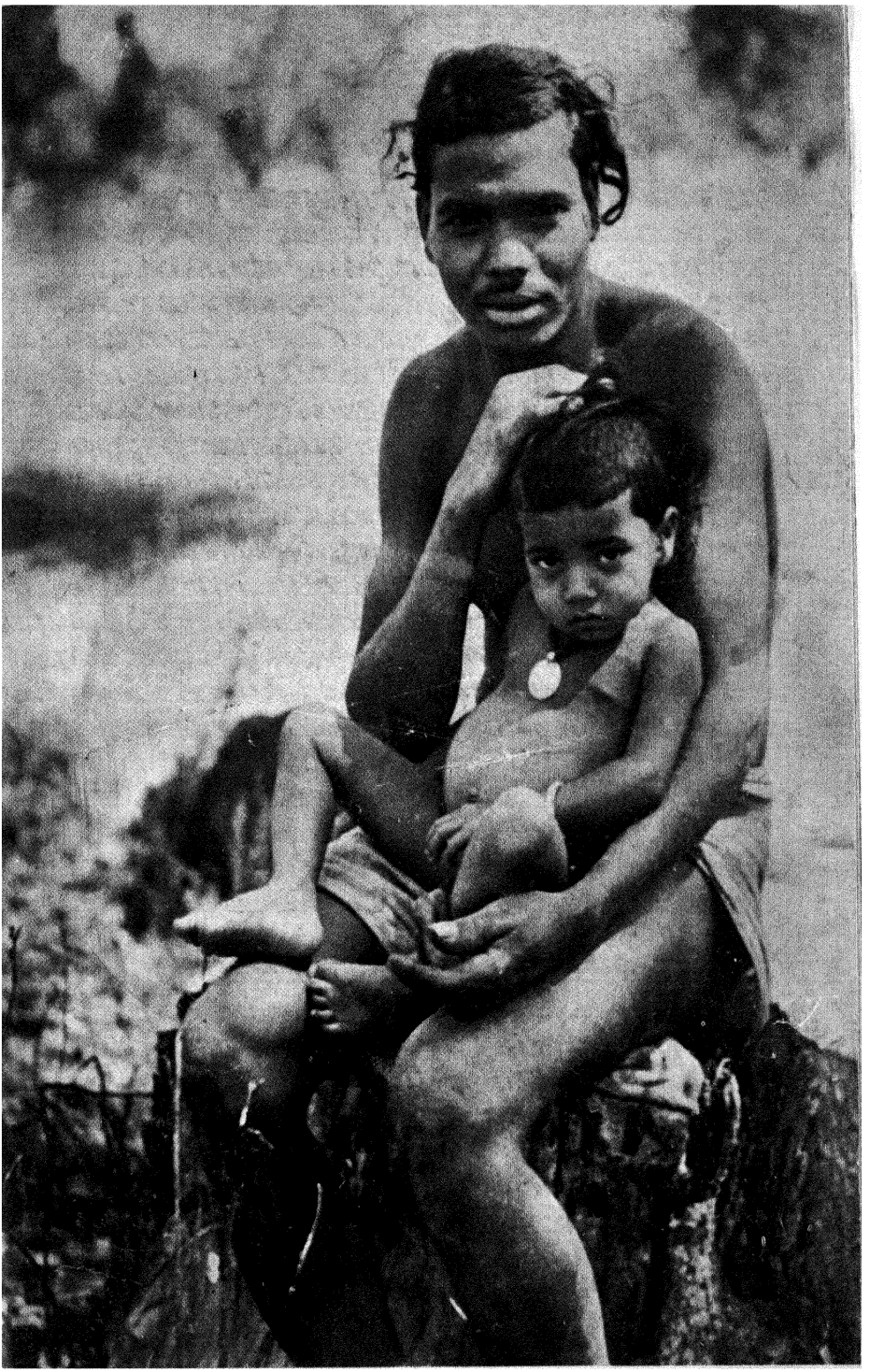
place and subject of the forthcoming meeting of the Panchayat. Outwardly, this organization looks very impressive, but if we approach it through the study of a number of concrete cases, very soon it becomes obvious to us that this administrative paraphernalia is merely superficial. Except in his own group, the *Kurha* is generally not invited to participate in the proceedings of the Panchayats of any other group. Nor is he ever officially informed about any of their decisions. During our stay in the Gariaband tract, there was a serious case of an assault by a Lohar on a Kamar woman of Kochena. While this case was being decided, Ghasiram, the *Kurha*, was not invited to participate in the Panchayat. The task of extending invitation to the Panchayat often falls on the *dih* Baiga of the village in which the Panchayat is to assemble. As the *Chaprasi* are generally not remunerated for their work, they are not inclined to accept the unnecessary botheration of going to all the neighbouring settlements. Heera Singh who is the *Chaprasi* of the group of Bamhni, Kochena and other neighbouring villages informed me that he is a *Chaprasi* only in name and never does anything. The way in which the proceedings of the Panchayat are carried on does not admit of any presiding officer. The factual data on record from these tracts unmistakably point out that the *Sirpanch* hardly wields enough influence to be in a position to get his will carried by a majority. Rather than being the *primus inter pares*, he is *unus inter pares*, only one among the equals who constitute the Panchayat. It is always the democratic verdict of this body of elders, which is supreme. No portion of fines imposed on persons who have committed breaches of tribal law and custom goes either to the *Kurha* or the *Sirpanch*. From the statements and opinions of some old and otherwise well-informed Kamars, we gather that the *Kurha*, *Sirpanch* and *Chaprasi* have been superimposed on the normal polity of the Kamars in comparatively recent times. Mahajan of Bamhni casually said to me, 'We jungle Kamars do not know any *Kurha* or *Sirpanch*; we decide everything when five *saga* meet.' When I told him that they had also a *Kurha* and *Sirpanch* of their own, he said, '*Ae har Ka hai, sab Gond man ke khel hai*—What is it, it is all the play of the Gonds'. Dhanwar Singh later elaborated this point still further; 'The Gonds laughed at us. As they have strong *Kurhas* they can always punish recalcitrant members adequately. The Telis have such organization; the Raots have. So we also orga-

nized ourselves on those lines.' Yet in essence the organization of the Kamars can hardly be said to be similar to that of the Gonds. The Gond *Kurha* and *Sirpanch* in that tract are *de facto* chiefs in tribal matters; their Kamar counterparts are at best *de jure* heads. They are titular chiefs, who have neither any power nor any personal glamour. In fact, the Kamars of Mainpur circle, Chikhli group of villages, Fingeshwar tract, etc. repudiate the *Kurha*, have no *Sirpanch* and run their administration through their Panchayats. The Panchayats of the various groups of villages in the various territorial units are thus the pivots of tribal administration in the socio-economic life of the Kamars.

Although the tribe never officially confers or recognizes any ranks within its fold, individuals do enjoy social prestige on the merit of their personal qualities, distinctions and attainments. It has been pointed out earlier that within the village community the Mukaddam enjoys great prestige. Although he is just a petty village official getting either a paltry salary in cash or a few acres of rent-free land for cultivation, his influence in the local group is enormous.

Wealth and possession of a substantial area of agricultural land similarly adds to the status of an individual. Well-to-do Kamars like Tingali and Daya are naturally looked upon as the leaders of the tribe and are respected as such. Skill in magic, hunting, dancing and singing, etc. contributes substantially to an individual's personal distinction and prestige. Dokri of Satdhar for his divination, Chuniya of Sinhar for his love-magic, Bhainsa of Garbhantora for his inexhaustible stock of songs and almost encyclopedic knowledge of tribal mythology, and Samaru of Kharkhara for his dances, all enjoy special prestige in the tribe because of their personal attainments.

Different individuals thus, enjoy prestige in varying degrees on account of their personal achievements. However, in tribal matter they do not exercise any authority. This authority is exercised by the tribal Panchayat, the membership of which is invariably determined by the age, experience, personality and ability of the individual members of the tribe. In the tribal matters the verdict of the majority in this body is final. Beyond it there is no appeal.



Father and Son



son will have no skin-covering on his glans-penis. She should not cross a plough, or else her child will develop the habit of crying aloud in the manner of a man who drives the bullocks yoked to the plough. She should also not cross the *dandi* of a bullock-cart, for this will give her child a bad throat resulting in the child producing noise from its throat similar to one produced by the movement of a bullock-cart. She should also not cross the shadow of a horse, or else her child will make *furra-furra* noise like a horse, when it grows up. These precautions are to be taken only during the first pregnancy and not in subsequent ones.

Child-birth generally takes place in the room adjoining the kitchen, or in the room in which the woman is normally confined during her menstruation. Some women are known to have given birth to their children in field or forest. This is not regarded to be ominous in any way. At the time of child-birth no professional mid-wife is called, but the expectant mother has the comfort of the presence of the *suin* (an experienced elderly woman), her mother-in-law, and even some of her friends. When the time for child-birth draws near, the room is closed, the woman's *lugra* is removed and a small piece of old cloth is tied round her waist. She is required to sit on the floor with her knees drawn up. Her husband and his brothers wait outside the room in readiness to do anything which the women inside the room might ask them to do from time to time. In cases of difficult labour the menfolk offer *hom-kuhra* to the ancestors and other deities and invoke their assistance for facilitating the delivery. Immediately after the child-birth, the umbilical cord is cut either with an arrow-head or with the knife used in basket-making, by the *suin*. She takes it away and buries it under a dung-pit. The *Chhatti* ceremony is performed on the day on which the naval cord drops off. A razor is obtained and with it the mother herself shaves her new-born child. After this she goes out to wash her clothes. On this day one of the elders of the family offers *hom-kuhra* and some liqour to the family deities, and may also sacrifice a chicken. The mother continues to be impure for two months after the birth of a son and for three months after the birth of a daughter. During this period she is generally subject to the disabilities of the menstrual period. Menfolk have no concern with a still-born child. They do not even touch it. It is disposed off by the women themselves who bury it somewhere

away from the normal village graveyard. Such children are born without life because the *jiv* sent by God does not reach them in time.

All efforts are made to save a child whose mother dies after child-birth. One of the nearer female relatives is normally called upon to breast-feed it. This, however, does not place her in any special social relationship with the child.

Twins are not uncommon and there is no sentiment against them. The Kamars do not have any disgust for the twins of opposite sex, for their offence of having slept together in the mother's womb. Triplets are rare, but there is nothing to prove the existence of any sentiment against them.

There is no special ceremony for the naming of the child, although a few Kamars, directly under the influence of caste-Hindus, have begun to give it a little ceremonial colouring. They invite a few relatives from the neighbouring villages, offer *hom-kuhra*, name the child and then drink together. In the wilder parts the child generally gets its name on the day of its *chhatti*, i.e., on the day its naval cord drops off. In some cases a child is named even on the second or third day of its birth. If the child has any visible marks of any one of its ancestors, it is believed that the same ancestor has come to life again; and the child gets his name. If there are no similar outward traits, generally two other methods are employed to find out as to which ancestor has taken birth again. Two or three elders may sit together with handful of *dhan* with them. One of them will then name some ancestor who is likely to have been reborn into the family. Another will immediately pick up at random some grains. All will then jointly proceed to count the grains that are picked up. If the number is even, it will be taken to be an indication of the fact that the ancestor who has been named has taken birth in the family again. However, if their number is odd, some other ancestor will be named and grains picked up again will be counted. This process will be repeated till they get some ancestor after whom the child is then named. A different method may also be used. People may sit with a handful of *dhan* and a *batki* full of water. After naming some ancestor two grains will be slowly dropped from two opposite sides in the water contained in the *batki*. If the two meet together within a short time the child is named after the ancestor on whose name the grains were put in the water, or else the process is repeated by naming different

ancestors until at last the two grains meet and decide as to which ancestor has been reborn.

The child may be named to commemorate some special feature or event of the time of its birth. Dukalu was so named because he was born in a year of severe famine. His younger brother, next to him, was named Sukalu because he was born in a year of plenty. Likhandarin was so named because she was born on the census day when the names of all people were being recorded. The child may also be named after its distinctive physical peculiarities. Lampetiya got his name because he had a large belly. Lamgodiya was so named because as an infant he had unusually large legs. It is also customary to name a child after the day of its birth; for example, Budhram, born on Wednesday; Sukwaro, born on Friday. Every child-birth is required to be reported to the village Kotwar and in some cases some over-enthusiastic Kotwars arrogate to themselves the privilege of naming the newly born children. Some Kamar children e.g., Ramsingh and Sarwan have been named by Kotwars of their respective villages.

GROWING UP

Age ceremonies, such as those practised by the other primitive tribes at the time of birth, naming, weaning, ear-boring, hair-cutting, puberty, first shaving, etc. are nearly absent in Kamar socio-religious life. The Kamar children, from their birth to adolescence, and from adolescence to manhood, grow in the lap of nature free and unhindered, and all the early education they get in their vocations, tribal lore and custom is through the constant company and imitation of their elders.

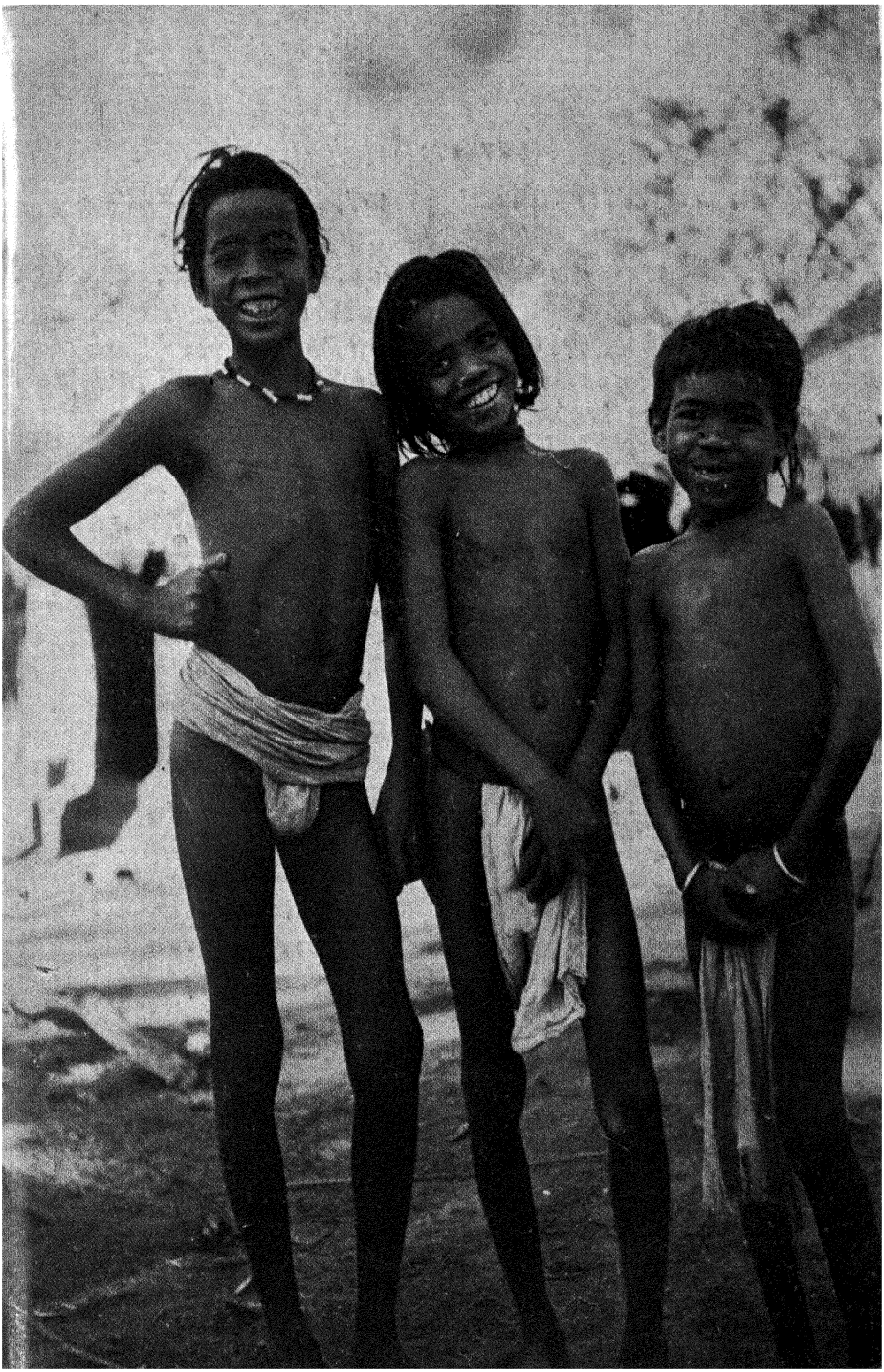
It is both interesting and instructive to study the gradual growth of Kamar children, and to see them in their intimate moments at play, at fishing expeditions, at their infantile attempts at hunting rats, squirrels and little birds. Their curious delight on the occasions of communal gatherings, ceremonies, feasts and dances also deserves to be noted.

Two months after the birth of a son and three months after the birth of a daughter the mother returns back to the regular fold of social and domestic life, and assumes all her normal household duties. Hazards of a life that necessitates the whole tribe to keep on its food-

gathering pursuits all through the year only to keep it a little above the starvation level, absorb the mother in her normal drudgery and she has little time left to care for the child. Whenever the mother goes out the young child is tied to her breasts. When she is busy in basket-making it is tied to her back. When the mother is otherwise busy the child is invariably under the care of mother earth, unless it has an elder sister, who herself being very young is not required for any other domestic work and who can therefore be asked to take charge of the child.

Till the age of five or six, there is no marked segregation of sexes. However, an intimate study of their play reveals that differentiation in their various functions starts at this very early age and they begin specializing in the economic functions of their representative sexes through their play. A male child of four or five years gets a set of bamboo bow and arrows for play and starts his infantile attempts in the fishing expeditions when he tries to shoot the small intoxicated fish. Little girls in these expeditions associate themselves not with the boys, but with the elder girls who are entrusted with the work of preparing the *manj*. At home the girls imitate the elder womenfolk by collecting some dust and husking it like rice with their little wooden *moosal*. For their play they have their own little *dhenki*. It is a joy to watch the little girls copying the ways and methods of the elder womenfolk in perfect and elaborate details in their games of cooking etc. while they play.

When the boys grow up and attain the age of seven or eight years, they get their first wooden bow and arrows of the normal type, although in size considerably smaller than those used by the adults. This adds to the status of the children who now begin to make independent efforts at hunting rabbits, squirrels and small birds. With a little practice many of them are very successful at it. At about this very age, on some day, a few boys gather together and with a piece of burning cloth make four to six round scars on their forearm, on one or both hands. No age is fixed for this cicatrization, and it may be done at any time in any season of the year. The elders have nothing to do with it, and boys of the same age manage the whole affair by themselves. These days cicatrization is not regarded as compulsory; yet hardly anybody refuses to do it. Like the tattoo marks on the bodies of the women, these scars on the bodies of men



Three Happy Children



are regarded to be merely decorative. At this age the boys are expected to begin putting on their *lingoti* regularly. They begin mixing with the elder boys rather freely, and bold ones among them begin smoking openly before their elders. They have now to take care of the domestic animals when they are taken out for grazing in the nearby forests. They also begin to learn basket-making and when they grow a little older they begin to accompany their elders on hunting expeditions. At the age of about fourteen they are given the axe, and from this time they are regarded as sufficiently grown up to take care of themselves. By this time the child acquires fair knowledge of his crafts, customs and tribal lore and can successfully copy the tunes of many folk-songs which he picks up from the marriage dances. By the time he comes to acquire the signs of puberty he naturally learns all about the tribe and its fortunes, to qualify him to become a full-fledged member of it. Talks for marriage open at this age and marriage nearly gives recognition to the fact that he has acquired the status of an independent member of the tribe.

Similar is the case with the girls. By the time they are six they begin putting on their *lingoti* regularly The segregation of sexes at this stage becomes more marked. They gradually begin sharing their part of the domestic work and before they attain puberty they nearly learn everything that is necessary for them to become good housewives. They are generally tattooed before their first menstruation. A change in dress is effected as soon as marks of puberty become visible, and even before becoming fully mature they begin covering their breasts. Maturity marks out another stage in their life history and it is at this time that they are called upon to leave their family on marriage to join and share the fortunes of their husband's family.

Adolescence puts both the boys and girls on a different track in the journey of their life. Growing up in an atmosphere of friendly love and sympathy, they naturally, almost instinctively, equip themselves for their future necessities; and when they are nearly fully equipped, they are saddled with responsibilities to face the grim realities of life, to work the destinies of their tribe.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRUATION

The horror of menstrual blood is almost universal in the aboriginal world. The Kamars also regard a menstruating woman as un-

clean. Their word for this period is *bahir*, i.e., out, which denotes that the women at this stage are not in the normal fold of social life. The Kamars fully recognize the importance of menstruation for keeping the woman's body clean. "They who *flower*," it is said, "are unclean for four days, but clean for the whole month; they who do not are dirty all the time."

There are no special puberty rites for women, and no ceremonials connected with first menstruation. No period is fixed for regarding the woman as unclean and she has to remain out as long as her menstrual flow lasts. Generally she is out for three to five days and this period is regarded as normal. But in exceptional cases when the women take a week or even more, such long periods only arouse the disgust of men, because of the many disabilities attached to the womenfolk with regard to cooking, household work, intercourse, etc. The Kamars do not have separate or communal menstruation huts. A menstruating woman is secluded to one of the rooms of the house. There is a very strict taboo on her entry into the cooking room which invariably is also the room of the *Gata-Dooma*. If there is a separate hut for the *mata* and other deities, she is not allowed to enter it during her period. She is required to take a *chindhi*, tie a *lingoti* over it, and lie secluded. She has to avoid her husband, as intercourse during this period is not only disgusting but is also regarded to be frought with serious calamities. During this period she cannot cook, nor can she bring water for the use of the family. She should also not enter the shed of the domestic animals. When in her periods, she should not enter a *dahi* field which has been burnt, nor should she enter fishing waters with *manj*. She should not touch any of the kills brought from the hunting expeditions. Any raw or cooked meat or cooked food touched by her will be polluted. Menstruating women can, however, go out to dig edible roots and tubers, and can also go to the markets to sell their baskets.

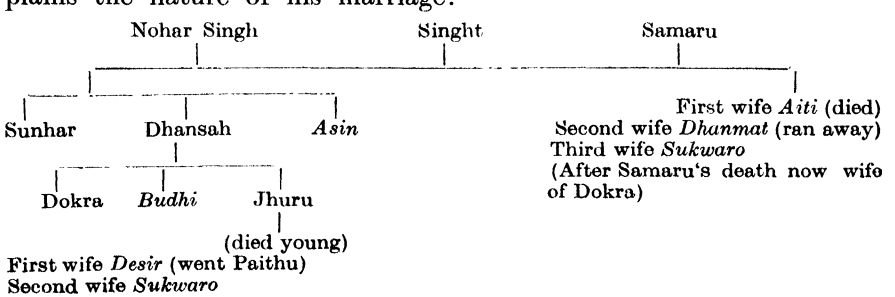
A few taboos are attached to the husband also while his wife is going through the menstrual period. During this period he cannot worship any deities, nor can he offer any ritual sacrifices. He may enter the fishing waters with *manj* but he has immediately to withdraw if it is decided to offer any sacrifices to the water deities there. He cannot participate in the ceremonial worship which precedes their annual communal hunt. Similarly he cannot also participate in the

rituals of first sowing which preface their agricultural sowing every year.

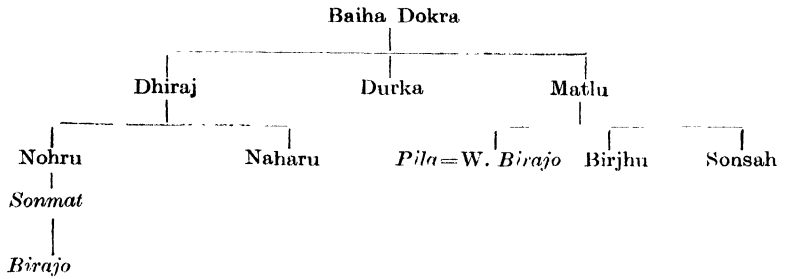
II

Marriage and Sex

It has been pointed out earlier that among the Kamars, the primary function of the clan is the regulation of marriage. No marriage is permissible between persons belonging to the same *got*. The tribe itself being endogamous, no marriages with outsiders are permitted. Further, there are a number of rules which prohibit unions between certain classes of relatives. A man is strictly prohibited from marrying any of the elder sisters of his wife. Similarly, a woman cannot lawfully become the wife of any of the elder brothers of her husband. A man cannot marry his mother-in-law or her co-widow or any woman related to them as a sister in the extended sense of the term. He cannot also marry any of his aunts and nieces even though they may belong to a clan from which he can take a wife. In the same way a woman cannot marry her father-in-law, and his real or classificatory brother; her uncles and her nephews. The question of grand-parent grand-child marriage is, however, controversial. Speaking strictly in a theoretical sense, a man may marry his daughter's daughter, and a woman may marry her son's son. Further, a man may marry the widow of his father's father, his father's mother's sister, and his mother's father's sister. Similarly, a woman may marry her mother's father, mother's father's brother and father's mother's brother. Yet, this is true only in a formal sense. Exhaustive searches made by us to trace out any actual instances of grand-parent grand-child marriage were not very fruitful. The only instance which we could discover was of Dokra Kamar of Boriyajhar who has married his father's father's brother's widow. The following genealogy explains the nature of his marriage:



In Dongrikhol, we recorded another instance of a marriage between a classificatory grandfather and granddaughter. The following genealogy explains the relationship between Pila and Birajo.



Such marriages take place among the Gonds of the neighbourhood also. It is said that Machhlu Kamar, brother of Ghasiram of Pendra, has also married in the above way. His sister in Bamhni confirms it. But I have not personally verified it. The genealogy given to me by her is incomplete, confused, and I think, rather unreliable. I did not obtain any cases of marriage between actual grandparents and grand-children, and I do not think that any such marriages have taken place in the recent times even within the memory of the oldest Kamars alive. Time and again I have discussed this subject in the small gatherings of old and well-informed Kamars. The general consensus of opinion seems to be that there is nothing wrong in such a marriage, although its possibility is remote. The great disparity between the ages of grand-parents and grand-children does not leave enough room for marriages of this type. Besides, by the practice of such a form of marriage, they will surely have to encounter the ridicule of their Hindu neighbours. 'We can do it', says Latti, 'even the gods will not say anything. But who can shut the mouths of the neighbours? Will they not all spit at us for that?' Because of these two factors we find that grand-parent and grand-child marriage, although it is permitted by the rules of exogamy, is nearly non-existent in the Kamar society to-day.

A person may acquire a mate through one of the following ways:-

1. *Bihaw* or regular marriage.
2. Run-away marriage.
3. *Paithu* or marriage by intrusion.
4. Serving for a wife.
5. Widow-remarriage.

The commonest and the most popular form of marriage is the *bihaw* or *lagin*, which is formally arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom and is celebrated with all the prescribed rites and ceremonials. Specially, it is the cherished desire of every girl that she should be married with full rites, for it is only once in her life-time that a woman is married with all the ceremonials of a regular marriage. As the kinship terms unmistakably suggest to us, cross-cousins, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, are regarded to be predestined mates. Although among the Kamars the failure to marry a cross-cousin does not necessitate the payment of a compensation, as among the Gonds who have to pay back the 'milk-money,' cross-cousins are generally favoured as mates. Sororal marriages are also common. In extremely rare cases marriages between classificatory grand-parents and grand-children are also possible. In general, when a suitable cross-cousin or the younger sister of a former wife is not available, efforts are made to find out a wife from a different clan, preferably from one from which they have already taken girls.

Among the Kamars, marriages generally take place between adults, although some Kamars, directly under the influence of the neighbouring Hindus, have begun the practice of child-marriage. In the wild tract of Nawagarh and Mainpur, out of the fifty-six marriages investigated by us, only two were such in which the bridegroom and the bride were under the age of fourteen and twelve years respectively. In the Chhura and Gariaband tract, we investigated forty-eight marriages out of which five could be said to be child-marriages. There may be some inaccuracy in the above estimates. The Kamars have a bad memory and cannot even approximately tell anybody's age. In determining the age at which a particular person was married we had to rely upon their sense of comparison and upon our own judgment. They would generally say, 'I was as old as Jhithu' ; or 'I was like Bisni' and then we had to look to Jhithu or Bisni to estimate their ages. Before fixing up the marriage the boy and the girl are asked to indicate their choice, and generally their consent is obtained before engagement.

The talks of marriage are opened by the boy's people who send their *mahalia* with the proposal to the house of the proposed bride. The *mahalia* is either a brother, near relative or friend of the bridegroom's father, and is selected for the job because of his intelligence

and tact in handling situations, and capacity for negotiating well. If the negotiations are successful and the marriage is arranged, the *mahalia* is called upon to explain to the bride's people all deficiencies on the part of the bridegroom's people, e.g., if the bridegroom's parents do not bring with them the quantity of rice or liquor or the necessary number of *lugra* which they had agreed to bring in the course of the negotiations, the bride's people will ask the *mahalia* to explain these deficiencies. When he goes to the girl's house with the proposal, he takes with him a bottle of liquor wrapped in a cloth. After a few preliminary formalities he opens the subject. The parents of the girl have probably known everything before-hand and have already decided one way or the other. But even then they indulge in these formalities before giving out their mind. If they have to refuse the offer they will generally do so only in an indirect way. They may say, 'The boy does not work; he cannot earn. How will he feed his wife and children?' Or they may say, 'If we give our girl to you, her notorious mother-in-law will quarrel with her.' Thus recourse is taken to some pretext or the other which will be tantamount to the rejection of the offer. If they agree to the proposal, they give their consent. When he receives a favourable reply, the *mahalia* produces the bottle of liquor which is at once drunk by all present. In the various territorial divisions there are well-established conventions as to the items on which the bridegroom's people have to spend their money. There is some higgling over the quantity of grain and liquor which the bridegroom's people are required to provide at the time of the *mahala* and the marriage. On this question, however, they invariably come to an agreement within a short time; and it never becomes an obstruction in the way of marriage. Bride-price is neither asked for, nor is it ever offered. The Kamars do not hold in esteem the custom of 'selling away daughters', for a petty 'bride-price'. Before the *mahalia* leaves the girl's house, he fixes with her parents the date for the *mahala*.

A day before the date for *mahala* a party of about ten people including the bridegroom and the womenfolk, goes to the bride's house. This party also includes a *Baiga*, one or two elders and a few friends of the bridegroom. They take with them five rupees worth of liquor, about five *katha* of rice and a few other sundries. After an hour's rest in the girl's village the parties assemble in the courtyard

of the house. Elders of both the parties sit on one side and all the rest on the other. The boy and the girl are made to stand before the elders, who invariably pronounce opinions expressing the suitability of the pair. The girl's father, and if he is not alive some other elderly male relative, then rises up and says, 'Here is my girl. Uptill now she was with me, now I entrust her to your care. I give you my girl.' Liquor is then sprinkled over the couple. All the people assembled there, then greet and wish one another. This is followed by the feast of rice and liquor brought by the boy's people and a night of singing and dancing.

Next day before the bridegroom's party leaves for home, they fix the time for marriage. Those who are rich enough to afford the expenditure of marriage immediately, fix a day within a month or two. But poor as most of them are, they have to take sufficient time to work hard in order to save enough money for the marriage expenses which are rather high for people of their economic level. Generally it is decided to perform the marriage after a year or two and all the people disperse. With the party of the bridegroom, the girl goes to the house of her prospective husband for about a week. After this period the *mahalia* brings her back to her father's place.

This engagement, it is believed, should not be broken. Indeed it is rarely broken in actual practice. If the bridegroom's people are unable to perform the marriage within the scheduled period, generally another suitable date is fixed. It is not thought proper to shift the date very often. If the parents of the boy cannot afford the marriage, they have to communicate their inability to the girl's parents who are then left free to find out some other suitable match for the girl. This is, however, regarded as very dishonourable and a definite social stigma is attached to the people who break engagements.

After *mahala* but before marriage it is necessary for the boy's guardians to bring their prospective daughter-in-law to their house on all important festivals like Diwali, Dasera, Nawakhai, Chherchhera and Hareli. If the girl is not brought on these occasions, her parents would take it ill, and may even regard it as a sign of the unwillingness of the other party to marry their girl. The girl stays with the family of her prospective husband for about a week, when she is brought there on such occasions. According to strict puritan standards of the tribe she is not supposed to meet or speak to the boy

to whom she is to be married. But this rule is more often broken than observed. According to most of my informants this is the most romantic stage in which the boy and the girl very eagerly seek all opportunities to meet stealthily. After a week or ten days the girl is sent back to the house of her parents.

Until the date fixed for the marriage approaches very near, there are hardly any signs of arrangements for the ceremony. But when about a month is left, all men and women, young and old, cast off their lethargy and burst into sudden activity.

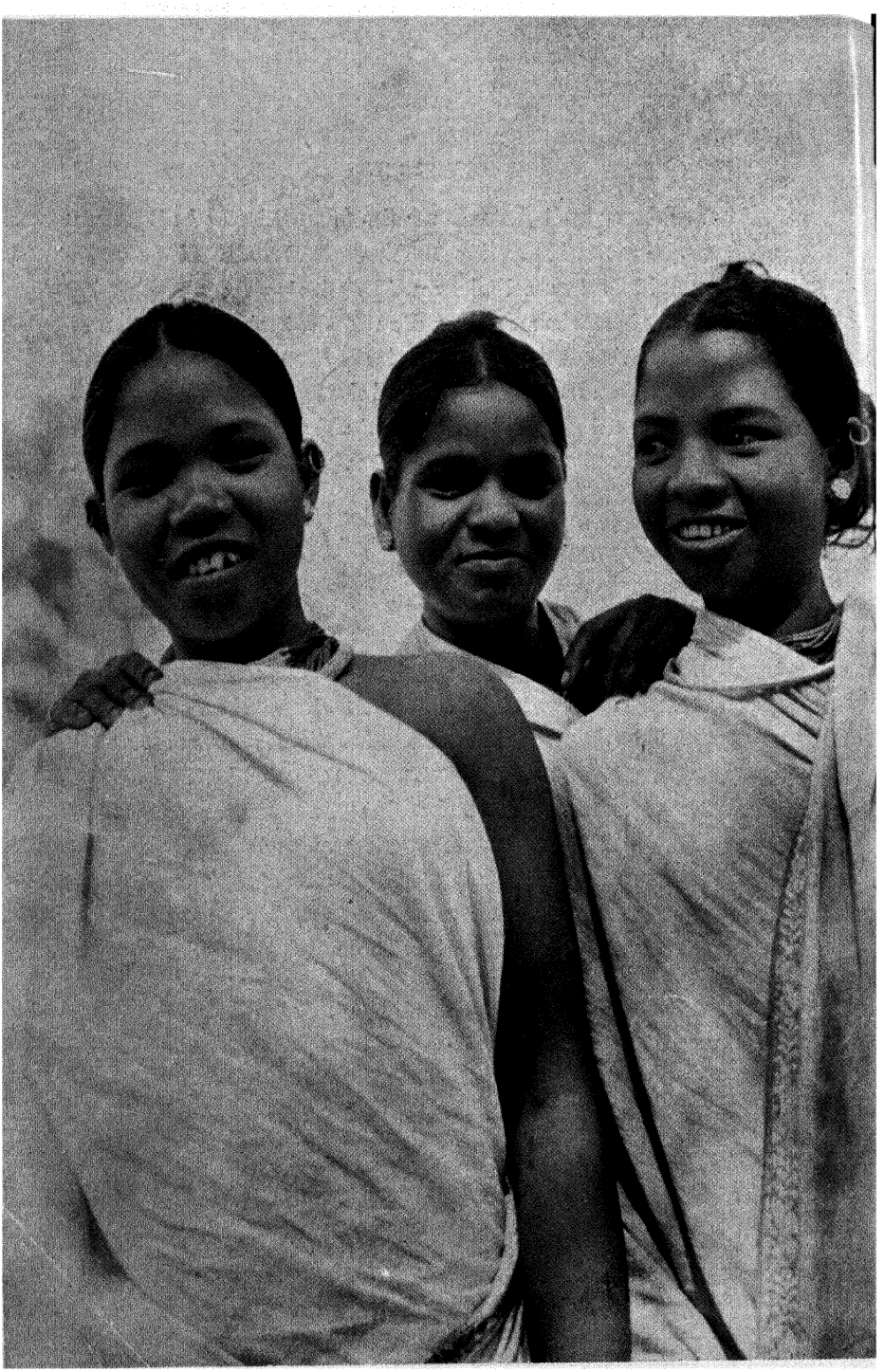
The marriage party starts a day or two in advance to reach the bride's village on the scheduled day. The party includes the *mahalia*, the Baiga and other relatives and friends of the boy's family. The number of persons forming the party depends mostly upon the financial position of the boy's parents. If the family is well-to-do, generally thirty to forty persons accompany the bridegroom. But if they are poor only six to ten people may go. It is customary that if the boy's father goes in the *barat* the mother should stay at home ; and if the mother goes, the father should stay back.

Outside the village of the bride the marriage party is checked by a group of women from the village who stand on the two sides of the road holding a rope between them. Generally a bottle of liquor is sufficient to get the way cleared from them. As soon as the *barat* approaches near the *madwa*, the bride's people wash the feet of all the persons coming in the *barat* and carry them in their lap under the shed of the *madwa*. Here they are offered tobacco and leaf-pipes for smoking. The boy's party brings with it about 12 *katha* of rice, two *katha* of pulse, one tin of liquor, two or three *lugda*, four to six *mala* and *fundra* and one or two rings.[1] All these things are given to the bride's people who carefully examine them to see that everything is according to the agreement previously made. The *mahalia* is called upon to explain if there are any deficiencies in these things. Unless the bride's people are satisfied with the things brought, no further proceedings of the ceremony take place. To meet any unforeseen expenses or demands, the bridegroom's people invariably take care to bring some extra money with them.

[1] There are considerable variations in the quantity of things brought by the bridegroom's party in different parts of the Kamar country. The above may, therefore, be regarded only as a standard average.



Kamar Youth: Bisram and Thanwar drunk at marriage party



Kamar Youth : Three Girls

By the time this is over, the bride has already been seated inside the house for the ceremony of *chor-tel*. Here the girl's body is massaged with oil and turmeric, and she is taken out into the *madwa*. The bride and the bridegroom take seven rounds of the marriage post and are then seated near it. The rite that follows is that of *tel-chadhana*, taking up the oil. The *dedhin* and the *suwasin*, who are generally elder sisters of the bride, first come and rub oil mixed with turmeric on the legs, hands and face of both the bride and the bridegroom. The rubbing movements are from the legs towards the head. The closing of this ceremony marks the beginning of the communal drinking of liquor and is followed by a night of dancing and singing, in which all men, women and children join. Next morning they have a feast and by the evening the marriage party returns home wih the bride.

The first rite at the bridegroom's house as opposed to the *tel-chadhana* of the bride's house, is that of *tel-utarna*, i.e., taking down the oil. It is performed by the same persons who had participated in the first *tel-chadhana*. If the bride's people do not wish to come with her, they perform this rite at their own house before sending the girl away. Under any circumstances the bridegroom at least has to go through this rite once again. The same persons who applied the first *tel* to his body before the marriage party started, now participate in *tel-utarna* also. This time the rubbing movements start from the head and go down towards the legs. The *mahalia* then takes the bride in his lap and the boy's elder brother takes the bridegroom. They stand facing each other. Two persons stand opposite to each other holding a piece of cloth between the *mahalia* and the boy's elder brother thus obstructing the bride and the bridegroom from seeing each other. Then the bride and the bridegroom throw rice at each other which the other two persons try to obstruct with the piece of cloth they hold between the two.

The *chikhal-lendi* follows next. The *mahalia* goes up on the *madwa* and the bride and bridegroom are seated near the marriage post. The *mahalia* pours three or four *handi* of water over them. Consequently the ground there becomes muddy. All then join together to sing and dance. Nearly every one is warmed with liberal quantities of liquor, and naturally the singing and dancing that follows is very vigorous. This continues for two to three hours. When they

are all tired perspiring and soiled with mud, they go with the bride and the bridegroom to the tank or the river. Here the bride and the bridegroom are required to play *panbudi* a sort of hide and seek in water. Just near the water a few branches of some tree are spread over which the bride and the bridegroom are seated. The *mahalia* catches hold of them by their legs, and pulls them in the water crying aloud '*sala lala bon, sala lala bon, sala lala bon*'. In the water the bride and the bridegroom are given the *kalsa* and by turns they hide and seek it. After their bath they are dressed in new clothes and prepare themselves for further rites. While the bride and bridegroom are playing *Panbudi*, the *mahalia* goes back and sleeps under the *madwa*. Near the tank or the river some friends of the bridegroom make an earthen deer and wrap it with cloth. When the bride and the bridegroom are returning after finishing their bath they are checked on the way by the bridegroom's friends. The bridegroom is provided with bow and arrows, and is asked to shoot the earthen deer. He is allowed seven opportunities to have a correct aim and shoot the deer. When it is shot, one of the friends picks it up, and some other friend goes on dropping water all over the road meaning thereby that blood is dropping off from the dead body of the deer. When they reach home, they find the *mahalia* sleeping under the *madwa*. An egg is broken and poured over his body, and he is given a coconut and a bottle of liquor. Every one then prepares for the still more important ceremony of *lagin uthana* and *tikan*.

The man who has to see the *lagin* observes a fast on that day. Either the *dih* Baiga or one of the near relatives is selected for this purpose. Near the marriage post the women make a *chowk*, i.e., a rectangular design with rice flour. The bride and the bridegroom are seated on it, the former facing to the East and the latter to the West. The ends of their respective wears are brought together and seven ricegrains and seven pieces of turmeric are tied together in them. Then the two take seven rounds of the marriage post, the bride leading. They then sit for the *tikan* when friends and relatives offer them little presents. When the *tikan* is over, the man who has to see the *lagin* opens the knot. All men, women and children join together to see the rice grains and pieces of turmeric. If they are perfectly intact all is supposed to go on well with the couple. But if even one of them is broken, it is taken to indicate that either one of the couple

or some of their children may meet an early death. The Baiga is then called upon to offer sacrifices to the deities who may avert the impending evil. This is followed by a feast.

After five days or a week the girl returns with the *mahalia* to her father's house for *pinyar-dhuwan*, i.e., for washing her turmeric-stained clothes. She stays there for two or three days, washes her clothes and returns back again with the *mahalia* to her husband's house.

While we were carrying on our field investigations in the Bindranawagarh Zamindari in March, April and May 1945, a number of marriages were celebrated in that tract. In Kochena, Lalsah's son Kuarsah was married to Heerasingh's daughter Thanwarin, in the third week of April. The *mahala* had been performed about a year back and for it Lalsah had provided a feast of 7 *katha* of rice, 1 *katha* of pulse, 1 seer of salt and 7 bottles of liquor. He had promised to marry the girl within six months, but could not fulfil his promise. About a year passed and in the meantime Heerasingh received three other offers for his daughter. He began pressing Lalsah for expediting his arrangements and placed the matter before the Panchayat also. The Panchayat urged upon Lalsah to fulfil his obligation within a short time. By this time Lalsah had saved only about thirty rupees. He borrowed two *khandi* of grain and forty rupees, and fixed the date for the marriage ceremony. To attend the ceremony, ten Kamars from Dhikudiya and Mohera, three from Singpur, seven from Bamhni, nine from Sandholi and twelve Kamars from Maragaon had come. Lakhnu officiated as the *mahalia*. In the feast which Lalsah provided this time he gave 15 *katha* of rice, 1 tin of liquor, 3 *katha* of pulse and 2 seers of salt. He gave one *lugra* to the bride and another to her mother. A full record of the rites and ceremonies of this marriage has provided the back-ground for the detailed description of Kamar marriage rites given above.

The following brief account of the marriage ceremony of Sonsah, son of Dukalu (Sori), who was married to Bhuri, daughter of Bhainsa (Chedaiha) of village Dhamandih, will give a more realistic picture of a Kamar marriage:

In this case the *mahala* was performed about a year back. For this purpose Gokul, Lampetiya and Sukhdeo accompanied Sonsah to Dhamandih, and took with them three *katha* of rice, half a *katha* of pulse and liquor worth four rupees. They also took with them one *lugra*

for the girl. After the *mahala* the girl was brought to Chikhli and there she lived in her prospective father-in-law's house for eight days. Dukalu and Sonsah then took her back.

The marriage was fixed for the month of March. When about a month was left for the ceremony Dukalu and his brothers applied themselves seriously to the task of making necessary arrangements. They bought 20 *katha* of rice, 5 *katha* of pulse, 2 *katha* of salt, 1 *lugra* for the bride, another *lugra* for her mother, 1 *dhoti* for Sonsah, 7 glass bangles, 1 *fundri* and 1 tin of liquor.

Dhamandih, where Sonsah was to be married to Bhuri, is about eighteen miles from Chikhli. Rites and ceremonies were started in Chikhli on the tenth of March. From early morning *saga* from the neighbouring settlements began to gather. The number of persons belonging to the tribe who came from the neighbouring villages was this: Satdhar 4; Garbhantora 5; Tewari 4; Bhainsatara 5. The *tel-chadhana* ceremony was performed in the evening. Kochiya, Baiga, Bisnath, Somnath and Chaitu participated in it. After this rite all sat together to eat. By about the midnight, all the Kamars who had assembled from the neighbouring villages along with about twenty others from Chikhli started for Dhamandih. On their way they rested at Madanpur for an hour, and started again. They reached Dhamandih at about nine a.m. on the next day. They all stayed under the trees outside the village, as nobody had come to receive them. Gokul, the *mahalia*, went to Bhainsa and asked "*Kedlo din thanwa? Jaldi an cho, ang sang thanwan, chongi dhungiya piwan*—for how many days will you keep us here? Take us soon, let us be together and smoke our *chongi* and tobacco." But Bhainsa was not yet ready. He said that he would receive them after some time. Gokul came back. They cooked under the trees and took their meals. As they were all tired by the last night's journey they slept. At about the time of sunset Bhainsa sent a word to them, saying that he was ready. The marriage party started. On their way they were stopped by a group of women of Dhamandih who were obstructing their way with a rope held across the road. A bottle of liquor and four annas in cash were given to the women who then allowed the marriage procession to proceed further. Near Bhainsa's house, at a distance from the marriage shed two women were sitting with two earthen pots full of water and two *tooma*. At first Sonsah's feet were washed, and a man who had been invited by

Bhainsa took him in his lap and carried him to the shed. One by one the feet of all persons coming in the marriage procession were washed and they were all carried in lap under the *madwa*. The bride's father carried Gokul in his lap. Dukalu was carried by his *samdhi* Gandarai. Under the *madwa* they all sat together and smoked for a while. Dukalu then produced the grain, liquor and cloth brought by him. No one seemed to be dissatisfied, as everything had been brought in accordance with their previous agreement. After the people from the bride's side had expressed their satisfaction about the things brought by the bridegroom's people, the tin of liquor was opened. Men began drinking. But the women were busy making arrangements for the *bhawar*. It took them about an hour to complete the arrangements. After *tel-haldi* was applied to the bride and the bridegroom, they were taken round the marriage post seven times. Later the women also drank their share of liquor and all men and women together danced. After a while some people retired from the dance and began making arrangements for the *mandi*, i.e., cooking for the marriage feast. Others continued to dance vigorously and when they were tired in the early hours of morning they slept. They woke up at about ten a.m. and by the time they assembled to partake of the feast it was already midday. In the evening at about four, they sat for *tikan* in which four rupees were collected.

That very day, they started in the night for Chikhli. The bride was accompanied by her father Bhainsa and brother Birka. As no women were accompanying the bride, Bhuri's *tel-utarna* was completed in Dhamandih. The party with the bride reached Chikhli early in the morning on the next day. They all slept as they were tired. After about two hours, all were asked to assemble under the *madwa*. Bisram took Sonsah in his lap while Bhuri was taken by Gokul in his lap. Two persons who had come to participate in the marriage stood stretching a cloth between Bisram and Gokul, thus obstructing Sonsah and Bhuri from seeing each other. The bride and the bridegroom threw rice at each other. Then they were seated near the marriage post under the *madwa*. Gokul went up on the *madwa* and poured five earthen pots of water on the ground. A new tin of liquor was opened, and warmed by it all began to dance. In less than fifteen minutes the whole place became muddy. The dance continued for about two hours. They then went to the Pairi river for *panbudi khelna*. Sonsah

and Bhuri were seated on the branch of a tree. Gokul then caught hold of their legs and dragged them into the water. A *kalsa*, i.e., a small earthen pot, was given to Bhuri and she was asked to hide it in water. She did so. Sonsah was then asked to find it out. He got it out within half a minute. It was now the turn of Sonash to hide the pot. He hid it in deep waters. Bhuri tried her best to find it out but failed. In the meanwhile Kochiya, Ghasiya and a few other boys had cut the top portion of an ant-hill and had placed it on the road. While Sonsah was returning with his bride and others from the river the people accompanying him cried aloud '*harina harina*,' and pointed out the top portion of the ant-hill kept on the road. Sonsah aimed at the ant-hill and shot it with the first arrow. Throwing a few drops of water here and there on the road, they came to the *madwa*. Here Gokul had covered himself with his *dhoti*, and was pretending as if he was fast asleep. An egg was broken and poured over him, and he was given a bottle of liquor and a coconut. After a little while a goat was killed and people dispersed to look to the cooking arrangements. After they had finished their meals all assembled together under the *madwa* once again. A *chowk* was laid out under the *madwa*, and Sonsah and Bhuri were seated on it. The end of Bhuri's *lugra* and that of Sonsah's *dhoti* were brought together and seven ricegrains and seven pieces of turmeric were tied in them. Then *tikan* followed and all the persons who had assembled made small presents to the bride and the bridegroom in cash and kind. Presents worth about five rupees were collected. Sukalu had fasted that day, as the task of seeing the *lagin* was entrusted to him. After the *tikan* he opened the knot and all were happy to find that all the ricegrains and turmeric pieces were intact. This was taken to indicate that Sonsah and Bhuri would have a long and happy married life.

The girl's father and brother returned to Dhamandih the next day. But Bhuri lived in Chikhli for a month. Then Gokul, Dukalu and Sonsah took her to Dhamandih for *pinyar-dhuwan*. They took with them four bottles of liquor and a cock. In two days the girl washed her turmeric-stained clothes and came back again to Chikhli with Gokul, Dukalu and Sonsah.

A few stray cases of *gurawat*, i.e., marriage by exchange are also found in the Kamar society. But such marriages are not popular. As no bride-price is ever asked for or given by the Kamars, such

marriages do not ensure considerable economy by eliminating the bride-price. However, agreement on the part of both the parties can and does very often reduce the expenditure on grains, liquor, etc. which the bridegroom's people are required to provide to the bride's people. To the house of Buddhu (Netam) of Satdhar came Sukri from Bendkura. Buddhu's sister Lalatin in return was given to Sukri's brother Nohru (Sori) of Bendkura. But in this case the two marriages were performed with a considerable interval of time between thèm and as such they did not result in any economy. The only instance of such a marriage arranged specifically for economising expenditure which has come to my notice is from Deopahar. Here, Sukhru (Jagat) married Sonmat (Chedaiha); on the very next day Sukhru's sister Birajo was married to Sonmat's brother Samaru.

Run-away marriage, although socially recognised, is still regarded to be irregular. Kamar folk-poetry is rich in love songs which have a common theme—hazards and exploits of a couple eloping for love. The romance and thrill that accompany such love marriage find beautiful expression in the song quoted below:—

Birajpalin, the maiden from Birajpali—
She is young,
She is sixteen years old now.
She goes to the market,
She puts on a red *lugra*,
And black bangles.
Her *pairi* is shining,
Her *khilwa* are multi-coloured.
With a head-load of baskets she goes to the market;
And comes back with *gur* and *bhaji*,
Youths from twelve villages see her.
They all long to talk to her;
But Birajpalin is silent,
She speaks to none.
In the market she saw Samaru—
Samaru, the boy from Amlipat.
They saw each other; and fell in love;
But were silent—
They did not talk.
Twice or thrice they met in the market
And then they met in a marriage,
Yet, they did not speak a word.
One day Birajpalin went to the river,
With the *handi* on her head,

Samaru came there.
She knew why he was there—
Yet, she asked him:
"Nobody is here—why have you come?"
"I have come to take you,
Birajpalin, let us run away," he said.
"No, I will not leave my parent's house –
You may make me work like cattle.
And may beat me;
With my parents I am happy."
"No Birajo, I will keep you happy,
I will work at saw; and you will cook.
I will give you silver *khilwa*,
And a *kosa lugra*;
You will be happy."
And they decided to run away.
In the evening, Samaru said;
"There is no fish,
I must go and get some."
"There is no *bhaji*,
I must go and get some," said Birajo.
At the appointed hour they met,
And ran away.
In the night people were searching for them,
But they were happily sleeping together,
In Budhram's house.
Samaru went away to the Khariar *raj*,
And with him went she.
When they returned after three months,
They paid eight rupees to the *Panch*,
And lived as wife and husband.

Although regarded as irregular, this form of marriage is still popular among the Kamars, and every year there are a few such marriages which for some time create a stir and become the talk of the tribe. Ordinarily the eloping couple has merely to give a liquor drink and an ordinary feast to the Panchayat which is obliged to give recognition to the *fait accompli*. Serious situations occur when either the rules of exogamy are broken by the lovers or when the girl who elopes is already married. The elopement of Bisram and his classificatory aunt Chamrin from Chikhli created sensation in the tribe. Yet the payment of a compensation to Chamrin's father-in-law and a feast to the Kamars of the neighbouring settlements were enough to secure tribal recognition for the marital relations existing between Bisram and Chamrin. Today they are husband and wife and socially

accepted as such ; the acceptance of the feast by the Panchayat has given legal validity to their relation.

The *paithu* marriage is also very common among the Kamars. This is a very simple form of marriage. A woman just simply walks into the house of the man she wishes to marry, and the two begin living together as husband and wife. The *saga* expect them to give a small feast and provide some liquor, but in many cases even this is not done. If there is a love intrigue between a man and a woman and as a result of it the woman becomes pregnant, she can intrude herself upon the man, if he seems to be unwilling to marry her, through this form of marriage. If the girl is unmarried no complicated situations arise. Sanmat, daughter of Gokul (Netam) of Chikhli went *paithu* with Buddhu (Sori) of village Bhainsatara. The two had a long-existing love intrigue. In this particular case, nothing further was done and the Panchayat also did not take any action. No feast was given. Buddhu and Sanmat were tacitly recognized as husband and wife. Complicated situations arise when the girl has already been betrothed or married. Dokri, daughter of Ramprasad (Netam) of Garbhantora, was betrothed to a Sori boy of Baherabuda Nawapara. She was in love with Jagdeo Sori of the same village and so she walked into his house. In this case the Panchayat was summoned which imposed a fine of Rs. 20 on Jagdeo. Out of this amount, fifteen rupees were given in cash to the parents of the Sori boy of Baherabuda-Nawapara by way of compensation and five rupees were spent in a feast by the people who had assembled for the Panchayat. In another case, Likhandarin, the daughter of Lampetiya (Sori) of Chikhli, was married to Thade (Netam) in village Satdhar. Later, she went *paithu* with Dokra (Netam) of village Chikhli. Dokra had to pay fifteen rupees by way of compensation to Thade and had to provide a small feast costing five rupees to the Panchayat. In Bhainsatara, Manglin, a Sori girl from Khamaripara, came to him in the house of Satmasi (Netam). Nothing was done in the case. Satmasi did not even give a feast. From the same village, Phulmati, daughter of Baldu (Sori), was betrothed to Banwa (Netam) of Hardi. As their marriage ceremony could not be performed in time, Phulmati walked into the house of Banwa and the two began living together as husband and wife. Again, from this very village, Nawli, the daughter of Chamru (Sori) went *paithu* with a Netam in Kantidadar. They also did not give any

feast. In fact it is difficult to draw a clear line of distinction between marriages by elopement and *paithu* marriages. The difference between them is rather technical. The Kamars themselves use the term *paithu* rather vaguely, and by it they often mean the living together of persons not properly married, as husband and wife.

The custom of serving for a wife is not very popular among the Kamars. Only those who have very meagre financial resources and are consequently unable to bear the marriage expenses take recourse to it. If a person has no male issue, for one of his daughters he may have a *lamsena* or *gharjawai* to settle with him. In such cases it is customary for the girl's father to approach the parents of the boy. The boy comes to live with his prospective father-in-law only when he obtains the consent of his parents. He has to live at his house and work for him for three years. In return he gets food and clothes and is married to the girl after the expiry of the fixed term. The entire cost of the marriage in such cases is borne by the girl's father. If the girl is not married to the boy, he has recourse to the tribal Panchayat which gets him duly compensated. The boy generally demands compensation at the rate of twenty rupees per year but a compromise is often reached at nearly half the amount or even less. If the girl runs away immediately after the marriage, then also her parents have to compensate the boy although not at such a high rate. In general, however, there is a sentiment against the custom of serving for a wife, and it is looked with disfavour by people of some dignity and status in the tribe. Jogi Kamar of Kosampani (Jagat) had no male children and so he had to keep *gharjawai* for his daughters. Since his death his sons-in-law are cultivating his land. In the course of my tours of investigation, I did not come across any Kamar who was actually serving as a *gharjawai* for one of the daughters of his prospective father-in-law. After the death of the daughter of Ghasiram of Pendra to whom he was betrothed, my *mahaprasad* Nandu Kamar of Bamhni was approached by some people to become a *gharjawai*. This proposal was made to his parents in the latter half of the year 1944. At that time he rejected the offers without giving any serious thought to them. But when I saw him in April 1946 he bitterly complained about the negligence of his parents and elder brothers, and told me that if arrangements for his marriage were not made within

six months, he might seriously consider the possibility of becoming somebody's *gharjawai*.

In the Kamar society, all young widows as a rule marry again. A widow generally waits for about a year after the death of her husband and after that period she becomes the wife of one of the younger brothers of her deceased husband. In case there are two or three brothers who can marry her she is asked to indicate her choice. If the man she chooses is not unwilling, a date is fixed for her remarriage. The man who has to take her as his wife usually brings a new *lugra* and a pair of bangles. On the day which has been previously fixed, elders from the village and a few relatives and friends from the neighbouring settlements assemble in the courtyard. The man formally puts the new pair of bangles on the hands of the woman. The people who assemble are given about four bottles of liquor and a small feast consisting of a *katha* or two of rice and one or two seers of pulse. This completes the remarriage of the widow. In case the widow wishes to marry a person other than one of the younger brothers of her deceased husband, the man who agrees to marry her has to come forward and make a proposal to her former husband's people. If they agree, the man who wants to marry her is required to pay a suitable compensation ranging anywhere between five to fifteen rupees. He has also to give a small feast. In other cases, the widow may elope with a man or may go *paithu* in his house. In such cases mediation by the tribal Panchayat secures for the widow's deceased husband's family a small sum of money by way of compensation. After the death of Konda, his younger brother Birshingh married his wife Chamrin. Such widow remarriages are common and instances like this can be multiplied by a marriage survey of any group of Kamar settlements. Complications occur only when a widow elopes or walks into the house of another man. After the death of Tijru his wife Sukwaro did not marry any of his three younger brothers. Instead, she walked into the house of Dharmu. After nearly a fortnight of this incident, the Panchayat was summoned which directed Dharmu to pay six rupees to the family of Tijru. Dharmu also gave liquor worth two rupees to the Panchayat and provided them two *katha* of rice and a seer of pulse.

In general the Kamar family is monogamous, although one may come across stray polygynous families here and there. Poly-

gyny is the only form of polygamy practised by the Kamars ; polyandry is entirely unknown to them. It is customary for a person to take a younger sister of his wife as his *chhotki*, i.e., junior wife. Mansing in village Bamhni has married Sukwaro the younger sister of his first wife Manglin. Similarly, Paklu in Amjhar has married one of the younger sisters of his wife. In other cases a man takes as his second wife the widow of one of his elder brothers. Sterility in wife often forces a man to take a second wife. Dhansah of Amjhar married four times, and at one time three of his wives were living together with him. His first wife had no issue. So he married a second wife. The second wife gave birth to a child and died. Before her death Dhansah had brought two more wives. His third wife gave birth to a child and became blind. The fourth one with her five children lived with him till his death. Shukhru Kamar, the Baiga of village Sandholi, has three wives. The first one lost her nose because of a wound. So he married a second wife. This wife was sterile. So he brought a third wife. Although she has delivered a daughter, Sukhru is not satisfied with her. He wants a male child, and if his third wife does not give him one within a short time, he is thinking of bringing a fourth wife. Perhaps Sahab Kamar of Tupenga has the maximum number of marriages to his credit. He has in all married seven times but at a time only three wives have lived with him. In many cases a man has to keep a woman as his wife because she conceives as a result of a love intrigue with him.

Tribal sentiment, on the whole, seems to be against polygynous marriages. The atmosphere of a home having more than one wife is rarely peaceful. This probably justifies the popular Kamar saying, 'If there are no quarrels in your house, go and bring a second wife'.

The Kamars have no formal procedure for divorce. If a husband wants to turn out his wife, he will quarrel with her constantly, beat her and maltreat her in several ways. Naturally the wife will not tolerate such behaviour for a long time and will ultimately run away. If a woman wants to get rid of her husband, she may either elope with some other person or may go back to her parents and refuse to return to her husband's house. Charges of adultery proved against the wife often lead to many quarrels and separation between husband and wife. A man will not like to keep a wife who is proved or suspected to be a witch. A woman who is a bad cook and indifferent house-

keeper is also not liked by her husband. In such cases all possible efforts are made to train her up, but if she does not improve even then, the husband quarrels with her and beats her till she runs away. Among the Kamars sterility leads to polygyny but never to divorce.

The Kamars as a tribe do not encourage divorce. Notorious 'wife beaters' like Baldu (Sori) of Bhainsatara, who himself turned out his wife Chamrin, are fortunately few among the Kamars. In such cases when the wife is driven away by the husband himself he cannot claim any compensation from the man who marries her again. In the case cited above, after being driven out from Baldu's house, Chamrin took another husband in Boirgaon. Baldu could not claim any compensation. But such cases are rare. It is generally the wife herself who runs away from the husband's house. The Kamars say that in her life-time a woman can have only three divorces and not a fourth one. If she takes a fifth husband the Panchayat can refuse to recognise her marriage and can even penalise her. No cases of this type have come to my notice. Lalsah's mother was found by me to have the maximum number of marriages to her credit. She was first married to a Netam but she went *paithu* in the house of Pandru (Netam) of Garbhantora. She conceived there, but before child-birth she ran away and became the wife of Kariya (Sori) of village Gujra. She lived with Kariya only for three months and ran away again. This time she went to Nohar (Sori) of Kesodar and lived with him as his wife.

In general, few husbands drive away their wives but if the two cannot happily live together the wife herself takes an early opportunity to run away and find another husband with whom she can hope to adjust herself better.

SEX

Fear, hunger and sex are the three dominant motive-springs in the life of the primitive man. Food-quest occupies perhaps the most important place in the life of a Kamar. He approaches religion and the mysterious phenomena of the universe with a deep sense of realism. He has his normal interest in sex.

The following brief account of the sexual life of the Kamars is necessarily fragmentary and has been obtained almost wholly from

male informants. Although my wife accompanied me in the later tours to the Kamar country, her acquaintance with the Kamars and their dialect was not enough to enable her to obtain any substantial data about the Kamar woman's emotional attitude towards sex.

In the Kamar vocabulary of abuses, sex occupies an important place. The commonest Kamar *gali* are *bhosadike*, i.e., born of an enlarged vagina ; *bhanchod*, i.e., seducer of sister; and *tor daila chodon*, i.e., I will have coitus with your mother. The women, however, rarely use any sexual *gali*. They commonly say *wagh-dhara*, i.e., may a tiger catch you, or *wagh-khaya*, i.e., may a tiger eat you. Their terminology describing sexual physiology is fairly extensive. Their term for penis is *bij*, for testicles *kar*, for man's pubic hair *jhat*, for woman's genitals *kandi*, for woman's pubic hair *bura*, for anus *pulki*, for breast *dudh*, for semen *paras* and for coitus *kandi lotan*. The children pick up most of these terms at a surprisingly young age and can correctly use them while talking among themselves .

The Kamars have very pronounced likes and dislikes regarding women. Yet if we ask them as to what exactly they like in a particular woman whom they regard to be beautiful, they are nearly always at a loss to express themselves adequately. A wild Kamar looks at a woman as a whole and forms his opinion. He never analyses her figure part by part. In Chikhli, nearly all young men said that Chamrin was good, but none could exactly point out the features which contributed to make her figure distinctive. Mansing's second wife Sukwaro and Kuarsah's wife Thanwarin are also universally admired. Perhaps the only part of a woman's body on which they can critically express their opinion is her breasts. They critically discussed the bare breasts of Maria girls as they saw the photographs in W.V. Grigson's *Maria Gonds of Bastar*, and in Verrier Elwin's *Maria Murder and Suicide*. On seeing the bare breasts of the Bhumia girl in Elwin's *The Baiga*, Samaru exclaimed: 'These appear to be the breasts of a woman who has been enjoyed by many people'.

Although the average Kamar cannot adequately express himself about his likes and dislikes in the physical beauty of women, the more sophisticated ones among them have definite ideas on their beauty and physiognomy. For example, Bhainsa of Garbhantora likes a woman with 'a small round face and long hair', who looks like a *dhur-putri*, i.e.,

a tiny doll. He has a definite preference in favour of a brunette, because he thinks that her body is affected very little by frequent child-births and on an average she remains sexually attractive for a comparatively long period of life. A fair coloured woman, according to him, becomes loose in one child-birth. Similarly, he prefers a medium statured woman to a tall one. After her short youth 'you can see all the bones of a tall woman's body', but a medium statured woman's body is 'nearly always a little plumpy and sexually enjoyable'. He dislikes women who are *chakmuhi*, i.e., with flat faces. Further, he also dislikes *rahanta mudi* women, i.e., those having very small hair. My *mahaprasad* Nandu, told me that he likes a woman who is neither very fat nor very lean, neither very tall nor very short, has a fair colour and firm and rounded breasts. He prefers girls who keep their hair tidy, well oiled and well combed. Chuniya, the celebrated Baiga of Mainpur circle, who is known for his love-magic, admires a woman who has a slim body and good breasts.

I could not obtain any information on the sexual life of children, from the children themselves. Others also did not provide me with many reliable details. It is said that while the boys play in the shrubs at a distance from the village, occasionally one of the boys may take out his penis from his *lingoti* and manipulate it. Others also follow. Till they are five or six years old, they share a room in common with their father and mother. Naturally, therefore, they can occasionally see their father and mother cohabiting and can thus form vague notions regarding *kandi lotan*. Dukalu said to us in Chikhli, 'Occasionally the boys and girls begin playing with their little genitals, as if they were wife and husband. Often we do not notice them, now and then we may admonish them.'

Premarital sexual experience is not uncommon. 'When her breasts begin to develop and hair grows on the *kandi*, the girl begins to feel its necessity', says Chuniya. Many boys and girls know one another and although there is a segregation of sexes, they can always develop personal likes and intimacies. When both of them belong to the same village, they can easily fix the spot and time for their meeting. Generally when the girl goes to the river to fetch water or to the jungle to collect wild fruits and roots, the two meet at the appointed spot. Often they do not have much time for love making. If they have become sufficiently intimate, they always proceed directly to the coital

act and separate from each other in a short time. Generally it is the boy who takes the initiative. Meeting the girl in a lonely spot he may say to her *kandi de*, i.e., give me your vagina ; or he may say *kandi lotu de*, i.e., let me have coitus with you. Nandu used a more romantic idiom, *tola cheekh dekh teon*, i.e., I wish I could taste you. The girl generally answers, '*waghdhara*, go to your mother, go to your sister'. The boy has to take some more chances. If the girl displays any interest in him or smiles when she sees him, this can be taken as a clear indication of the fact that she is yielding to the boy. But the boy has still to overcome her initial reserve. In one of his subsequent meetings the boy may press the breasts of the girl. This invariably culminates his efforts and he can immediately proceed to fix up the time and place with the girl for the sexual act itself. In other cases, the girls themselves first indirectly try to attract the boys towards them and when they are partially successful in it they begin displaying disinterestedness and indifference towards the boys, thus forcing the boys to woo them. In rare cases, the girls literally force the boys to have coitus with them. To the regret of Bhainsa, he could not become a real *guni* and full-fledged Baiga because a beautiful young girl named Puroni forced him to have intercourse with her. At that time Bhainsa was very young ; 'his moustache was only beginning to grow'. While most of the villagers were out, one afternoon Puroni came to the room in which Bhainsa was sleeping and stealthily put her hands on his eyes. Bhainsa tried to recognize her by touching her body but failed. She seized Bhainsa's necklace girdle. As Bhainsa wanted to sleep at that time he was annoyed with her. But Puroni laughed in a very suggestive manner. He understood what she meant. Yet he pretended that he could not follow what she wanted. Puroni told him frankly 'unless you do it with me I will go in the village with your necklace girdle and tell everyone that you forced me'. Bhainsa himself, to use this own phrase, was now burning. He did it with her. Such affairs even when they are known, are generally ignored. But action is taken in all cases which are reported to the Panchayat with definite proof. Complicated situations arise when such cases infringe upon the tribal law of exogamy or when the girl becomes pregnant.

Notwithstanding such casual intrigues and affairs men and women start their normal sexual life after marriage. The Kamars do not freely discuss sexual topics. It is therefore not possible for me to

discuss the subject of sexual deviation at any length. They know masturbation, but say that only in jails people take out their semen with their hands. They regard bestiality as disgusting and male homosexuality as unbelievable. The Kamars claim ignorance regarding the means of contraception. Chuniya, however, was able to suggest 'coitus interreptus' as a remedy. 'If the seed does not go to the field, no crop can grow', he said. I have not made any further enquiries on the subject of sexual deviation.

Two methods are generally employed to secure abortion. When the hair of *kewach* mixed with *gur* is given to a pregnant woman, she is sure to have abortion within five days. In other cases a quarter seer of real *fuli* liquor given to the girl will achieve the desired end. These methods should be tried only upto the fifth month of pregnancy, not later.

No medicine is administered to a woman whose menses stop without her being pregnant in her young age. Similarly no medicine is given to women who have long continued menstrual periods. Such cases are subjected to the divination of the Baiga.

Frigidity and sterility are also attributed to the wrath of hostile deities and spirits. Medicines are generally of no avail in such cases. Only the Baiga can remedy them. Functional impotence in man can, however, be cured by a medicine. Such a person should catch a male *godera* bird (sparrow). He should take it to the jungle, kill and roast it. This should be mixed with unadulterated cow's *ghee*. This is sure to increase the virility of the person. The *godera* bird is selected for the purpose as it is regarded to be unusually potent.

Even after their marriages, persons continue to have occasional extra-marital intrigues. When lapses of this type are detected and reported to the Panchayat with sufficient proof, a very serious view is taken and the culprits are punished.

III

Death and Attendant Ceremonies

In the life of an individual, death is the final crisis. Since an individual has multifarious and complex social relationships, his death as an event is sociologically very significant.

To the Kamars, death has always an evil association. It is uni-

versally feared and is generally held to be the handiwork of hostile spirits, black magic, witch-craft or the wrath of gods and deities.

The Kamars rarely use a cot and therefore in sickness they have to sleep on the bamboo mattresses which they normally use. One of the Baigas is called upon to diagnose and prescribe locally obtainable herbal medicines for simpler bodily ailments, like fever, stomach-ache, etc. In minor physical injuries the Kamars apply pastes of some leaves and barks known to them. But as soon as a case becomes chronic or the cause of the illness is beyond diagnosis and cure, all medicinal administrations are stopped. Such a serious illness is always attributed to the malevolence of some hostile spirits or deities or to evil magic or witch-craft. The only hope in such cases remains the divination of the Baiga. In acute illness the Kamars are reluctant to accept medicinal help from outsiders; instead they keep their faith in their Baiga even under the worst conditions. During our last visit to Chikhli we found that Baisakhu was lying with chronic pneumonia. At first they called the Baiga of Tewari, but as he did not give much hope they called Dokri from Satdhar. We were present when Dokri was divinating the cause of his illness. At least in our presence he pretended that the deities were not disclosing the cause of his illness to him. As Baisakhu was apparently suffering from pneumonia we thought that a course of M.B. 693 tablets might do some good to him. We enquired from the people if they would like to give him some medicine. To our disappointment they told us, 'How will medicines help? He is in the hands of *Bhagwan*. He may take him away or leave him.' Any way until the person dies all possible efforts are made to save his life. Notwithstanding all their efforts, if death comes to the patient it is accepted with a sense of realism.

If the death occurs in the night, the corpse is allowed to remain in the room and all people sleep outside, either in the verandah or in the courtyard. If the person dies in day time the corpse is brought out and is kept under the *madwa* in the courtyard. The people from the village gather there and if there are any of the near relatives in neighbouring villages a word is sent to them. While a wooden or bamboo bier is being prepared by some people, others stand waiting around the corpse. Normally, the corpse is not washed with water. Before it is carried to the burial ground women apply some turmeric mixed with oil to the face and other parts of the dead body. The

corpse is then kept on the bier and is covered with a piece of cloth. Those who can afford buy a new cloth; those who can not, use one of the old clothes of the deceased. Only two men lift the bier and carry it to the graveyard by a route not frequently used by the people of the local group. Preferably the brothers, clansmen, or *samdhi* of the deceased should lift the corpse. All male members and grown-up boys of the local group except the sick and the disabled, who are present at the occasion, go in procession to the graveyard. The normal practice is to bury the dead. But in the Kamar villages in the plains, the custom is growing that persons dying in very old age, reputed Baigas or those who are otherwise respectable, should be cremated. Both in burial and cremation, the head of the corpse is kept towards the north and it faces upwards, the face being slightly turned towards the east. The position of the dead body is straight, the legs are stretched and hands are kept upright, closely touching the body. After the corpse has been buried, a standing stone is erected approximately above the head of the dead body and over the whole grave a heap of boulders, small stones and pebbles is placed. If stones are not readily available three wooden posts are erected at the spot. Even after cremation either stones are arranged on the spot or three wooden posts are fixed. Over the graves of children thorns mixed with earth are put. At this time all the goods in the personal use of the deceased are left near his grave, and are never brought back to be used again. If the deceased was a man, his bow and arrows, axe, mattresses etc. are left near his grave. In the case of a woman her *bongi*, oil-pot, comb, and all bangles and cheap ornaments on her body at the time of her death are left there. Over the graves of children their play-things are kept. Some people also leave a pice or two at the graves.

When the funeral is over, all people take their bath, wash their clothes, and return to the village in a file. The womenfolk sprinkle water mixed with cow-dung in their houses and go together to the river for taking their bath and washing their clothes. They also return to the village in a file.

An unfortunate delay of half an hour prevented us from witnessing certain important aspects of a Kamar funeral. We were scheduled to reach Amjhar on the 18th April 1945, in the morning. On the previous night Jagotin, the wife of Nandu (Sori) died of some acute stomach trouble. The news was brought to us at our camp early in

the morning, and we started immediately. An accidental breakage in our bullock-cart detained us for half an hour on our way. When we reached Amjhar the corpse had already been taken to the graveyard. Without waiting in the village we immediately rushed to the spot. The following account of the burial of Jagotin has been considerably supplemented by the accounts given to me by those who were present in Nandu's house from the time of Jagotin's death till her being taken out for burial.

For two days Jagotin had been suffering from acute stomach-ache. The local *dih-baiga* was called for divination, but he was of no help. On Wednesday morning a word was sent to other Baigas in the neighbourhood, but somehow they could not come. In the meanwhile, in consultation with the village elders, Nandu prepared a decoction of some barks and leaves and gave it to Jagotin for drinking. No change for the better was marked in her. In the evening her pain became unbearable and she began screaming loudly. Village people began to assemble in the house. The *dih-baiga* was asked to make a last effort. But her pain increased and at about eight in the night she collapsed. As her burial was to take place the next morning, her corpse was allowed to remain in the room. Marnu (Sori) Murha (Sori) Budhram (Marai) and Ratnu (Jagat) slept in the courtyard outside keeping a watch on the corpse. A word was sent to Jagotin's brother Bhaku in Kochbay. He came there early next morning. No one from any other village came. In the morning Budhram and Ratnu brougnt some *dhanwara* wood and made a bier. Chhedia and Paklu brought the corpse from the room and kept it on a bamboo mattress. Women from the village gathered and applied to the corpse some oil mixed with turmeric. Then a *gondla* mattress was spread on the bier and the corpse was kept on it. It was then covered with a *lugra* which had been recently bought for six rupees. Budhram and Ratnu went in advance to dig the grave. Chhedia and Paklu, younger brothers of Nandu, took up the bier, and all followed them in a procession to the graveyard. The bier was kept near the grave which was then only half dug. Others assisted Budhram and Ratnu, and it was dug about four feet deep. Then the corpse was taken up from the bier and it was kept in the grave. Nandu (the deceased woman's husband) and Sudhram (her son) were the first to cover the corpse with some earth. Then all others followed. When the whole grave was covered they

dispersed to bring stones. A big stone was erected at the head and over the whole grave small stones were placed. Jagotin's sickle, digging stick, oil-pot and comb were left there. They all then went to the neighbouring river, took their bath and returned in a file to the village. After the return of the menfolk the women of the village went together to the river, took their bath and returned to the village in a file.

Tij-Nahawan is the third day bath for purification. The news of the death is sent round to all relatives in the neighbouring Kamar settlements. On the third day after death all of them assemble in the house of the deceased. It is necessary that all relatives should be present; families related distantly are represented generally by a member from each of them. When all have assembled ceremonial hair-cutting is gone through. At the death of one of the parents the sons have to get all hair including the moustache and beard removed. If the deceased was a man and had no son, one of his younger brothers gets all his hair shaved. At the death of an elder brother or uncle it is not necessary to remove all the hair on the head, but in such cases the moustache must be shaved. Other relatives only go through a formal hair-cutting. As soon as the hair-cutting is over, they all proceed together for their bath. When they return, turmeric mixed with oil is ready for them and they apply a little of it to the different parts of their body. With this they are supposed to have become clean. In the meantime the women belonging to the family of the deceased throw away all the old earthen pots, and cook a quantity of rice in a new *handi* for all those who have assembled. After partaking of the meals they all disperse. But at this occasion they fix up the date for the funeral feast. Those who have the means, finish it off on this very occasion, but poor as most of them are, they generally ask for time. The date of the feast is fixed anywhere after a month and within a year. It is customary to give this feast within one year, failing which the family is temporarily excommunicated till the feast is given to the members of the community.

The funeral feast is not as elaborate as the feast given at the occasion of marriage. Had it not been accompanied by the important rite of "calling home the *Jiv*," it would have had little sociological significance. In some cases, however, people do not wait till the fu-

neral feast for calling back the *Jiv* and perform the necessary rituals the day after the third day purification.

For the solemn rite of calling back the spirit of the departed, the head of the family, his *samdhi*, and all other male relatives take their bath and assemble in the room which has a corner dedicated to the *Gata-Dooma*. The atmosphere of the room is one of perfect seriousness. Near the corner dedicated to *Gata-Dooma*, a rectangular *chowk* is designed with rice flour. A new seven strand cotton thread called the *anwar sut* or the *jiwatia sut* is suspended from the roof over this *chowk*. A new copper ring is tied to the hanging end of this cotton thread. Two leaf cups are placed on the *chowk*, just under the ring which hangs about four inches above the cups. The leaf cup kept to the right is filled with rice, and the other kept to the left is filled with water. One of the responsible elders of the house, dips his fore-fingers and thumbs in the water and takes some rice from the other cup, between them. He then rises and slides both fore-fingers and thumbs down the hanging thread. He does it seven times; others do it three to five times. While this is being done, all present in room invoke the spirit of the deceased in a sing-song recitation, such as—"O, deceased! O, departed! we call you back. Wherever you are, O departed, come back to us. If you are in the sky, come back; if you are on the earth, come back. If you want *dhan*, we will give you *dhan*; if you want rice, we will give you rice. But you should come back to us. Come back to us to protect our children at home, and our animals in the jungle. Come back to us who want you. Come back to us and help us. Come back and protect us. Protect us from evil influences. Protect us from wild animals. Come back to us O, departed."

Several such repetitions with slight variations and additions are continued. After a while a chicken, preferably white or black, is brought in. A handful of rice is put on a leaf before the small platform which is the residence of the *Gata-Dooma*. Then the chicken is left free there. As soon as the chicken eats a grain or two from the rice kept on the leaf, it is assumed that the soul of the departed has agreed to come back. They immediately take a knife and sacrifice the chicken there. Then they burn some gum of the *sarai* tree by way of giving *hom-kuhra* to the soul which has come to live on the *Gata-Dooma* platform. Then follows the funeral feast. It is rich neither in variety nor in quantity. Besides rice, pulse and meat there is also a little

quantity of liquor. All the people assembled disperse when the feast is over.

THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL—TREATMENT OF ABNORMAL DEATHS.

The Kamar ideas regarding the destiny of the soul, at the first sight, appear to be a little intricate and confusing. It is uiversally believed that unless the death is accidental, both men and women become *madhee* and live in the graveyard. It is primarily for this reason that the grave-yard normally lying to the south of the village, is dreaded and feared by men, women and children alike. Some of the *madhee* are kindly disposed, but most of them are cruel and wicked and are capable of doing incalculable harm. They can harm people at any time but in particular they come out at midday and in the evening, and have almost a freeplay in the nights. The services of an experienced Baiga are requisitioned to confine and restrict the *madhee* to their own domain, lest they come to the habitations of the living and become a source of mischief and evil.

What happens to the *Jiv* of the person who dies? The obvious answer which will come from every quarter to this question, will be: "The *Jiv* immediately goes away to Bhagwan." A further complication arises from the fact that they invoke the soul of the deceased and consequently the *Jiv* of the departed comes to live on the *Gata-Dooma* platform. To the Kamar, however, this is not baffling. As Chuniya, the Kamar Baiga of Sinhar, explained it, the understanding of the question becomes easy if we distinguished between the dead body and the *Jiv* which are two distinct things. The dead bodies become *madhee* and the *Jiv* goes away directly to Bhagwan. When invoked by the members of the family, this *Jiv* comes to live with them on the *Gata-Dooma* platform. When it chooses to take rebirth, or when Bhagwan directs it to do so, the *Jiv* comes from Bhagwan or its own earthly abode to take birth again.

This happens only to those who die a normal death. Abnormal deaths present very complicated problems—problems which cause many maladies in the life of the Kamars. A woman dying in pregnancy becomes a *churelin* and is a potential source of great harm to the people. She is dreaded by all, specially by women and children.

She seeks her vengeance by harming pregnant women and killing other people's children. If she dies on a Tuesday, she is dreaded all the more. Her haunts and visits are ominous. Only an expert Baiga can undo the mischief done by her. The *churelin* does not recognise any barriers and distinctions of caste and tribe and harms all on whomsoever she can lay her dreaded hands. The Kamars of Bamhni had recently to get rid of a Telin *churelin* with the help of their Baiga. Budhlya Kamarin of Gujra became a *churelin* and she troubled not only the Kamars but people belonging to other castes also. A person killed by a tiger becomes a *baghmasan*, and the dead body when it is discovered has to be cremated. Elaborate rites of *mud-bandhna* are necessary to keep the *baghmasan* in check lest he may haunt the forest in the shape of a tiger and kill many other people. In Tawar-bahira, Dongrigaon, Maroda, Chhindola and Satdhar, we came to know that some Kamars belonging to these villages had been killed in the past by tigers and therefore they had to requisition the services of reputed Baigas to tie down the *baghmasan* in the forest. In the Nawagarh circle the Kamars told us that nowadays it is only the Gond Baiga of Bengarpalli who can tie down a *baghmasan*. Bhainsa claimed that he could also do it, but so far he has not been provided with such an opportunity. A man dying of drowning becomes *panbudiya mola*, and a woman becomes *jalakamini*. Here Bhainsa slightly differs from my other informants. He regards *jalakamini* to be a female deity living in the waters, and says that all women who die by drowning become *panihari* and serve the *jalakamini*. These water-ghosts should always be kept appeased with an annual sacrifice of a chicken or two, or else they periodically rise in the shape of round and high columns of water and drown whomsoever they get. I was informed that there are *panbudiya mola* in Toribhui and Barula. It is said that there are *jalakamini* and *panihari* in the Khelurghat and Ghumarghat of the Pairi river in the Nawagarh circle. A person killed by another person becomes *mirchuk* and when offended gives terrific headaches to people. Manjhi who was murdered by Bankhandi in Milcowa, is reputed to have become a *mirchuk*. Some young and passionate men who die before having satisfied their sexual desire even once become ghosts with ice-cold bodies and enormous genitals. If any girl happens to come alone in the area haunted by such a ghost, he will catch hold of her and co-habit with her. After such an intercourse only few

girls can survive and the few who do survive have to give birth to cold still-born children.

The Kamars cannot definitely say as to what happens to the *Jiv* of persons dying such abnormal deaths. I could not obtain any instance in which a person dying an abnormal death was believed to have taken birth again. All abnormal deaths in general are potential evil and therefore they are the concern of the whole community. The problems which arise from them are sufficiently delicate to warrant handling only by the more experienced and recognised Baigas. Strong circles of protective magic are necessary to keep away the hostile spirits.

Even if they wish to, the kindly disposed ones among the dead can bestow only little favour. The hostile ones can, however, bring incalculable harm at any time. The constant effort of the tribe therefore remains that the good ones among the dead should be kept pleased with periodic worship and sacrifices, and the evil ones should be held in check by the strong protective magic of the Baiga.

CHAPTER V

TRIBAL LAW AND ITS BREACHES

The imposition of an alien government with its own elaborate administrative paraphernalia, and the increased contact with the neighbouring castes and tribes of Chhattisgarh, have greatly modified the tribal administrative system of the Kamars. Today, their tribal organization for the administration of justice runs parallel to the British sponsored judicial system. Besides the customary law of their tribe, they have also to abide by the Indian Penal Code. Contact with the neighbouring villagefolk has broken their tribal isolation still further. In the inter-village disputes or in matters in which persons belonging to either party in the dispute are other than Kamars, they have to participate in the Panchayat of the larger village community which comprises members of a number of tribes and castes. Yet, the numbers of cases going to the Indian Courts, or to the larger Panchayats is surprisingly low. Within the tribe itself, order is maintained and the sanctity of the tribal law is enforced by the tribe's own organs of justice.

In the Kamar society, the tribal jurisprudence is based on primitive ethics widely differing from our own. Indeed, many acts which would be counted as serious offences according to our standards, are treated very lightly by the Kamars. To us, homicide is a heinous offence ; to the Kamars it is sometimes a justifiable necessity and the murderer can expiate his offence with an ordinary penal feast. *Marpit* to them is often a legitimate means of settling several personal disputes. Stealing from the Zamindari or government forest or illicit distillation of liquor, rather than being disapproved, is on the contrary encouraged. The Kamars do not think that there is anything wrong in occasionally stealing grains from the standing crops of their neighbours belonging to other tribes and castes. Rape to them is just illegal intercourse and abduction is never regarded anything different from ordinary elopement.

Even those acts which are recognized as offences by the tribal opinion do not all fall in the same category. There are some offences

the penalties for which are supernatural and are expected to follow automatically. Even if the persons committing those offences are left unpunished by the deities in this world, they would certainly have to undergo punishment for their misdeeds after their death. Incest between very close relatives is one such offence. The traditional view of the tribe in the matter has been very vividly described in a song which gives an account of an incest between a father and his daughter. The song runs thus :

An ugly wretch was he,
And she a handsome maiden,
The two lived alone,
The old widower and his lovely daughter.
The old man cast his lustful eyes on her,
And when the fiery finger touched him,
He caught hold of her and enjoyed her-
Enjoyed her breasts, and body and youth.
They lived secretly, and then openly they lived
—As man and woman—as wife and husband.
For some time it was calm,
But then came the great rains, the thunder and storm,
Then suddenly the rains stopped ;
The whole year was dry.
The *dahi* failed,
Animals left the forest.
No fish was there in the ponds and pools,
Edible roots too were scarce.
One sin—of the old wretch, and the lusty girl,
And such was the penalty.

The punishment in this case is undoubtedly supernatural and automatic.

Incest between brother and sister is also very serious. Another Kamar song describes the sombre punishment that descends upon those who are guilty of this loathsome offence :

The young girl and the young boy—
Brother and sister they were, brother and sister.
They danced together,
And for the whole night they danced.
They decided to elope—
After five days—before day-break,
Before the cock heralds the dawn of the day,
They decided to run away—

To run away to a distant *raj*.
'I will go with you;
But will go for the whole life.
Desert me not, or I shall be ruined'.
'Before the cock crows, we shall start,
And shall be in Boda Sambhar Raj before the dawn.
There we shall work, and eat, and live happily.'

The night passed,
And the appointed hour came.
She took five *katha* of rice;
A handful of tobacco and a score of *tendu* leaves for *chongi*.
She took two pice, a plate and some pots,
She arranged all those things
And at the appointed time they started.
At dawn they crossed the tract;
And reached the Boda Sambhar Raj.

Nine months passed;
And she began to feel miserable.
Every limb of her body ached.
Helpless she was—utterly helpless.
'O, father! what can I do?
For what I did, I must suffer'.
Her agony increased,
And she had none to help her.

They promised to offer presents to the spirits;
But the spirits would not be pleased!
They invoked the family gods,
But they too was hostile.
Death seemed the only alternative,
The punishment for her sin—
The sin of eloping with her brother.
None of their relatives had anything to do with them,
Nor did any one smoke with them!
Such was to be their life.

In this case also the penalties are supernatural, but the community has also taken action in the matter. We are told that none of the members of the community had anything to do with the couple living in incest and all refused to smoke *chongi* with them.

In a number of other cases also the penalties are supernatural. If a person is negligent about his duties to the *Dooma*, and even if he insults them in a calculated manner, the Panchayat will leave him to his own fate and will not take any steps in the matter. In Bamhni

when Heerasing's son was seriously ill, all the members of his family invoked the assistance of the deities and the *Dooma* for his recovery. But all those prayers were of no avail and the boy died. Heerasing was very much upset. His father Mahajan was also very angry. 'What is the use of keeping them in the house, when they do not help us in times of difficulty ?' said he, and Heerasing removed the earthen platform of the *Gata-Dooma* from the room and threw it in the jungle. When I interrogated Mahajan regarding this incident, he said, 'If they are of no use to us why should we keep them in the house, feed them with chicken and worship them ?' The news of this incident spread around in the neighbouring villages, and it was widely discussed. No action was taken by the tribe, because it was felt that if the *Dooma* were angry, they would themselves punish Heerasing and his family.

For the ordinary breaches of taboos associated with menstruation also the penalties are supernatural and automatic. According to Bhainsa if a menstruating woman enters the shed of the *Mata*, the goddess will immediately retaliate upon her family. The violation of the taboo restricting a menstruating woman from entering into the *deo ghar* and the cooking room is automatically punished by supernatural powers. However, if such a breach comes in the way of any communal pursuit of the tribe, it will be punished by the Panchayat. In case a menstruating woman or her husband enters the waters in which *manj* has been put for intoxicating the fish, they will be penalised by the tribe, because as a result of the breach of this taboo, the entire party participating in fishing may get very little fish or no fish at all. Similarly, if a Kamar cohabits with his wife during her menstrual period, supernatural powers are believed to punish him.

The Panchayat does not assemble to consider all the breaches of the established norms of tribal life. In many cases, social disapproval expressed by the elders of the local group is generally enough. A son not paying due regard to his aged parents, a wife negligent in her household duties, a couple constantly quarrelling with each other, a young woman alleged to have become very liberal in granting favours to young men, are always in the first instance admonished by the elders of the local group.

The Panchayat assembles and takes into consideration, only the comparatively more serious breaches of tribal law and custom.

An outline of the Panchayat organization has been given in the chapter on Social Organization. There is no central authority common to the whole tribe. A group of settlements close to one another, constitute their own Panchayat which is supreme in the socio-religious matters of the members of the tribe living in the constituent settlements. It has been pointed out earlier that a few such groups have a superficial hierarchy of officials; they have a *Kurha*, the chief of all the villages, *Sirpanch*, the presiding officer of the group Panchayat and the *Chaprasi*, an official who is required to intimate to all concerned the date, place and object of the forthcoming meeting of the Panchayat. But in such groups also, as everywhere else, the Panchayat is supreme. None of the officials mentioned above has a determining voice. The Panchayat is composed of a number of elders each constituent local group being represented in it. Women are excluded from its membership.

When a breach of any of the customary laws of the tribe has been committed the news passes round. Surprisingly there is little effort on the part of the culprits to conceal the relevant facts.Even if any such efforts are made, generally a rumour about it spreads. The elders of the same village or of one of the neighbouring villages, take congnizance of the offence and temporarily ostracize the person or persons responsible for the offence. Other members belonging to the family of the accused are also ostracized with him. This action is, however, purely temporary. The final decision rests with the Panchayat. In the tracts having a hierarchy of officials, the *Sirpanch* directs the *Chaprasi* to go round the neighbouring villages communicating to the elders concerned the time and place of the meeting of the Panchayat, and the purpose for which it is being convened. In other tracts which have no *Sirpanch* and *Chaprasi* such invitations and informations are conveyed through the *dih-baiga* of the village in which the Panchayat is to assemble. Generally the meeting of the Panchayat takes place in the village in which the offence has been committeed or in one in which the offender parmanently resides.

In the Panchayat, decisions are arrived at by a majority. Although votes of the people assembled are never taken, the elders present in the meeting freely express their opinions and the general sense of the meeting invariably decides the matter. There is no superior

authority in tribal matters to which an appeal against the decision of the Panchayat can be carried. In judging a case, the Panchayat hears both the sides, eye-witnesses are specially relied upon and the accused persons are allowed an opportunity to explain their position. An individual is punished for the consequences of his act ; his motive is seldom taken into consideration. Generally, no distinction is made between wrongs committed deliberately and those committed by accident or through carelessness. Bucha broke one of his ears accidentally and was consequently ostracized permanently. Lachchiram killed a cow through carelessness and was severely penalised for this offence. In several of the meetings all the members present may not see eye to eye with regard to the matters under dispute.. In such cases discussions are unduly prolonged and often tempers rise. But in the end a decision is invariably reached, which is enforced by the group as a whole.

There are very few offences which cannot be expiated by a feast. If the Panchayat agrees to expiate an offence by taking a penalty feast, it clearly expresses its view to the offender and dictates to him the items of the feast. In several cases it has to secure suitable compensations from the offenders for the aggrieved. The items of the feast are often open to compromise, and they can be considerably reduced by subsequent request to the Panchayat. As few Kamars are rich enough to be in a position to provide the feast immediately, they generally ask for, and are given time to prepare themselves for it. Further extensions of time can be given to enable them to save sufficient ammount of money and grain to pay the fine and provide the feast. In the interim period, however, they continue to be outside the tribe. People do not eat with them, nor do they smoke the same *chongi* with them. It is only when they are ceremonially purified by *son-sunwani* at the time of the feast, that they are readmitted into the tribal fold as regular members. Complicated situations arise when any Kamar ostracized by the Panchayat dies without the expiation of his offence. People refuse to carry the corpse, for those who carry it become liable to provide the feast due from the deceased.

Offences such as homicide, grievous bodily hurt, thefts of serious nature, etc. are nowadays brought to the Indian Courts for administration of justice. The Panchayat is never called upon to sit in judgement over them.

Some of the important customary laws of the tribe and the punishment meted out to the individuals who were adjudged to be guilty of their breaches are described below.

There are a number of complex rules and regulations governing the intercourse of the Kamars with other tribes and castes, specially prohibiting them from eating food cooked by outsiders. Tribal law prescribes that a Kamar woman should not eat any cooked food prepared or touched by a person of another tribe or caste. This injunction is seriously enforced and penalties for its breaches are very severe. In the case of young unmarried boys and girls, the eating of food cooked by others is not regarded as an offence, but it is expected that they should not eat anything cooked or touched by very low caste people. Similarly, the menfolk may eat food cooked by the Gond, Teli, Halba, or Kanwar, i.e., by the castes and tribes regarded as superior ; but they must avoid all food which has even been touched by the low caste people like the Ganda Ghasia, and Chamar. The traditional penalty for such offences is that the woman who eats from persons of any other caste or tribe should be permanently ostracized. Sargi, wife of Mati Kamar of Sinhar was ostracized permanently because she ate cooked food at the hands of a Gond. Baihi of Kulharighat was ostracized because she ate cooked food at the hands of Gonds and Raots. Fagni, wife of Sagram Kamar of Dongrikhol was ostracized because she ate cooked food given to her by a Lohar. The offence may be expiated in very exceptional cases and that also only when a woman has eaten from a person of one of the higher castes. In such cases it is necessary that there should be no suspicion of her sexual liason with an outsider. She may be readmitted in to the tribe after a penalty feast consisting of two *maran* (meat of two animals specially killed for the purpose ; necessarily goats in the case of women for they cannot drink the blood of hen or pig in *son-sunwani*) and two *mandi*, i.e., ordinary meals of rice and pulse given to the members of the tribe who assemble for two days. Ramdi of Naginbuda who was ostracized because she ate *basi* given to her by a Teli woman was readmitted into the tribe after such a feast. The expiation of this offence, in the case of a man is simple and less costly even it they eat from low castes. Although they have also to give two *maran* and two *mandi*, the cost of the penalty is considerably reduced as the tribe generally expects two fowls by way of *maran*. Usually a fine of two to five rupees is

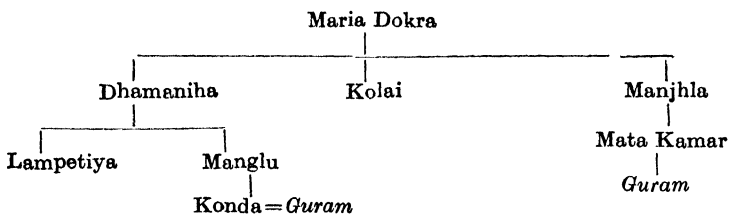
also imposed, and this amount is always utilized immediately for providing liquor to the assembled members of the tribe. Jhablu of Patdongri was ostracized because under the intoxication of liquor he sat with a Ganda and ate with him. He was readmiitted into the tribe by the above procedure.

Sexual relations or adultery with a man of a different caste or tribe results in the permanent ostracism of the woman. Tijri, wife of Sonau Kamar of Keujhar had an affair with a Ghasia. When she was discovered with him in the jungle under very suspicious condiions, the matter was reported to the Panchayat which ordered her to be permanently ostracized. Tijri had to run away with her Ghasia lover to the Dhamtari-raj. Samari Kamarin of Kallemeta in a similar case has been permanently ostracized. She is now living with a Ganda in Bendkura. In the case of man adultery with a woman of some other tribe or caste can always be expiated, provided he breaks off his connection with that woman and gives the usual feast to the Panchayat. Penalty is less severe in the case of adultery with a woman of a superior tribe or caste such as Gond, Raot or Teli. Adultery with a low caste woman such as Ganda, Ghasia, Panka or Chamar, is severely penalized. Aitwari was ostracized because he kept a Gond woman. Since he refused to drive her away he was not admitted into the tribe. Manku had a liason with a Ganda woman. According to the orders of the Panchayat he agreed to drive her away. He gave a feast consisting of two *maran* (goats) and two *mandi*. After *son-sunwani* he has been readmitted into the tribe.

There is a strict taboo which prohibits sexual relations between near relatives and between members of the same clan, in the Kamar society. When cases of incest are detected, they are brought to the notice of the tribal Panchayat. The treatment meted out to the offenders differs in different cases. Incestuous unions among the Kamars are rare. Regarding the few stray cases which do occur and are brought to light from time to time, the Kamars are very reticent with the outsiders, although among themselves these cases are subjects of endless discussions. During my field investigations, for a long time, the Kamars avoided talking on the subject. When questions were put to them regarding the treatment which might be meted out to prsons violating the rules of exogamy, they invariably said that such persons would be permanently ostracized and driven

away from the locality. They always claimed ignorance about the occurrence of any such case. But genealogies and village census revealed what they so consciously wanted to hide from us. When I confronted them wth a few concrete cases, they broke their silence, started freely discussing the individual cases, and gave information regarding some other similar cases.

The first incestuous union which I discovered was that of Guram Kamarin in Chikhli with her classificatory brother Konda. The following genealogy explains Guram's exact relationship with Konda :—



When the sex intrigue between Guram and Konda was first known a rumour regarding it spread in all the neighbouring Kamar settlements. There was a great sensation.. But at that time nothing was done. When Guram conceived and her pregnancy was generally known the Panchayat was immediately summoned. The offence was very serious and had created a stir in the neighbouring settlements. Representatives from as many as seven settlements took part in the proceedings of the Panchayat. After a heated and prolonged discussion, they came to the conclusion that the offence of Guram and Konda was such that it could not be expiated. They could not therefore take a penalty feast from them. The elders present there said, "*Pap laguan na khawan. Jacho pap tachha lage thaon*—We will not eat for their sin. They are themselves responsible for their sin". Infact, they regarded the offence as so serious that they thought that the wrong involved in it could be mended only by the deities. The highest penalty which the tribe could possibly inflict on them would be inadequate. The Panchayat, therefore, took no action in the matter and punishment for their sin was left to the deities. Konda did not live for many years. His untimely death was attributed to the wrath of gods. Gradually the people became sympathetic towards Guram and her child.

Today she is regarded as a regular member of the tribe. The Kamars from neighbouring villages do not refuse food cooked by her. She is invited in all social ceremonies and there is no discrimination against her. In April 1945, at the occasion of the marriage of Dukalu's son Sonsah, she participated in the ceremony and sat with other Kamar women in the marriage feast. Like ostracized persons she was not asked to sit at a distance from the other members of the tribe nor was she herself required to remove her own leaf plate. Of course, nobody agreed to marry her after the death of Konda, and so after his death she has been living separately with her son Jhuru. No social stigma attaches to Jhuru and there is no doubt that after his marriage he will become a full-fleged member of the tribe. There is likely to be no difficulty in his marriage also.

Chikhli provided another example of a love intrigue of an incestuous nature. On the 18th March 1946, there was a great sensation in Chikhli. Bisram, son of Sukalu, eloped with Chamrin, the wife of Dheemar Sing. Dheemar Singh's father Lampetiya is Sukalu's *kaka*, and therefore Dheemar Singh was Bisrams's *kaka*. Bisram's elopement with his *kaki* became the talk of the tribe. People were sent round to search them out. But they had gone away to the distant Khambat-Hata tract in the Sambalpur district, and therefore it was not easy to locate them. In the meanwhile, Sukalu and his brothers Dukalu and Sukhdeo were ostracized. Lampetiya began pressing them for compensation for the huge expenses he had incurred in the marriage of his son. A word was sent round the neighbouring villages, and after one postponement the Panchayat met in Chikhli on the 2nd April 1946. The following were present in the Panchayat: from Tewari, Samaru, Badali, Banwa and Dhanwa ; from Bhainsatara, Nandiram, Baldu, Sukhdeo, Latti and Chamru; from Hatbai, Budhram and Bidhnu ; and from Dhamandih, Buddhu. Satdhar and Garbhantora boycotted the Panchayat because they apprehended that because of the enormous prestige and influence enjoyed by Dukalu who is the Mukaddam of Chikhli the Panchayat would punish the offence very lightly and would readmit all of them into the tribe. Their plea was that looking to the severity of the offence a Panchayat of many more villages should have been called and Dukalu and Sukalu should have given an undertaking that they would give an adequate penalty feast. Notwithstanding the boycott of the two large neighbouring

villages, the Panchayat met and under the influence of Dukalu it agreed to expiate the offence. Sukalu was directed to pay Rs. 50 to Lampetiya by way of compensation. He was further put to an expenditure of Rs. 30 with which he had to provide the feast. Sukalu had already sold one of his bullocks for one hundred rupees. With this amount he met all the expenses. When I went to Chikhli for the second time in April 1946, Satdhar and Garbhantora were still not maintaining normal relations with the three brothers. But all indications pointed out that they would also soon fall in line with the other neighbouring settlements. Infact, when I was about to leave Gariaband I got the news that three Kamars from Satdhar had already eaten in Sukalu's house. Bisram and Chamrin had not yet returned to Chikhli. They had built a temporary hut for themselves in Patora and were earning their livelihood by sawing wood. The acceptance of the compensation by Lampetiya and of the penalty feast by the Panchayat closed the matter and gave tribal recognition to the *fait accompli*. Chamrin and Bisram now live as wife and husband.

Theoretically, any sexual union between persons belonging to the same clan is as serious an offence as incest between brother and sister. But the facts on record show that unions within the clan itself are often lightly treated, and in some cases the Panchayat takes no notice of them. From Bhainsatara, Phulmat, daughter of Baldu (Netam) went *paithu* in Timanpur to Meghnad (Netam) son of Narsing. For some time people contemplated action against them, but in the end no Panchayat was summoned and the matter was dropped. In the case of Lalsah for a similar offence the Panchayat was convened. It met thrice, but in the end the matter was dropped. Lalsah's case was very complicated and deserves special consideration. We have referred to the exploits of his mother with reference to *paithu* marriages in the chapter *The Phases of Life*.[1] Lalsah's mother had conceived him from Pandru (Netam). But before his birth she went from Pandru to Kariya (Sori) and from Kariya (Sori) to Nohar (Sori) in Kesodar. Although actually Lalsah was the son of Pandru (Netam), he was born in the house of Nohar (Sori). Later Nohar arranged Lalsah's marriage, and got him married to Ghasnin of Timanpur. Ghasnin happened to be a Netam girl. Therefore for a long time controversy was

[1] See page 107

raging regarding the validity of this marriage. The Panchayat met thrice, but it had ultimately to leave Lalsah unpunished, because it thought that personally he had no hand in the matter. Even if they would have decided to penalize Lalsah, they would have only demanded one *mandi* and liquor worth four or five rupees.

It should not, however, be concluded that all cases of incest go unpunished. In Jabbarra, a very serious view was taken in the case of an incest between the children of two brothers. Chitna and Sukhram are two brothers and they belong to the Sori *got*. Chitna's daughter Dhansir went wrong with Sukhram's son Sahab. The two were immediately ostracized. They have now two children, a son and a daughter. Tribal opinion is divided regarding this case. Some think that their offence can be expiated if they give a very heavy penalty feast costing about one hundred rupees. Others hold that so long as they live together as wife and husband their offence cannot be expiated. In a notorious incest case reported from Sonjhiri, Karbari (junior) of the Markam *got* first kept the wife of his classificatory elder brother, and later kept her daughter also. The Panchyat took a very serious view in this case and ostracized him. He is outside the tribe now.

Adultery within the tribe itself is seriously penalized. Very often it leads to serious quarrels resulting in grievous bodily hurts and occasionally to murder. The notorious Milcowa murder case was consequent upon the discovery by Bankhandi of the adulterous union of his wife Jholagain with Manjhi's son Lachhman. Bankhandi being suspicious about the character of his wife kept a close watch over her. One day when she went to dig roots in the jungle he stealthily followed her. There, to his great annoyance he found that she was making love with Lachhman. In a fit of blind rage Bankhandi ran to the settlement and came back running with his heavy axe. What he saw there, did not leave room for any doubt. Bhankhandi became fierce. He gave a few heavy blows with his axe on the head of Lachhman who immediately died on the spot. A heavy blow fell on the head of Jholagain also. She suffered for a long time but ultimately survived. Bankhandi reported the incident to the village Kotwar and silently took his way to Raipur where he surrendered himself to the police. He was tried for murder, but was spared the death penalty. After he had done the major part of his term, he was released from the

prison. On his return from jail, the tribal Panchayat did not penalize him for homicide. Infact nobody talked about it. He was asked to go through a ceremonial purification for his having gone to jail. He soon gave a small feast and was readmitted into the tribe. However, Bankhandi did not live for many years more. Jholagain has taken another husband and is now living in Kodobater. The passage of time has made the exploits of Bankhandi a legend among the Kamars of Bindranawagarh.

But all cases of adultery do not result in personal quarrels or murders. When detected, most of them are reported to the tribal Panchayat which gives its judgements on the cases. A very interesting case of adultery within the tribe was detected during the ceremonial purification of Lachchhiram who had killed a cow. Kesri Kamarin and Gawarsing had come along with others from Bhiralat to Satdhar for participating in the feast. Near Amethiya's house Gawarsing occupied a small room which was vacant. After the feast, in the night Lohra's brother heard the sound of glass bangles inside the house. He naturally became suspicious. He peeped through a hole in the door. Although it was dark, he could unmistakably make out that two persons inside the room were cohabiting. He called a friend of his from the neighbourhood, forced open the door of the room and caught Kesri's *fundra* and *khilwa* and produced them before the Panchayat the next day. The Panchayat immediately fined Gawarsing two rupees. He was further asked to keep Kesri as his wife and give a tribal feast. The question of compensation etc. was left to be decided later.

Breaches and annulment of marriage arrangements are brought to the notice of the Panchayat. If the parents of the boy keep on postponing the marriage after betrothal, before terminating the engagement, the matter has to be reported to the Panchayat. Lalsah of Kochena was admonished by the Panchayat for not having married his son Kuarsah to Heerasing's daughter Thanwarin. In *paithu* marriages also the Panchayat is often convened. It is felt that a small tribal feast is necessary for legalizing such unions. When the girl happens to be free from any encumbrances, i.e., when she is neither engaged nor married, the Panchayat has little to do but to eat the feast and bless the couple. However, when complications arise as a result of such unions, it has to take into consideration all the aspects of the case. It

secures suitable compensation for the aggrieved party and takes a penalty feast from those who are held responsible for the breaches of the established traditions of the society. Similarly in the case of all 'run-away' marriages also the Panchayat has to consider all the implications of the case and when necessary it has to determine the amount of compensation to be paid to the girl's husband or father-in-law.

It is said that if a woman changes four husbands one after another and goes to live with a fifth one, the Panchayat can refuse to recognize the validity of her last marriage. But no actual case of this type has come to my notice.

In the tribal code of the Kamars, allowing oneself to be beaten by a person of another caste or tribe is also an offence. A Kamar who is beaten by a very low caste person is automatically ostracized. Similarly, if a money-lender or any other person of one of the superior castes and tribes beats a Kamar with a shoe that Kamar will be ostracized. Unless such a person pays a nominal fine and gives a small penalty feast, he will not be readmitted into the tribe. An exception to this rule is made in the case of persons who are beaten by government officials. In such cases neither a fine is imposed nor even a feast is demanded. Matwar Kamar got intoxicated on a market day at Mainpur. He quarrelled with Karia Ghasia who was also heavily drunk. During the quarrel the two freely exchanged blows. It was alleged that Karia Ghasia spat on the face of Matwar. Matwar was immediately ostracized. He was readmitted into the tribe a year later on payment of a fine of rupees three and a feast consisting of two *maran* (goats) and two *mandi*.

Vermin in wound lead to pollution and an individual having them on his person is temporarily put out of the tribe. For readmission into the tribe a feast with one *maran* and two *mandi* is required to be given, along with a fine of two to five rupees for providing liquor to all the people who assemble. Such a person will not be readmitted into the tribe unless he is subjected to a ceremonial purification, commonly known as *son-sunwani*. Dokri (Markam) of Milcowa got vermin in her wounds caused by burning. She was temporarily put out of the tribe. Besides the Kamars of Milcowa, the following parti-

1 See page 97.

cipated in the Panchayat: Bhainsa from Garbhantora; Dukalu, Lampetiya and Dokri from Chikhli and two Kamars from Rawandih. The woman gave one *mandi* and one *maran* (a full-grown fowl) and liquor worth one rupee. She was pressed to give a goat but as she was very poor and could not afford it the Panchayat accepted a hen. Bhainsa did the *son-sunwani*. The woman took her bath in the river. Bhainsa, who had brought with him a little quantity of unboiled milk previously touched with gold, sprinkled some of it over her body. He also applied a small quantity of the paste of raw turmeric to her body. All the people who had assembled for the occasion were present at the spot. In their presence Dokri was made to drink a little quantity of milk. The hen was sacrificed there. Ordinarily a person who is to be purified drinks the blood of the *maran* which is sacrificed, but as Kamar women cannot eat fowl the rite in this case had to be performed with milk. A feast then followed.

Killing a cow or a bullock is also a very serious offence. The person or persons responsible for this offence are immediately put out of the tribe. Before they can expiate their offence by giving a tribal feast they have to go to Narsingnath, get themselves purified by the *Panda* there and are then required to do *son-sunwani* at home. From such offenders the tribe demands seven *maran* and seven *mandi*. In such cases fowls are not accepted as *maran*, but if the offender is poor, in lieu of one or two goats he may give an equal number of large-sized pumpkins. He has further to pay a fine of rupees ten to fifteen, which is spent on liquor.

A couple of weeks prior to our visit, Satdhar had witnessed the ceremonial purification of Lachchhiram son of Amethiya who had been ostracized from the tribe on the charge of having killed a cow. Over eight years back Lachchhiram had tied an old cow with a rope inside a room and had kept no fodder for it. Because of his carelessness the cow died on the third day. Lohra saw this and talked about it to the people in the village. The news gradually spread and the Panchayat was summoned. It directed Lachchhiram to make a pilgrimage to Narsingnath and give a penalty feast of seven *maran* and seven *mandi*. The whole family was outside the normal fold of the tribe for about eight years. During this period they completed their preparations for the expiation of Lachchhiram's sin. Accompanied by Budhram and Lohra, Lachchhiram went to Narsingnath and spent over ten rupees

there. A *panda* struck him thrice with a cane and accepting a *dakshina* of one rupee and four annas from him, he said, "*Ab ja. Tor pap kat ge.* Now go. Your sin has been expiated." After his return from Narsingnath he requested the *Panch* to assemble in his village and take a penalty feast. On the 7th. April 1946, he was readmitted into the tribe. In all, over forty men and twelve women assembled to partake of the feast. In the *Panchayat* representatives from Chikhli, Timanpur, Garbhantora, Bhiralat, Patora, Bhainsatara and Khamaripara participated. In view of the abnormal rise in the prices because of the war the Panchayat agreed to accept only three *maran* (goats) and three *mandi*. The feast was preceded by *son-sunwani* which was performed by Budhram who is Lachchhiram's sister's husband.

The Kamars treat all witches very harshly. Women who are suspected of being *tonhi* are taken out of the village and are beaten mercilessly. In the rural life of Chhattisgarh such treatment to a suspected *tonhi* is a matter of common occurrence.

If a person is detected while using black magic, or love magic of a serious nature, he is punished by the tribe. Two very interesting cases of the use of love magic, illustrate the tribal attitude in such cases. The first case is from Khamaripara. Jhadu (Sori) was very much worried about his wife who was gradually becoming notorious as a woman of free morals. He consulted Bisse about it, and decided to use love magic. From the forest he brought the skull of a monkey. One day he went outside the village, cooked a little quantity of rice in that skull and gave it to his wife to eat. It is not known whether his wife ate that rice or not. Bisse was very young and he could not keep the secret to himself. The news passed from person to person and within a few days it was widely known in the tribe. An unusually large Panchayat assembled to decide the case. Representatives from Kodohardi, Sandholi, Chikhli, Satdhar, Bhainsatara, Milcowa, Achhachherka and Timanpur gathered to participate in the proceedings. The Panchayat fined Jhadu fifteen rupees and ordered him to arrange for a feast consisting of four *maran* and four *mandi*. At his request the Panchayat later reduced the items of the feast to two *maran* (goats) and three *mandi*. They refused to reduce the fine. Jhadu was admitted into the tribe only when he had given this feast. The second case is from Kodohardi. Here, Bheu (Netam)

tried to use love magic on his wife who was suspected of going astray. His sister's husband told him the secret of infallible love magic. Accordingly, Bheu brought from the jungle the skull of a human being. One morning he went outside the village, cooked a little quantity of rice in the skull, mixed that cooked rice in *til* oil and gave it to his wife. Asin applied the oil to her hair, face and body. The love magic seemed to be very potent as Asin virtually became a slave to Bheu. All went on well for some days. But one day the ghost of the dead man in whose skull Bheu had cooked the rice caught him. Through his divination Matwar Baiga unearthed the secret. The ghost was driven out but Bheu was immediately ostracized. The tribal Panchayat decided to penalize him heavily. Unfortunately Ghasia (Sori) of Barbahera gathered some people and did his *son-sunwani* without the knowledge of the elders of the villages which formed the Panchayat of the group. Ghasia did not even take a *maran* from him and did his *son-sunwani* with a little quantity of *gur* and a very meagre feast. The Panchayat was convened again. Since Ghasia had eaten with Bheu he was also ostracized. They were readmitted into the tribe when they had jointly paid a fine of eight rupees and given a feast consisting of two *maran* (goats) and two *mandi*.

There is a taboo which prevents the Kamars from touching a horse. Riding a horse is an offence in their tribal code. Similarly, another taboo prevents them from touching or wearing shoes. In the Fingeshwar Zamindari, even a Kamar child will not touch anybody's shoes. In Bindranawagarh they often carry the shoes of touring government officials but otherwise do not touch or wear them. The people of the Sori *got* claim that only they can wear shoes, others can not. These rules are strictly enforced. I wanted to present a new pair of shoes to Bhainsa, but he declined to accept the present as it would not be of any use to him.

A person returning from jail is admitted into the tribe only after a ceremonial purification. All his clothes are thrown away, his hair is cut and then *son-sunwani* is done. He is expected to provide a small feast consisting of one *maran* and one *mandi*. Numerous Kamars, going to jail because of illicit distillation of liquor on their return from jail, get readmitted into the tribe by this procedure.

Getting hair cut by a barber or by any one other than a Kamar also constitutes an offence. Persons guilty of this offence are tempo-

rarily put outside the tribe and can be readmitted only when they provide a feast consisting of one *maran* and two *mandi*. However, no actual case of this type has come to my notice.

If a woman pierces a hole in her nose the Kamars of all parts except Khariar and Mainpur will regard it as an offence. In Fingeshwar such a woman would be ostracized, in Bindranawagarh she would be just tolerated. In Bhiralat in the Nawagarh circle, Budhram's daughter Bamhnin and daughter-in-law Ghasnin have pierced their noses. No action has been taken against them, but other Kamars object to their having broken the tribal rule and often threaten them with fines.

No adequate explanation was offered to me regarding the custom of ostracizing any person who is *kantuta*, i.e., with a broken ear. One such person in Kodobatar was ostracized when his ear was broken and throughout his life he was not readmitted into the tribe. After his death his children have been admitted into the tribe after a nominal feast.

From the above, it will have been noticed that in the tribal jurisprudence of the Kamars, offences connected with sex taboos such as incest, breach of clan exogamy, adultery, elopement, etc, are the most numerous and are regarded as grave. Incestuous unions between close relatives within the tribe, and sexual liasons between Kamar women and men belonging to a different tribe or caste, or between Kamar men and low caste women are viewed very seriously. Offences against person and property are not numerous and are rarely of a serious nature. They are generally treated lightly and are even regarded as justifiable necessities sometimes. Concealment of offences and suppression of evidence is rarely attempted. In fact, rather than being regarded as 'crime,' offences are regarded as sin, which can be expiated in most of the cases by giving a tribal feast and paying a fine. Authority naturally devolves on men of age and experience. The elders of the tribe are the guardians of its law and order. They are both, interpreters of the tribal code and adjudicators of disputes.

CHAPTER VI

MYTH AND RITUAL

I

The Mythology Of The Universe

The folk-lore of the Kamars is poor in respect of traditional myths and legends. Yet, regarding the origin of the world they have the following legendary song which gives an admirable picture of the Universe.

Origin Of The World: A Song

God created the Earth,
And then created a couple,
A man and woman, wife and husband.
To them were born two children,
One son and one daughter.
And as it happened,
The mad jackal offended god Mahadeo.
A deluge—a mighty deluge he sent to drown it.
Apprehending the danger impending,
The couple placed the children in a box,
In a box of wood, and therein
They kept provisions for them,
To last till the deluge ended.
The great thunder came,
And came the roaring winds,
In the deluge were drowned all living things and the old couple.
Twelve years passed—and
God Mahadeo created two birds;
Around the world they flew to see,
If the jackal—Mahadeo's enemy was dead.
Over the endless ocean of water they flew,
And not one creature was alive!
Yet, in the wooden box they heard,
Low voice of human children,
'Provisions enough only for three days we have' (said they)
Soon the birds flew back,
And reported to God Mahadeo.
In surprise,
God Mahadeo sent for the box; opened it and found the children.
Then Mahadeo, the great god
Ordered the flood to subside,

And all was well again.
The children were brought up by him,
And pleased with them one day,
He asked them to marry.
Marry they did; and had children.
To each of their children,
The great god gave the name of a tribe,
And thus were descended the many, many tribes.

Origin Of The World : A Legend

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD

The great god Mahadeo said, "My *raj*, this Universe, needs a change. The Old should now be turned into the New".

"How many days will the change take to come ?" asked those who were near Mahadeo.

"Five days, five days only", said Mahadeo with a grim determination.

The news of the impending destruction created a great commotion. The black deer in the forest ran to his wife and said, "Only five days of life we have; come, let us make the most of it". The two went out to satisfy all their earthly cravings, for they knew that on the fifth day they would meet sure death. In that final flow of passions they forgot even the common rules of decency. Seeing their uncommon and unbecoming behaviour the old woman asked, "O, have you lost your eyes? What is wrong with you? You seem to have forgotten that you must behave properly".

"What proper way?," asked they in a jeering voice, "Only five days of life we all have, go and enjoy with your old man". In dismay and surprise the old woman ran to her husband and said, "Come, let us enjoy life". "What has happened to you"? asked the old man, "Why are you getting mad?" "Only five days of life we have," said the old woman, "Then *Akas* will meet *Prithvi*, and everything will change. Come on, let us play and eat". "Who told you?" enquired the old man anxiously.

"The black deer", replied the old woman.

The old man rose up, ate some *basi*, and picking up his axe he went into the forest. He went to the dense forest near the sea-shore. Of pure sandal wood he made a huge boat, and over the boat he constructed a number of rooms. In one of the rooms he kept water, in another

fuel. He fitted the third one for the purpose of cooking, and the fourth room he reserved for calls of nature. Then he built two more living rooms and fitted them with all the necessities of life to last for a period of twelve years. He then called his son and daughter, lodged them in their respective rooms, and locked the house-boat from outside.

For four days all was quiet. On the fifth morning dragonish clouds began to appear on the horizon. In an hour the whole world was covered by these clouds, the clouds that were shortly to rain destruction. One hour more and all was in turmoil. Thunder, lightning and rain, all came to the service of god Mahadeo in his play of frenzied destruction. In less than an hour the whole scheme of the Universe was completely upset. Not one living creature survived. In all the four directions there was endless water, and over that water was the small sandal house-boat.

THE CREATION OF THE NEW

When destruction was complete, Mahadeo called back the thunder, lightning and rain. "The Old is gone", he said, "now I must create the New". He called his attendant Balia, and asked him to search out the seeds of earth and man. Balia sent out twelve lacs of *kauru* birds to find out the required seeds ; and they flew and flew over the endless ocean of water for long twelve years. Half of them died and half of them saved their life by perching on the sandal house-boat which was the one and the only shelter they could find. "We failed to find the seeds of earth and man", exclaimed the birds to one another. From below the surface over which they were resting, they heard two feeble human voices. "The little food that we have, will not last long", they heard someone saying. The birds flew back to Mahadeo, reported to him their failure, and narrated their discovery of the human voices in the wooden box. "Let their food last for six months more", said Mahadeo. He then set himself to the task of finding out the seeds of earth and man. He called the crab, and asked him if he had any seeds of earth with him. He had none. Mahadeo then asked the crab to find out someone having the required seeds. From the bottom of the sea the crab brought out a little earth-worm, the *kechuwa*. The teeth of the *kechuwa* were milched, and at last seed of earth was found out. Mahadeo uttered a powerful

mantra, touched the seed with his hand, and kept it in the water. The little seed developed, till sufficient earth was created for many species to live on. Mahadeo then asked it to stop. The earth was still unstable as it was floating on the water. Mahadeo asked the *Nagin* (she- cobra) to coil round a huge post. Then he fixed the earth to that post., The earth was now complete, but there was no sky. Over the earth, Mahadeo raised four big pillars in four different directions. Over these pillars he tied the skin of a black cow in such a way that it covered the whole world. As the sky was very loose, Mahadeo fixed it with shining nails of different sizes. The sky is the skin of that black cow, and the stars are those nails.

The earth and the sky were now complete, but there was no sun to brighten the days, no Moon to light the nights. Mahadeo first gave the world the Moon from his head. He then asked the *Pandvas* to give the world their Suns. Obeying the orders of Mahadeo the *Pandvas* released four Suns in four different directions. The terrific heat of the four Suns was unbearable, and therefore the *Pandvas* were asked to withdraw three Suns, leaving only the one which rises in the east. The earth was still to be made fit for the habitation of the different species about whose creation god Mahadeo was still contemplating. He asked Balia to sow the seeds of different plants. Balia began sowing the seeds. In the plains he sowed the seeds of *mohua*, *tendu*, *sarai*, etc., near mountains, bamboo, and near rivers he sowed the various edible roots and tubers.

THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN RACE

"The world" said Mahadeo, "is now fit for human beings to live in. Let me create man now." But the seed of man was nowhere to be found. He ordered Balia to bring the wooden box to him, brought out the children from it, and reared them as his own son and daughter. They called Mahadeo their father and Parvati their mother.

In the month of Chait, Mahadeo called the boy and said, "Come now, let us produce something for ourselves to eat. Let us have some *dahi* cultivation. The two went out together, selected a suitable site for *dahi*, and cut the branches of the trees. In the month of *Baisakh* they burnt it. The paddy was sown in the month of *Asar*. The plants grew, and gradually developed, till in the month of *Bhadon* the crop

was half ready. Lest the crop be destroyed by birds and animals, Mahadeo made a *jhala* (temporary shed) near the *dahi* field and asked the boy and the girl to sleep in it to watch the fields. "How shall we sleep there?" asked the children shyly. "Do not be afraid," said Mahadeo, "Burn a fire and sleep by its side." The boy burnt a fire in the middle of the *jhala*. The boy slept to the right side of the fire and the girl to its left.

Mahadeo wanted to create the human race, but did not possess the seed of man. "I must bring these two together," he said. He then turned himself into a tiger and went to frighten the boy and the girl, hoping that they would be afraid and sleep close together. The girl was frightened. But the boy said, "It is a mere tiger. It will not do any harm. Do not worry, sleep now." Mahadeo then turned himself into a snake. The girl got frightened again, but the boy said, "It is a mere snake. It will not bite you. Sleep silently." Failing in this too, Mahadeo tried several other methods; but the two would not sleep together. At last Mahadeo turned himself into scores of ants, and covered the girl's body. The girl felt miserable. "I am nearly done by the ants," said she to the boy. "There are none on this side," said the boy, "come on, sleep here." The two, at last, slept together. Mahadeo was pleased. Now he would have the human race.

When she woke up in the morning the girl was pregnant. The foetus began to develop fast. It took her only going nine steps to complete the process which normally takes nine months. Then came mother Parvati to her. Ashamed of himself the boy ran away, and the girl began to weep. "You have treasure in your womb. Why do you weep my girl?" said Parvati, giving her a tender caress. The girl sat down to deliver her children. One, two, three and then gradually scores, hundreds and thousands of them were born. After giving birth to them all, the mother died. "From whose breasts are we to drink our milk? What are we to eat?" asked the numerous new born children. Mahadeo asked them to go to the *Bar* tree to drink its milk.

Mahadeo resumed his work in his *dahi* field, and when he had enough rice for them all, he gave a handful of it to every one of them, "Eat and live now," he said to them all.

THE CREATION OF SOME ANIMAL SPECIES

As yet there was no specialization of functions, and nearly everything was in a chaos. Determined to evolve order out of it, Mahadeo prepared himself for a long tour. Starting on his journey he said to Parvati, "My work is yet incomplete. Let me go and finish it".

He went into the jungle and made various things. He made the plough and other agricultural implements. He then made *chikara*, *baja*, *nisan*, *mohri* and several other varieties of musical instruments. He discovered iron. Later he worked out bamboo into several patterns of baskets. For twelve long years he worked and worked and worked there without returning home even for a day.

Parvati waited for him long but in vain. At last she decided to send a message to him. "Why is it that Mahadeo is not returning home?" She asked herself, "has he forgotten me? or has he married some other woman?" She tried to sleep, but she became restless in her bed. She took up her water pot and went to the river for her bath. There she took out some dirt from her body and made the image of a spotted deer from it. She then gave life to it and ordered it to go to Mahadeo. "Teeh, teeh" cried the spotted deer near Mahadeo. Mahadeo simply looked him once and resumed his work.

Parvati decided to send some one again. She took out some dirt from her body, made an image of a panther and gave it life. She marked its body with her finger tips and said, "Go my son. Find out your father and bring him to me." The panther went. Mahadeo once again merely looked at it and resumed his work.

Determined to call Mahadeo back, Parvati made a tiger out of the dirt of her body. From the flour of *ranikajar* rice, soot, red clay, and *harduli* (wild turmeric) she made white, black, red and yellow stripes on its body. When she gave it life, the tiger roared aloud. Afraid of her own creation, Parvati went inside the house.

"Tell me mother, why did you make me?" asked the tiger.

"Go and bring back your father," said Parvati.

With the approach of the tiger the whole forest was disturbed. In dismay wild animals ran helter-skelter. Birds began to weep. Hearing the tiger's voice Mahadeo also became cautious. Picking up some pieces of wood he made a *sonkukur* (wild dog). With a powerful *man-*

tra he gave it life. The dog pursued the tiger. The tiger ran for its life to mother Parvati. When the *sonkukur* pursuing the tiger reached Parvati she was cleaning the cooking utensils and her hands were blackened with soot. She checked the dog and giving it a tender touch on face and tail she said, "You two are brothers. Do not quarrel with each other." From that day the wild dog has a black face and a black tail.

ORIGIN OF THE CASTES AND OCCUPATIONS

Mahadeo had by now created a number of instruments and implements. He piled them all on the bank of the river and began throwing them one by one into it. From the river different people seized different things. Those who got the *nagar* (plough) took to agriculture, those who got the drums became Gandas, those who got *kargha* became Kostas, those who got razors became Nais. Thus the different people got their different professions. There was one who got only a basket, and did not know what to do with it.

Having done this, Mahadeo went to see whether all was going on well in the World. Different people were working out their destinies in the stations of life assigned to them by Mahadeo. Mahadeo saw the Nai, Dhobi, Ganda, Panka, Kumbhar, Gonds and all others at their professions one by one; till at last he discovered the man with the basket. He was lying in the dust. "Why? Why are you here? Why do you not work?" asked Mahadeo.

"What am I to do? I have only this basket," he said.

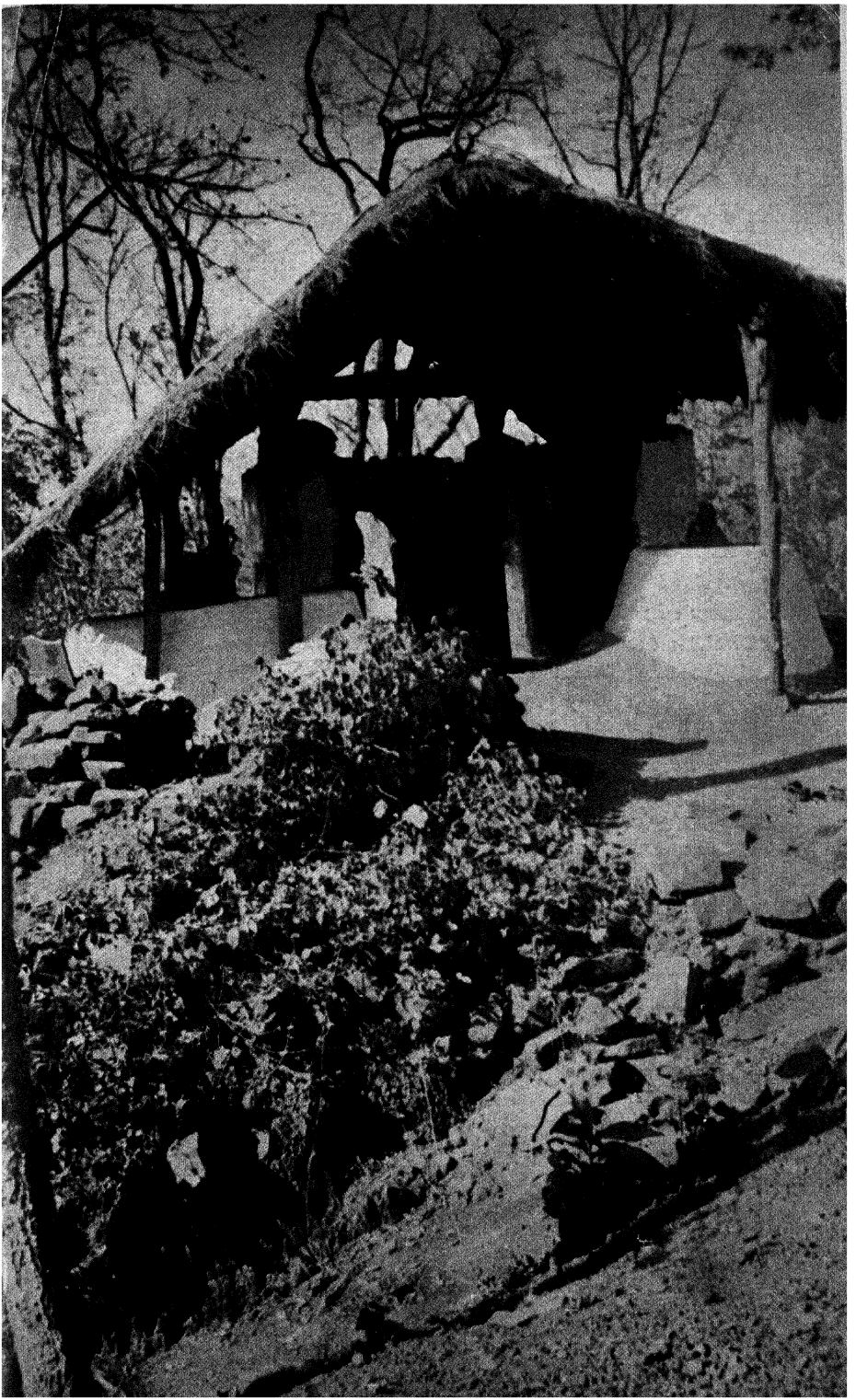
Hearing this Mahadeo gave his axe and bow and arrow to him and said, "Take these and remain faithful to them. Get your food from the jungle and from *dahi*; you and your womenfolk can make bamboo baskets." He was a Kamar. Till today he is faithful to the words of god Mahadeo.

II

RELIGION

THE KAMAR PANTHEON

A close observation of the Kamar pantheon reveals to us that there are several distinct categories of gods and deities who are worshipped by them. Firstly, the cult of *Gata-Dooma*, i.e., *Mata* and the



Crossing the River

ancestral spirits, is universal. The *Mata* who is lodged with the ancestral spirits on a special platform in the cooking room is the *Dharti-mata* (Mother Earth) from 'whose womb all are born.' The Kamars think it absolutely necessary to worship this 'mother of mothers'. Before they begin drinking liquor they offer a drop or two to her. In the second category, can be placed the various local deities and *Mata*. Among the Pahar-patiya Kamars of Mainpur circle, Budha-raja is worshipped and is given a place on the platform of the *Gata-Dooma*. The Kamars of Nawagarh, Chhura and Gariaband tracts worship Dulhadeo who has been given a place on the *Gata-Dooma* platform by them. All these are their *pogri* deota, i.e., family gods.

Outside the house but within the tribal settlement itself the Kamars keep and worship different goddesses who are all generically called *Mata*. Among these *Mai* is the goddess of small-pox, and *Devi* is the goddess of Cholera. There are also the *Badi-mata*, *Manjhli-mata*, *Senduri-mata* and *Chhoti-mata*, i.e., Eldest Mother, Mother next to the Eldest, Mother with vermilion colour and the Youngest Mother respectively. The worship of all these *Mata* differs from region to region; mostly, according to the local emphasis given by the neighbouring Hindu village-folk. In a special hut just adjoining his house, the Baiga of Sandholi has all these six goddesses under one roof. Besides explaining to me the characteristics of the *Devi* and *Mai* he could not point out any substantial difference between the various other goddesses beyond saying that they are the goddesses of various types of small-pox. In Birodar only *Devi*, *Mai* and *Badi-mata* are worshipped. Similarly, in Sindhola in Mainpur, *Mai*, *Badi-mata* and *Chhoti-mata* are worshipped. All the goddesses enumerated above are exclusively kept within their settlement by the Kamars and are worshipped by themselves alone.

In the next category, can be placed the deities and goddesses who are worshipped by the Kamars and also by their neighbouring village folks belonging to different castes and tribes. At a distance from the normal Chhattisgarhi villages and the Kamar settlements, on the village boundary we often come across a hut of the *Mata* and Thakurdeo. They are village deities and are worshipped by all the Kamars and non-Kamars alike. In the same category we can class the various deities connected with territorial cults and worships. The Kamars of the villages around Bhatigarh hills near Mainpur, worship the Bha-

tigarh-mai. Those around the Bamhni hill worship Bamhnai-mai. The cult of Kachna Dhurwa is prevalent throughout the Bindranawagarh Zamindari. The chief shrine of Kachna Dhurwa is near Baruka on the Rajim-Gariaband road. According to the local tradition all the traffic on the road stops near his shrine for a while and the people passing it offer a coconut or a pice or two. It is said that a Hindu Deputy Commissioner and even a Mohammedan District Excise Officer used to stop their cars near the shrine to offer coconuts to Kachna Dhurwa. This custom is observed by the Hindus, non-Hindus and tribal people alike. In the legendary past Kachna Dhurwa had close associations with the Kamars who, therefore, still commemorate and occasionally worship him. On the Chhura-Gariaband road also, there is another shrine of Kachna Dhurwa. But it is not regarded to be as important as the other. Among the Kamars of Bindranawagarh the following legend is very popular.

THE LEGEND OF KACHNA DHURWA

The Nawagarh-raj was originally inhabited by the Kamars. Although, they had no King of their own, they were the undisputed lords of the land.

Then gradually the power of the Bhunjias increased. Chinda Bhunjia, a great fighter, became the ruler of the land. Chinda was the King, and the Chaukhutias were his *paik* (footmen). Then came the Dhurwa Gonds from Lanji, and fought against Chinda. Chinda was treacherously killed. Thus, the way was paved for the supremacy of the Dhurwas in this land.

During this period two Kamars from a distant *raj* in Orissa came to this part. Their names were Niriya and Kariya. In Sonabeda they halted with Thutwa Mahajan, who was the *phul*[1] of their father. "Where are you going boys?" asked Mahajan. "To Nawagarh", answered the boys. When they were ready to depart, they asked Mahajan to give them some money. Mahajan gave them the money, and said, "Sons, give me twelve maunds each of wax, horns, leather and honey".

[1] A ritual friendship, Cf. S. C. Dube,
"Ritual Friendship in Chhattisgarh", *Man-in-India* Vol. 29, No. 2.

In Bengarpalli they asked the Dhurwa Gonds to give them some land and shelter. The Dhurwas directed them to settle in Amatpali near Mardha.

The two brothers went to Amatpali. There they constructed a small *kundra* (temporary hut) for themselves and lived in it.

One day they went for hunting in the hills near Bengarpalli. There they saw a small *Bhengraj* bird on the top of a tree. They took it out from its nest, and took it to their *shelter*.

The next day as they woke up, they found that the *Bhengraj* bird was speaking to them. "Come father, let us go for hunting," it said to one. "Come uncle, let us go for hunting", it said to another. The two brothers went out with the bird into the jungle. The bird knew where the animals were in the jungle ; and it could even bring them near the Kamars. Every day the Kamars got plenty of *shikar*. So much so, in a few days they sent to Thutwa Mahajan, their father's *phul*, twelve maunds each of horns and leather.

The Dhurwas did not get any *shikar* in the jungle.

"What is the reason? We must find it out", they said.

The Dhurwa-raja of Milcowa asked them to find out the reason. When they discovered the secret of *Bhengraj*, they decided to kill it. In the forest near Mardha, as the bird was coming on the back of a wild animal, the Dhurwas shot it.

The two Kamar brothers were very angry when they learnt about the death of their pet *Bhengraj*. They resolved to avenge their loss. They left the Nawagarh-raj and went back to Orissa. For twelve years, they served a King there ; and made *tokna*, *supa*, *chariya*, etc., for him. The King was very much pleased with them, and gave them a good reward.

The two brothers had not yet forgotten the loss of their dear *Bhengraj* bird, nor had they given up their determination to avenge the Dhurwas. With the money they got from the King in reward they went to the North and from there they brought the forces of man-eating *Munguls*.

The man-eaters created a havoc in the Nawagarh-raj. The Dhurwas did not know what to do. They ran to the Kamars for help. When armed Kamars came in large numbers for their help, Dhurwas were also inspired to fight back the enemies. The jungle-folks orga-

nized themselves and armed with their bow and arrows, *barchhi*, *ballam*,* etc. they began fighting the man-eaters.

The man-eaters were not very brave, but they were treacherous and cunning. Half the *Munguls* fought the Kamars, and the other half went in units to the Kamar settlements to eat their women and children. When a parrot brought the news of the death of their wives and children, the fighting Kamars became desparate. They began fighting the enemy without any care for their lives.

In one of these battles, Singal Sah, the chief of the Dhurwas was killed. His queen, Gangi Dhurwin, who was pregnant, was alone in the village. When she found the village surrounded by the enemy on all sides, she jumped off from a high hill-top with the intention of committing suicide. But destiny had something different in store for her. Like a flower she fell on a rock ; her body was not injured. even slightly.

Mara Manjhi (Kamar) came to know about it and decided to rescue the queen to a place of safety. He went to her and said, "O queen, in your womb you have the king of our land. Come with me. I will take you to some place where you and your child will be safe".

Mara Manjhi (Kamar) took her to the Patna-raj, and kept her in the house of a Brahmin. He then made a little wooden sword, and giving it to the queen he said, "Take it, Queen mother. When our King is born, present it to him on my behalf".

The queen worked as a maid servant in the house of the Brahmin. One day as she was taking out *Kachra* (rubbish) for throwing it on the *ghurwa* (the place where dust and rubbish are thrown), she delivered a male child. The child was called Kachna Dhurwa.

In the Nawagarh-raj, at this time, the Kamars were desperately fighting the man-eaters. They gradually drove them away from the Nawagarh-raj. On the bank of the Pairi river near Baruka, all the surviving man-eaters surrendered themselves to the Kamars. On the *dand-ghat* the heads of all of them were cut off. From that day, man-eaters do not cross the border of the Bindranawagarh-raj and never enter its territory.

Having killed all the *Munguls* the Kamars went into the Dhamtari-raj to find out wives for themselves as the wives and children of most of them were eaten away by the *Munguls*.

* Different types of spears.

In Patna, Kachna slowly began to grow. He was the son of a king and had martial blood in his veins. As a child he was very naughty.

When the women-folk went out to fetch water, he used to break their earthen pots with his *gulel*. When they took out brass vessels, he broke them with iron arrows.

The complaint reached the King of Patna. He summoned the boy to his court.

"Who are you?" asked the king.

"He is the son of a poor woman", said Gangi Dhurwin, the Queen.

But the king knew that such an extraordinary boy could not be the son of an ordinary woman. He asked the same question again. When the question was put to him thrice, Kachna Dhurwa boldly came forward and said, "I am Kachna Dhurwa, son of the Dhurwa King of Nawagarh''.

"You will have to prove that" said the king.

On the seventh day, the king summoned Kachna Dhurwa to his court.

In the middle of the court he had kept a plantain tree inside which a thick iron rod was inserted.

"If you are Kachna Dhurwa, cut off this plantain tree with one stroke of the sword", said the king.

Kanchna Dhurwa smiled. He took up the wooden sword made for him by Mara Manjhi (Kamar) and with only one stroke of it, he cut the tree into two pieces.

The king was very much pleased with Kachna Dhurwa ; and gave him the kingdom of Bindranawagarh. Here Kachna Dhurwa lived and ruled for many years. He fought and won many battles. He won success after success, till at last he was killed by Bhilai Mata, with whose sister he fell in love. His headless body still lies in Dabha- Kareli and his head is in Nawagarh.

From the various *mantras* recited by the Kamar magicians, we get the names of several other gods, and goddesses also, such as: Parmatma, Basung-nag, Bir-mati, Dharan-mai, Dai Jimindarin, Gadhia, Garh-mati, Chinkaur-mata, Dattesari, Ranchandi and Kalha-kuanwar. Besides these, we find that in their tribal mythology an important place has been given to Mahadeo, Pandwa, Bhagwan and Hanuman. But their worship has not been institutionalized,

It is interesting to note that the Kamars have no definite ideas about the forms and characteristics of their deities. The mental images of their gods and goddesses which the Kamars possess are very vague and flimsy. "*Deota hai ohar to, okhar bat la ka janbo*—that is a deity, how can we know anything about him," is the characteristic answer we get from all Kamars if we confront them with questions regarding the forms and characteristics of their deities. Indeed very few Kamars are well versed in the religious myths and legends of the tribe, and even the Baigas like Bhainsa, Chuniya and Latti who are recognized to be experts in matters of tribal religion, called throw very little light on the subject.

The following is all that Bhainsa could tell me about the deities:

Mahadeo is the greatest of all gods. In his *jata* (bun of hair) he holds the sky and the earth. He is a great god, and does not commonly interfere with the lives of men.

Next to Mahadeo comes Bhagwan. His form is that of a man. The *Jiv* of a person goes away to Bhagwan after death. Sometimes Bhagwan spares a *Jiv* which is born in a human form again.

Pandvas are five brave fighters. They mount on flying horses and tour all over the world. Hanuman is the greatest of all fighters.

Dulhadeo's appearance is similar to that of a man. He walks on foot. He is not very difficult to deal with. 'You only offer him a little of *hom-kuhra* periodically and he remains contented.'

Thakurdeo is the vicar of Bhagwan. He keeps a watch on all the villages. He rides a white horse, and puts on a sacred thread. He stays at one place, but keeps his watch in all directions. He is very helpful in undoing the evils wrought by ghosts and malevolent spirits. His wife Thakurain puts on only a *suta* round her neck and no other ornament. They have in all twenty one sons but they are not worshipped.

Mata Dai is extremely beautiful. Sometimes she looks very young, 'like a girl of nine years'; sometimes she looks 'like a beautiful maiden of sixteen years'. She puts on ornaments on all parts of her body. She also puts on a vermilion mark on her forehead.

Among the Kamars the belief in *Jiv*, which may in other words be described as the 'soul substance,' is universal. It is the *Jiv* which keeps a man living, walking and talking. When this substance leaves the body, man ceases to live; it is only his *madhi* which remains. Death

occurs when the *Jiv* leaves the body permanently. Encircled within the body itself the *Jiv* is always restless. Therefore, leaving the body motionless in the nights (and also occasionally during the day) the *Jiv* temporarily goes out to roam about in the wide world. Sometimes it visits markets, sometimes it goes to fares; and occasionally it may visit beautiful women of its choice. All dream experiences are realities encountered by the *Jiv* in its ramblings. The trees also have *Jiv*. 'What else is it except the *Jiv* which keeps a tree green?'. asked Latti, explaining to me that although the trees can not move they do possess a *Jiv* which often goes out.

The gods and deities worshipped by the Kamars are believed to safeguard jealously their legitimate rights and interests. If they do not get their due in proper time they retaliate very seriously. The following incident witnessed and recorded by us at Chikhli, furnishes an example of the wrath of a deity :

In the fishing expedition described in chapter two, Dukalu's son Sonsah sustained a minor injury in his leg. It was a small cut which bled slightly for some time. A paste of leaves was applied to it and Sonsah got much relief. But the next day he suddenly got pain in his wound. Within half an hour he was screaming with pain, saying that it had become unbearable. "It cannot be an ordinary cut. The trouble must be different," said Dukalu. The Baiga was called. Dukalu offered himself for being 'ridden' by the *deota* who was troubling Sonsah. *Hom-kuhra* with *sarai* gum was offered. The Baiga began reciting the following in a sing-song manner : "Deota, Devi, whoever you be, come and tell us who you are. Tell us why you are troubling the boy . If you want *pooja* we will give you *pooja* ; if you want fowl we will give you fowl ; if you want goat we will give you goat . Come *devi*, come *deota* tell us now".

In half a minute Dukalu began shivering and muttering some unintelligible words. In two minutes he was in a trance. "Who are you?" asked the Baiga. But the *deota* did not reply. After repeated questions Dukalu said, "I am *Ghatwari deota*. I did not get my *pooja*".

"We will give you the *pooja* but leave the boy" said the Baiga. "Within a month I must get it", warned the *deota*. Dukalu then gradually cooled down and within five minutes he became normal. Strangely enough Sonsah got much relief.

I have several such cases on record but this is the only one actually witnessed by me.

The Kamar certainly fears his gods, but he does not seem to have any great love or respect for them. Heerasingh threw away his gods as they did not help him in saving the life of his son. The Kamar often talks lightly about his gods and even makes fun of them. The following are some of the remarks of the Kamars regarding gods, which I recorded at random during the course of my investigations : "Gods do not forget to take their *Kukri* (fowl) and *bokra* (goat), but they forget helping us when time comes". "Bhagwan helps a corrupt official, but kills the jungle Kamar". "*Andhra he Bhagwan. Jekhar ghar ath hain ola das dethe ; jekhar ghar lutur puttur ek than hai, okhar la lethe*—Bhagwan is blind. One who has already eight he gives him ten ; one who has with difficulty only one, he takes it away from him".

About the religion of the primitive tribes in India J. H. Hutton has remarked, 'tribal religion represents as it were, surplus material not yet built into the temple of Hinduism'. Today there is not much to distinguish between the tribal religion of the Kamars and the Hindusim of the agricultural castes in the villages of Chhattisgarh. The cult of *Gata-Dooma* is present not only among aboriginal Gonds and Bhunjias but also among professional Hindu castes such as Teli, Raot and Kewat. Dulhadeo, *Mata* and Thakurdeo are also worshipped by the aboriginals and non-aboriginals alike. In his *The Loss of Nerve*, Verrier Elwin has remarked, "The tribal people always are willing to worship a few more gods if by doing so they can gain some material or social advantage". This is true of the Kamars. The Kamar religion today has neither the picturesqueness and excitement of primitive animism, nor yet does it possess the philosophical heights and spiritual depths of Hinduism.

CEREMONIALS AND FESTIVITIES

In order of time the following are the chief religious ceremonies of the Kamars :

i. Hareli
ii. Pora
iii. Nawakhai
iv. Dasera

v. Diwali
vi. Chherchhera
vii. Fagun-tihar

Of these Hareli is celebrated in the Hindu month of *Sawan* (July-August) and Pora in the month of *Bhadon* (August-September). Nawakhai, i.e., New Eating precedes the famous Hindu festival of Dasera. A day for the Nawakhai is fixed, as soon as a part of the new crop is ready. The Dasera and Diwali of the Kamars coincide with these Hindu festivals falling approximately in the months of October—November. Chherchhera is celebrated when all the crops are completely harvested. Fagun-tihar coincides with the Holi festival of the Hindus. Of these the Kamars regard Hareli and Nawakhai as more important.

On the Hareli day, the Baiga of the settlement gets up early in the morning, takes his bath and collects a bundle of the branches of the *neem* or *bhilwan* tree. On his way back to the village from the jungle, he keeps some of these branches in the shed of the *Mata* on the village boundary. In the village he fixes a few of these branches under the roofs of all the houses in the village. As this is a very important ceremonial different branches of the same *mai ghar* (main house) gather under its roof to worship the *Gata-Dooma*. The first thing which every family has to do in the morning is to offer a little quantity of salt to the cattle. If a family has no cattle of its own it should give salt to the cattle of some one else. All then go out to take their bath. On return from the river the menfolk get ready to offer sacrifice and *hom-kuhra* to the deities and the women assist them in completing the arrangements. All then assemble in the cooking room in the corner of which the platform of *Gata-Dooma* is located. Women withdraw from the scene. Then the chief member of the family, under whose roof the deities are lodged, keeps five leaves in a line infront of the platform of *Gata-Dooma*. He then keeps small quantities of rice on each of them. The chicken intended for sacrifice is then brought in and left there. The chicken generally begins eating from one of the leaves. This signifies the acceptance of the worship by the *Gata-Dooma*. The chicken is immediately sacrificed with a knife. When a goat is to be sacrificed it is also brought into the room and is left free to eat the rice from one of the leaves. When it has eaten a little quantity it is killed . Then, *hom-kuhra* is offered to the

deities by burning some *sarai* gum. As the *sarai* gum is being put in the fire the person performing the rite says the following *mantra*:

"*Jai jai mata. Dekh mata bal bachcho baniyo that. Dekh Devi-dhuki bachchala dhakka nai yeu. Pardes jatan sahta thatas. Hajar thatas. Hajar admi mata to jaga jawan, dhakka nai yeu. Tum devi sahta thatas. Dekh Thakurdeo daiki laika wagh ke jhaon jataon, jungle jataon sahta thatas. Gai gour dhor dangar jungle jataon sahta thatas. Dekh Gata, dekh Dooma, dekh Dulhadeo, kadha mandi, sakal jano dhakka nai yeu.. Sahta thatas.* —Victory unto *Mata* ! Look *Mata* let our children be well. Look Devi-dhuki ! let not trouble come to our children. When we go out help us. All persons from here, *Mata*! wherever they go help them ; let not trouble come to them. You *Devi* help us. Look Thakurdeo ! women and children go where tigers live, they go to jungle, help them. Cows and cattle go to jungle, help them. Look *Gata*, look *Dooma*, look Dulhadeo ! let not trouble come to any person, anyone who belongs to this family. Help us".

This being over, the menfolk come out. In the verandah they drink the liquor specially bought or distilled for the occasion. The women start cooking. On this day the Kamars do not go out on any economic pursuits.

Pora is primarily observed by the Baiga and the boys and girls of the village. A day previous to *Pora*, the Baiga keeps a fast. In the night he goes out of the village, takes his bath, fetches water for himself and cooks his food. On this day he eats only once and it is necessary that the food which he eats should not be cooked or even touched by a woman. On the next, i.e., the *Pora* day he gets up very early in the morning and takes his bath. Then unnoticed by any woman he proceeds to the *Mata Kuriya* with six branches of *dhan*, some vermilion, collyrium, five black bangles, one *fundra*, two *khilwa* and two fowls. There he keeps all the offerings before the *Mata* and sacrifices the fowls reciting the following *mantra* :

"*Laha pooja laha.*

Anna Kumari, Jarhibai, Lali-mati, Pinwari-mati, Kari-mati, Chokhi-mati, Sonamati, yo pooja laha.—Take, accept worship. *Anna-Kumari, Jarhibai, Lali-mati, Pinwari-mati, Kari-mati, Chokhi-mati, Sona-mati* accept this worship".

He then digs a small pit in the earth and keeping the offerings therein he covers it. Returning to the village he distributes a little

quantity of *gur* to all the persons in the settlement. This *gur* is previously bought by raising a subscription from the different families living in the village. The young girls are then given new baskets, winnowing fans, *chulha*, etc. specially made for their play. The boys play with earthen bulls bought from the neighbouring Kumhars.

Nawakhai, or the New Eating ceremony is another important festival of the Kamars. The date for it is not fixed. It may be celebrated at any time in the months of *Bhadon* or *Kuar* (August-September-October) when a part of the new crop is ready. The day for it is fixed by consultation among the members of the local group.

On the day fixed for the festival, the Kamars leave their homes early in the morning. From their fields or *dahi* plots, they reap some paddy crop and bring it home. After the return of the menfolk the women go for bath. In the meanwhile men from different families make for their homes a new wooden *karchhul*, i.e., a large wooden spoon. After their bath, the women take out the paddy and boil it in a little quantity of water in a new earthen pot. The paddy is only a little less than half-boiled when it is taken out. In small quantities it is slightly dried on an earthen pan and is then pounded with a *moosal*. The *dhenki* is not used on this day. After husking, the rice is taken out and is cooked in another new *handi*. When it is cooked they keep the pot before the platform of the *Gata-Dooma*. This cooked new rice is meant only for the *Dooma* ; the *Mata* and Dulhadeo or Budharaja are separately given some uncooked rice from the new crops.

On this day they do not sacrifice goats or fowls. They simply offer *hom-kuhra* by burning a little quantity of *sarai* gum. While offering the *hom-kuhra* the chief of the family says:

"O, *Mata*! O, Dulhadeo! We offer you the grain of our new crop. O, *Dooma* we offer you the rice of the new crop. Eat it. Accept our worship. Help us all, men, women and children. Accept our worship."

Although they do not sacrifice fowls or goats on this day, they do not still miss meat on such an occasion. They can not kill any bird or animal with a knife or any sharp weapon on this day. They strike very heavy blows with a rod on the goat or fowl; and when it dies they cook it. Liquor adds to the festivity of the day. The whole day is, then, passed in talk and merriment; occasionally in singing and dancing.

On the Dasera day, the Kamars offer both, sacrifice and *hom-kuhra* to the deities.

They take their bath in the morning. People belonging to the family assemble in the cooking room at about 10 a.m. and sacrifice a fowl near the platform of the *Gata-Dooma*. Then burning some *sarai* gum they recite a *mantra*, such as:

"*Dekh Dulhadeo! dekh Mata! jito achhas jale sukhe thak. Kadha mandi, laro baro sukhe sukh thak. Jhuke posa. Jo du than dhor dangar gai goru achhe to sukhe thaon. Path thokun ne charaun dar to pun an.* —Look Dulhadeo! look *Mata*! keep happy all those who are here. Keep happy the young children and all others who belong to the family. Whatever cows and cattle we have let them be happy. When we leave them to graze let them return in complete safety." If they can afford they offer a coconut also. When the worship is over, they drink liquor.

Like their neighbouring Hindu village-folk the Kamars do not observe Diwali with much pomp and festivity. Those who have cattle of their own give them a little *khichadi* to eat. They then offer *hom-kuhra* to the deities. This is all. No special preparations are done for this day; nor do they light a large number of tiny lamps as their Hindu neighbours do.

On the Chherchhera festival which falls on the full-moon day in the month of *Pus* the Kamars get up in the morning and make their appearance funny by applying ashes to their bodies. Some of them put on masks made of dried gourd. Some are clad in wild bear's skin. Still others may tie various jungle creepers to their bodies. When they are thus dressed, they go in a team to the Hindu villages in the neighbourhood. Standing before every house they cry '*Chher-Chhera, Mai Kothi ke dhan her hera*—Chher-chhera, take out the paddy from the main paddy bin.' From every house they collect small quantities of paddy and rice. When the collection is over, they return home, take their bath, cook and eat the rice. No *hom-kuhra* or sacrifice etc. is offered on this day.

To the Kamars, Fagun-tihar is more important than Diwali or Chher-chhera as they specially worship Thakurdeo on this day.

After taking their bath, the male members of the family assemble in the cooking room. *Hom-kuhra* with *sarai* gum is offered. Then the chief of the family takes the *muhu-kukri*, i.e., fresh half-blown

flowers of *mohua*, washes them with fresh water and keeping them in front of the platform, he says:

"Look Thakurdeo, from now we will begin collecting *mohua*. With food or without food we will collect the flowers. We will eat it, our children will eat it. Let us be happy, let our children be happy. Let us not meet a tiger or panther in the jungle; let our cattle not meet a tiger or panther in the jungle." If they can, they may sacrifice a fowl. Meat or pork is considered to be a necessity on this day. Liquor is also drunk in liberal quantities.

It is interesting to note in this connection that although the Fagun-tihar of the Kamars coincides with the famous Holi festival of the Hindus, the Kamars do not burn a bon-fire like their Hindu neighbours.

III

Magic and Witch-craft

The following legend explains the origin of magic and witchcraft as the Kamars understand it:

There was Guru Dhanetter. His powers were greater than those of Bhagwan. After every twelve years he used to give a *hank* (call) and all persons who had died during the preceding twelve years came to life again. Bhagwan could not get enough *Jiv* to create new human beings, for Guru Dhanetter brought back every dead person to life.

Morning and evening Guru Dhanetter used to drink liquor. After every twelve years he used to tour round the world once.

Bhagwan said, "He must be killed"

Why?

How else could Bhagwan get *jiv* to change the Old into the New?

So Bhawgan became a stick of gold and lay in the jungle. Dhanetter Guru was coming that way. He had nothing in his hands. Holding its bottom portion Guru Dhanetter picked up the stick of gold. Bhagwan instantaneously turned himself into a she-cobra and bit Guru Dhanetter.

Guru Dhanetter knew that he would die. He called his seven disciples, and asked them to cook his flesh in seven earthen pots. They did so. To see if the flesh was cooked, the senior disciple took out seven small pieces of flesh from the seven pots and ate them. The

smell of Guru Dhanetter's flesh reached Bhagwan. He came running to the spot.

"Let us eat the flesh," said the disciples.

"What? Will you eat the flesh of your father?" intervened Bhagwan.

"How can we eat the flesh of our father?" said the seven disciples.

On the advice of Bhagwan they threw all the seven pots in the river. The eldest disciple who had tasted the seven pieces of Guru Dhanetter's flesh, got seven *gun* of his *Guru*. He became the greatest Baiga. The others did not get anything.

In the river five naked women were bathing. They were Pat Savrin, Nitay Dhobin, Chhutki Chamrin, Lohkhai Loharin and Kari Kewatin.

'O, look to the pots' exclaimed they. They looked into the pots and found that they contained very tasteful meat. Each of them tasted a piece of it. As the meat entered their stomach they also got some of the *vidya* of Guru Dhanetter.

But Guru Dhanetter's disciple knew it through his magic. He chanted a powerful spell. The earthen pots stopped where they were. The new Guru covered himself with the skin of a tiger and put on the horns of a deer. Then he went out in search of the persons who had eaten the flesh of his father, Guru Dhanetter. "You ate the flesh of my father," he exclaimed, "but remember, none of you have eaten more than one *boti*. Altogether you have eaten five, I have eaten seven. I am more powerful. I will kill you all."

"No Guru! you are ten we are nine; you are far superior to us. Whenever you like you can tie us with your *mantra*. We will always be subordinate to you", they said.

The Guru was pleased and spared their lives. Those women became *tonhi* (witches) and from that very day they began spreading their *maya*. Only the Baiga can undo their evils.

The Kamar Baigas inherit only a grain or two of the power which originally belonged to Guru Dhanetter. Surrounded as they are by a world of malevolent ghosts and spirits, it is with the help of this power that they seek to obliterate and mortify the forces and powers which cause disharmony in the equilibrium of their tribal life. Witchcraft originally belongs to Savara, Dhobi, Chamar, Lohar and Kewat women. A Kamar woman may be initiated into the mysteries of it by

a witch of one of these tribes and castes. Occasionally, on the outbreak of cholera a Kamar woman may be suspected of being a witch and beaten for it. Yet very few Kamar women have this evil reputation. The constant effort of the Kamar Baigas is to save the tribe from the mischief of witches belonging to other tribes and castes.

The office of the Baiga is not hereditary, and cannot be inherited. A person can not be initiated into its mysteries and techniques even by an established Baiga. It is only when one gets his *achchhar* from a supernatural source that he becomes a Baiga. Once in his early youth Bhainsa was very seriously ill. He was unconscious and 'nearly dead.' Some people thought that he had actually died. It was then that he got his *achchhar* and gained an insight into his profession. Dokri Kamar was suffering from small-pox. For about three hours he was unconscious, almost lifeless. In a state of delirium he got his *achchhar*. From that day he became a *guni* and is very popular.

The Kamars distinguish between several kinds of Baiga. The *dih-Baiga* is the village priest who carries out the routine of the socio-religious life of the village. *Nari-chhuwaiya* Baiga is one who knows how to feel the pulse and can administer herbal medicines, decoctions, etc. The *jhad-fukaiya* Baiga knows valuable and powerful spells and can remove the evil influences of ghosts and witches. Far superior to all these is the real *guni* Baiga who can contact all deities and can even communicate with Bhagwan. He is very powerful and succeeds in bringing relief where all other Baigas fail.

The Kamars in general do not look to the ordinary *dih-Baiga* with much expectation. He officiates in religious rites and ceremonies and undertakes divination of the routine type. But a higher Baiga specially the *guni* is expected to show quick results. If his efforts fail, he is ridiculed as an impostor or *fokat-kukri-khaiya*, i.e., one who only knows eating fowl for nothing. The Baigas are fed by the people to whose houses they are called; and when they return home they are given suitable *bidai* in cash or kind. The fowls or goats sacrificed are partly shared by the Baigas. Their reward naturally depends upon the results. If the patient dies they may get only some grain and a fowl, or in rare cases nothing at all. But if a difficult patient recovers, besides their normal *bidai* (which may go upto Re. 1/4/--) they may demand a goat or a cow.

In the general scheme of the socio-religious life of the Kamars, the Baiga occupies a place of considerable importance. Besides officiating at rites and ceremonies, his services are required for the divination of the causes of disease, difficulty, death, etc.

For the purposes of divination he employs three different techniques: *Supa bajana* (taking sound in a winnowing fan), *dhan ginna* (counting rice grains) and *jot dekhana* (seeing the flame).

Supa bajana—The Kamar Baigas claim that when they take paddy in a *supa* and recite their *mantra* the deities give them a sound which enables them to understand the cause of difficulty, disease or death. The technique is simple. The Baiga takes a *supa* and takes five handfuls of paddy in it. Spreading the paddy in the *supa* with his hand he begins reciting a *mantra* like this :

"*Johar johar* Parmatma Guru, Dhartimata, Basung nag, Birmati, Dharan-mai, Dai Jimindarin, Thakurdeo, Gadhia, Kachna-Dhurwa, Garh-mati, Chinkaur-mata, Dantesari, Bamhni-mai, Ranchandi, Kalha-kuanwar, the trouble which the patient has, let it go soon. Remove his trouble soon. Give us word ; but let it not be false". If one of the deities named in the above *mantra* is responsible for the disease, he gives a jerk to the Baiga's hand when his name is uttered. The Baiga then proceeds to offer *pooja* and sacrifices to that deity. This is expected to remove the cause of illness. If there is no response in the first effort, names of a few other deities may be added while the *mantra* is being recited for a second time. If five efforts do not give any result, the Baiga tries the other method of *dhan ginna*.

Dhan ginna-The Baiga takes five handfuls of *dhan* in a *supa* ; and picking up a few grains at random he counts them. He does it thrice. If the number of grains in all the countings is odd it is taken to indicate that the sickness is purely natural and ordinary ; it is not caused by any hostile deity or spirit. But if the number is even, it indicates the presence of a deity or spirit who is displeased. They then proceed to trace the source of the trouble. One by one the Baiga names deities and various kinds of spirits and takes out a few grains and counts them. If the grains picked up with the name of a particular deity or spirit are even in number his presence is thought to be likely. But they do not take it for granted, unless it is testified by one of the *panchdeo* (five gods). In the name of Mahadeo, Parvati, Bramha, Bhagwan

and *Mata*, five times a few grains are taken out from the *supa* and are kept separately at five different places. They are then separately counted. If the number of grains in all five is odd, it means that the five gods have not confirmed the finding of the Baiga. But if the number is even, in even one of the five, the finding of the Baiga is confirmed. He then immediately takes steps to please the hostile deity or spirit.

Jot dekhana—The Baiga keeps a *diya* before him ; and begins seeing its flame. Silently he says the follwoing *mantra* :

"Gods of the sky, gods of the world, gods of the under-world ! Tell me what the cause of the trouble is ! I name you one by one ; I name the spirits one by one; whoever is displeased must come and tell me. What you want, we will give". He then names the deities one by one. If one of the deities is displeased the flame in the *diya* will rise a little when the Baiga utters his name. If none of the gods or goddesses is displeased, he will name the various types of spirits one by one. The rising flame gives him the clue. He then applies himself to the task of offering worship and sacrifice to the offended deity or spirit.

The gods and deities can be easily pleased. *Mata* requires a lemon, a flag, a fowl, an egg, a handful of paddy and some vermilion. Others may be satisfied with ordinary *hom-kuhra*, and the sacrifice of a fowl or goat. The more adamant ones do not yield unless they are promised regular worship and periodical sacrifices.

Churelin, *Raksa* and other hostile spirits are driven out of the village, and tied down by thrusting a nail in the earth in some solitary and unfrequented place. The spirits of the persons dying an abnormal death are also similarly tied down with special rites. Bhainsa always thrusts seven large iron nails in the earth with his powerful *mantra* believing that the power of the hostile ghost or spirit will be ineffective for seven generations.

When a *tonhi* is detected, the Baiga is asked to tie her down. The Baiga fixes his plans but does not disclose them to anybody. One night he stealthily goes to the *tonhi's* house, and thrusts a nail in some part of her house, saying the following *mantra* :

"Parmatma Guru, Mahadeo, Parvati ! tie her down. Tie down the *bir* of the *tonhi*. Let her power not work from today. My tying down of the *tonhi* should be equal to her tying down by Mahadeo".

Very few Kamar Baigas are universally acknowledged today to be real *guni*. Although Bhainsa, Dokri, Chuniya, Latti, Sukhru and a few others enjoy considerable local reputation, none of the mcomes to the high standard of late Darbari's achievements. Today the Gond Baiga of Bengarpalli is acknowledged to be the best in Bindranawagarh, and even the Kamars call him in times of difficulty. Bhainsa claims that he is at least equally good, if not better. He claims to have given life to a girl who had actually died. But his claims have not yet been recognized ; nor has his merit been tested. Yet his inexhaustible stock of tribal songs and an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the legendary past of the tribe has made him very popular, and he has now a very flourishing practice. The Kamars themselves realize and confess, that they have few *guni* Baigas who really can help them in times of extraordinary difficulty. They have therefore become increasingly dependent upon the Gonds and Bhunjias, who have in the recent past given them proof of greater magical skill and ability.

CHAPTER VII

CULTURE CONTACTS

Primitive cultures are not static, they are dynamic. The Kamar society is not an isolated and closed group. The Kamars, claiming to be the true autochthones of the land, had developed contacts with the other tribes and castes even in the past, and their tribal mythology, legends and traditions bear ample testimony to it. There have been many changes in the social, economic and political setting of the Kamar country and consequently the Kamars have been required to adapt themselves to the changed surroundings. The changes in the socio-political and economic environment have necessitated adaptation and adjustment in their culture on a sufficiently wide scale. The picture of their tribal life that we have today is the picture of a society which has undergone enormous changes. Even the dialect which they speak now is not their own ; it is a corrupt form of the language of their Aryan invaders which they assimilated long ago.[1] The people who were described by John Ball in 1876 as 'regular Troglodytes in their habits' 'dwelling in caves' and 'existing chiefly on roots and fish', have greatly changed. Their tribal standards and ways of life have been considerably modified. Although they have maintained an admirable degree of seclusion and isolation, even their distinctive pattern of tribal life bears an unmistakable impress of the contacts and influences of their neighbours. None of the Kamars now live in caves. Even their personal standards have sufficiently changed. Today they have more clothes, better houses and they are less shy of the strangers. Many of them have now taken to plough cultivation. The virtual self-sufficiency of their tribal life has broken down and they have been left to work out the destinies and fortunes of their tribe in the competitive economics of rural Chhattisgarh. In the wake of the impact of complex alien cultures, numerous streams of culture contact have operated on a large scale in a wide area for a sufficiently

[1] "It has often been remarked as a notable fact that the very tribes that are usually regarded as the true autochthones of the country, such as the Kamar and Baiga, have lost all traces of the older Austro-asiatic languages and have entirely assimilated the speech of the Aryan invaders of their land"—Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London 1939), p. 53

long period of time. Its results are visible in almost all the facets of Kamar life.

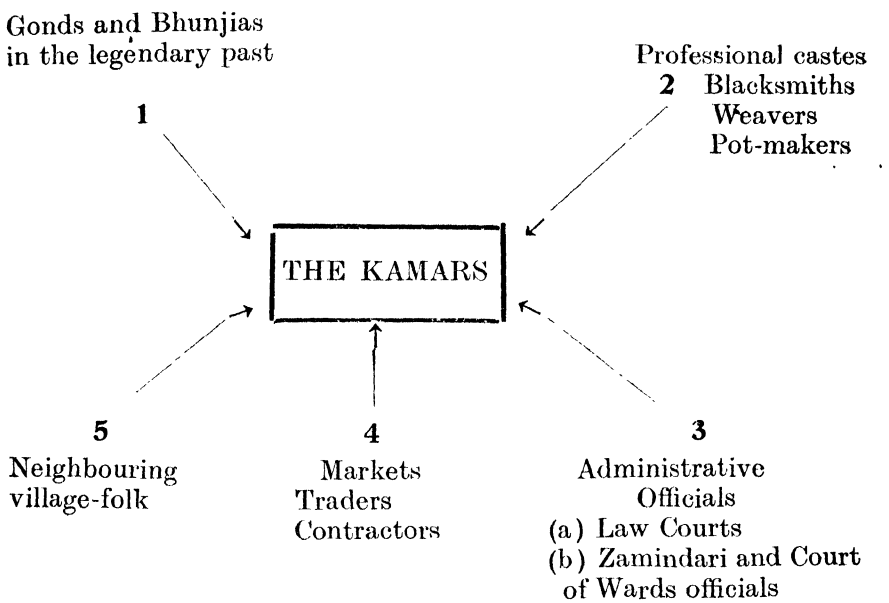
The Kamars are still at a relatively low level of primitive culture. Notwithstanding the universal operation of the forceful currents of contact, they have not lost the identity and distinctiveness of their tribal culture which shows very few signs of disintegration and degeneration. Although their contacts with the outside world are sufficiently old, the repercussions of these contacts are not markedly profound. They have not demonstrated any eagerness to take from 'civilization' all that it can offer to them. They stand at a distance, as it were, with a marked degree of aloofness, still full of suspicion, watching the tide and ebb of time in the life of their neighbouring communities. They sing of the Englishman's *raj*, where *kantopwalas* (hat-wearers) used to rule. They wonder at the railway trains and motor cars —*gadi* (vehicles) which can be driven without bullocks. They sometimes seriously talk about the wars which Gandhi Mahatma, *the king of all kings*, who in the words of Bhainsa was endowed with great magical powers used to fight with the white *sahibs*. They talk despisingly about the Englishman who put an end to their age-honoured practice of *dahi*. With suspicion they talk of the *suraj*, the reign of the congress, in which 'liquor may be completely forbidden to them' and 'they may not be allowed to eat any meat' nor will 'they be permitted to have two wives or more'. They are afraid that in this new epoch they may even lose the semblance of freedom which they possessed under the British rule.

The great political awakening which has given a new national consciousness to India during the last sixty years has left the Kamars almost untouched. The great social and economic upheavels which have stirred the bullk of Indian society to its depth, have only touched the outer fringe of Kamar society. The transition in their ways and standards of life has been very slow and gradual. Yet changes and modifications have come and have come to stay. They now form an integral part of their tribal culture.

The diagram on page 165, illustrates the main streams of contact which have influenced and changed the Kamar society.

The tribal mythology, traditions and legends of the Kamars tell us that they had close associations with the Bhunjias and the Dhurwa Gonds in the past. Although they were the original inhabitants of

the land they did not have a king of their own. Later, when Chinda (Bhunjia) ascended to power the Kamars collaborated with him. However, their connections with the Dhurwa Gonds who ruled the country afterwards were closer and more intimate. From their version



of the legend of Kachna Dhurwa we gather that it was the organized strength of the Kamar bows and arrows which induced the Dhurwa rulers of Bindranawagarh to give a bold stand to the invading hordes of man-eating *Munguls*. It was Mara Manjhi, a Kamar, who rescued Gangi Dhurwin, the widowed queen of Singal Sah Dhurwa, to the safe home of a Brahmin in the Patna *raj*. It was with the wooden sword prepared for him by Mara Manjhi that Kachna Dhurwa cut the iron-rod-fitted plantain tree which consequently won back for him the kingdom of Nawagarh. Obviously, these age-old associations between tribes which have lived in the same tract for such a long time could not have been without any mutual influence.

The contact of the Kamars with the other professional castes of this region must also be regarded as sufficiently old. Today for their arrow-heads, knives, axes and ploughshares they depend upon the village blacksmiths. The Kumhars supply them their earthen ware. The Koshta weavers give them the cloth which they need. The Gandas play the much needed music at their weddings. It is not pos-

sible for us to know whether at any level of their social development the Kamars possessed the necessary knowledge of smithery, pot-making or weaving. They have no tradition to indicate that. However, they have surrendered their drums to the Gandas in comparatively recent times, for they were threatened that unless they gave up the traditional occupation of the Gandas they would also be accorded a low and depressed status in the rural society of Chhattisgarh. It is noteworthy that the Kamars used to play their drums and other musical instruments only in their own rites and ceremonies, and not elsewhere. The Kamars in Fingeshwar still retain their drums. On the contrary the Kamars of Bindranawagarh are now being pressed to give up their *mohri* also or else the Gandas threaten them with excommunication by having recourse to the Panchayat of all the tribes and castes of the important neighbouring villages. In the social hierarchy of their Hindu neighbours, which is characterized by a certain amount of economic specialization, the Kamars have been given the monopoly of bamboo-craft. It is only in the last ten years that a number of Oriya Kandras have infiltrated into the Kamar country and are competing with them in their vocation. This inter-dependence of different tribes and castes in the village economy of Chhattisgarh has naturally been conducive to culture contacts on a sufficiently wide scale.

The British system of administration has indeed been responsible for introducing profound changes in the life and living of the Kamars. It has restricted their ancient freedom of the forest. Their practices of shifting cultivation such as *dahi*, *beora* and *guhad* have been prohibited by law. Police and Zamindari officials have increasingly interfered with their food-gathering in the jungle, specially with their *shikar*. The introduction of a common administrative system has considerably weakened their Panchayat organization. The results of their contacts with the administrative officers and the courts of law have not been altogether happy. It is significant to hear the use of an English word like 'power' from the completely illiterate members of a tribe which has at best less than half a dozen persons who barely have an apology for reading and writing Hindi. Indeed it is striking to hear from the Kamars such remarks as : *"Chaprasi sahib 'power' wala mankhe hai"*—The peon sahib (!) is a man with power ; or *"Dipty Ranger ke bad 'power' hai"*—The Deputy Ranger has great power.

From intimate personal contacts and experience I can say that the infiltration of such words in their dialect symbolizes their unfortunate contact with semi-educated but all too power-conscious and rapacious petty officials, who have been instrumental in bringing about a loss of self-respect in these people. It is interesting to note that a Kamar who is beaten with shoes by a money-lender or any one else, not in government service but belonging even to the highest caste, will immediately be outcasted; but a person beaten by a Government servant even if he belongs to the lowest caste, will be left unpunished. Old Kamars told me that a few years ago (and even now on a smaller scale) the incidents of government servants beating the Kamars, often on trifling pretexts, were so frequent that they were forced to make such an exception. The stories of extortion, bribery and corruption which we hear from the Kamars against petty Court of Wards and Zamindari officials are too many. Such are the persons who have taken the so-called 'civilization' to the remote forests and hills of the Kamar country. It is, therefore, natural that the Kamars despise them and have a hostility towards their ways.

Another important source, through which the Kamars come in contact with the outside world, is the agency of the traders, money-lenders and contractors. The Bania, Marwari and specially the Kachchhi have settled and set themselves up as small traders and money-lenders even in some of the remote parts of the interior of the Kamar country. To the Kachchhi at Mainpur, the Kamars of even some of the remote hill villages come for occasional loans. These Kachchhi Seths have been referred to in many Kamar songs. In one of the 'Turi' songs of the Mainpur Kamars, we find reference to one Kasam Seth :

The girl goes out,
Every day in the morning;
And comes back home in the evening.
She takes out the *Kosa* cocoon,
And collects lac in her basket.
For seven years she has done it,
And given all to Kasam Seth.
But Kasam Seth is a difficult man,
For with this he is not pleased.
Seven years back, they borrowed from him rupees twenty,
And having given him all this *kosa* and lac,
They have yet to pay him twenty.

The song speaks for itself.

Contractors have also had long contacts with the Kamars. The Bindranawagarh Zamindari has some of the best forests in the Central Provinces, and this has been exploited to the full, in the interest of the Zamindari. The estate is under the Court of Wards management, and its forests have been mostly worked out departmentally. The felling and floating of timber has been done almost wholly with the labour of aboriginal Kamars and Bhunjias. A part of the timber and other forest produce is leased out to various contractors. These contractors maintain their offices and a considerable staff in the Zamindari. Most of the forest work is done by the aboriginals, and since the Kamars have proportionately little plough-cultivation in comparison to the Gonds and the Bhunjias, we find that they are becoming increasingly dependent upon it for their subsistence. A large portion of the forest produce of this tract is collected for the outside markets by Kamar men, women and children. In the neighbouring Khariar Zamindari, similarly, most of the felling and floating of timber is done by the Kamars, and it is through their labour that the contractors can collect for distant markets the produce of the forests of this tract.

Weekly markets and fairs etc., also bring the Kamars into contact with the outside world. In order to sell their baskets, forest produce, etc., Kamars regularly attend the neighbouring weekly markets. Cheap goods of foreign manufacture, specially fancy articles (imported mainly from Japan in pre-war days) catch the attention of aboriginal women and children and produce in them new economic wants. Although, some Kamars still continue barter on a small scale these markets have gone a long way in educating them in competitive money economy. The annual fair at Rajim is attended by a large number of Kamars who see there for the first time some of the important contributions of modern science. It is there that some of them see the Railway train for the first time. Some of them see the movies and the circus, and carry with them to their villages their novel experiences.

Means of communication have not been sufficiently developed in the Kamar country. A second class road joins Rajim, a railway station on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, with Deobhog in the extreme south of the Raipur district. In the dry season a bus runs daily from Raipur to Gariaband, and twice a week from Gariaband to Deobhog. A similar second class road joins Chhura

with Gariaband. Raipur and Dhamtari are connected by a railway line, and the road running from Raipur to Jagdalpur passes through some portions inhabited by the Kamars. A light line of the Raipur forest tramway formerly joined Charmudya (near Dhamtari) with the remote Nagri-Sihawa where there is a considerable Kamar population. But some years ago, the working of this line was stopped by the Forest Department. These communications have increasingly brought into these parts a stream of immigrants who have settled near the Kamar villages. But the number of persons coming here for settling down has so far not been very large ; and land-alienation has almost never been a problem in this area. Although the Land Alienation Act protects the Kamars, its necessity was felt only in the Chhura circle of the Bindranawagarh Zamindari, and in the Fingeshwar Zamindari to a limited extent. There is no paucity of virgin soil in the sparsely populated areas of the Mainpur and Nawagarh circles, and the money-lenders in these parts prefer to mortgage standing crops, rather than mortgaging agricultural land which the Kamars in the hill vilages are not too unwilling to leave.

To the Kamars liquor is a physical and socio-religious necessity. They have, therefore, not yet fully accepted the excise laws. Although liquor is illicitly distilled on a considerable scale and consequently many Kamars suffer punishments of fine and imprisonment, the liquor shops are also frequently visited by them. A considerable amount of their money is drained into these shops. During the first term of the Congress Ministry in the Central Provinces, Fingeshwar Zamindari was included in the dry areas of the district, and this prohibition of liquor to the Kamars brought numerous difficulties and complications in their everyday social life.

More than all these, the influence of the neighbouring village-folk of different tribes and castes, who live in the neighbourhood of the Kamar settlements, is the most pronounced on the life and culture of these people. In matters of dress, decoration, house-building, food, etc., a large number of Kamars are trying to emulate the ways and standards of their neighbours with whom they come in an increasingly close contact.

Before we examine the social changes and incorporation of alien traits introduced in the Kamar society by the operation of these streams of contact, it is important to note that some other forces which

have been instrumental in transforming many other primitive societies of India, have left the Kamar society almost untouched.

Education has had an important role in changing the life and outlook of many Indian aboriginals. But among the Kamars it has made little headway. In the vast Bindranawagarh Zamindari, I came across only two Kamars, Mansigh of Bamhni and Kuarsah of Kochena, who can read and write a little. A third one, Parsadi Kamar can only sign his name in Hindi. In the hill villages of the Khariar Zamindari, none of the Kamars has received any schooling. In the Fingeshwar Zamindari also no one possesses even an elementary knowledge of reading and writing. None of their children attend the schools. There is almost a universal hatred among the Kamars for the school and the school teacher. If we ask them as to why they do not send their children to school, the reply that they often give is : 'The masters beat our children like bullocks'; or 'Reading and writing will be all that they will learn at the school. But will they earn?' The type of literacy which the pupils get in most of the primary schools distributed all over this area, is mostly unsuitable for aboriginal needs. Even for the Hindu boys who pass their primary school examination Hindi almost remains an alien language which they can neither write nor speak correctly. To the Kamars even Chhattisgarhi is alien, and therefore it is futile to look to them to acquire any proficiency in Hindi with a schooling of only four years. Absence of any useful arts and drafts in the curricula make such an education almost a luxury to the Kamars who are afraid that it will develop in their children an antipathy towards their traditional ways of life and thus make them misfits in the economy of their tribe.

Missions have also played a conspicuous part in moulding the destinies of some of the Indian aboriginal tribes. Dhamtari is an important centre of Christian missionaries, and from there they have extended their work to the neighbouring rural areas. Christian *padrees* and preachers are stationed at some of the centres in the different areas and some of them attend the important weekly markets regularly. The efforts made by them to enlist converts from among the Kamars have yielded no fruit. None of the Kamars from the Fingeshwar and Bindranawagarh Zamindaris and the adjoining parts of Khariar and Dhamtari have been converted to Christianity. The Kamars have a

keen sense of tribal superiority, and they have little respect for the Christian preachers.

Dispensaries in the Kamar habitat are few and far between. In the Bindranawagarh Zamindari there are only two dispensaries, one at Gariaband and the other at Deobhog. At Fingeshwar there is a small dispensary run by a compounder. In the Komakhan Zamindari there is a cheap-plan dispensary at Bagbahera. Missions have given some medical relief to the areas around Dhamtari. Looking to the vastness of the area, these ill-equipped dispensaries provide only meagre medical facilities to the people. Kamars never travel long distances to avail of the slight facility that is provided to them by these dispensaries. For fever and other minor illnesses they depend more upon their Baiga and their cheap rural prescriptions. It is generally for gonorrhoea and syphilis that they sometimes go to these dispensaries. But the few such cases that do go to the doctors for treatment are often second and third stage cases that require intensive and long-continued treatment. None of the dispensaries have provision for free injections, and the Kamars do not have money enough to bear the entire cost of treatment. I have carefully gone through the records maintained in the Gariaband dispensary and from them I gather that besides the two venereal diseases mentioned above, a few Kamar patients of scabbies also go there for treatment. However, the contact of the Kamars with the dispensaries is very slight, and it has not changed their ideas regarding the causes and cure of diseases.

The Kamars are a home-loving people. They do not like to leave their homes to go to distant lands in quest of subsistence. The drives to recruit the Kamars for labour in mines and plantations, and recently for the labour units of the Army, have been barren of any results. None of the Kamars have left their homes to earn money and bring new ideas from the outside world.

Such have been the currents which have influenced the Kamar society. Although the tribe has retained its solidarity and distinctive features, as a result of these contacts it has incorporated a number of alien traits.

A comparison between the life and the standard of livng of the Kamars of remote hill villages and of those living in the neighbourhood of the important market centres reveals a difference which is at

once striking. Many of the Kamars, while coming to attend the weekly market or the law court, are not what they are generally at home. At their settlements the men generally do not put on anything else except their *lingoti* or small *dhoti* wrapped round the waist in the typical Kamar style. But when they go to the weekly market or to the court of law, most of them go dressed in their *salukha* or shirt. Among the women too, there is a more conscious attempt at dress and decoration if they have to go out. In the matter of ornaments, they wish to emulate the standards of other Chhattisgarhi women. The patterns of *khilwa* (ear-ornaments) are almost common throughout the region with slight local variations. A number of Kamar women now buy silver *khilwa* and put them on, on the market days. The necklaces used by them are the same as those commonly used by the other Chhattisgarhi women. The necklaces of jungle beads used by some of the old Kamar women in the hill villages of Mainpur and Khariar are rarely met with among the Kamar women of the plains. Heavy *pairi* of the common Chhattisgarhi type are now frequently worn by the Kamar women. The patterns of tattoo-marks are nearly common in all parts of Chhattisgarh. Indeed the Kamar women coming to attend the weekly markets so much resemble the womenfolk of other tribes and castes, that they can be marked out only by their distinctive way of tying the children to their breasts. Some of the Kamars in the villages around Gariaband and Chhura have even given up their traditional style of hair-dressing, and get their hair cut in the *babu* fashion. A few among them, occasionally smoke *bidi* instead of *chongi* and some of them can even afford the luxury of a match box. The pattern of their houses is also slowly changing. In the Chhura circle, I came across a number of Kamars who had built for themselves comparatively spacious mud houses. Mangsaram Kamar of village Pantora, near Gariaband, has used earthen tiles in his house. Among the Kamars who have come down to the plains we can easily discover some efforts at the decoration of their houses. In Birodar, Sandholi and Amjhar we came across a few beautiful designs done in red and yellow clay in the Gond style. In the articles of everyday personal use of the Kamars also there are a few new additions. The women now have shining glass bangles and a small looking glass. The men-folk buy for themselves cheap aluminium bracelets and ear rings. Many families keep some brass and bronze utensils also. Thus we find that the tastes, likes and

dislikes of the Kamars in matters of dress, decoration, house construction etc., are changing gradually as a result of their contact with the neighbouring castes and tribes.

It is really in the economic sphere that the impact of these forces of culture contact has been the most pronounced and profound. The Kamars who were once the undisputed lords of the jungles in which they lived, with the advent of the new economic and political system, have virtually been reduced to the position of human drudges. They have lost their freedom of the forest. The new administrative system sought to put an end to their *dahi* and *beora* cultivation and when they defied governmental restrictions and were caught, they were heavily punished for their offence. Being very poor, most of them could not afford the price and maintenance of bullocks and ploughs necessary for settled cultivation. Coupled with this came the other forest laws which prohibited their *shikar* and also imposed several restrictions on their freedom to gather food from the forest. Restrictions were imposed on fishing too. Even for basket-making they could not get free bamboo from the forest. Thus some important sources of their livelihood were taken away from them. They had naturally to find out other means of subsistence. Very few of them could successfully take to settled plough cultivation. Others had to work in the forest or field, or had to sell their labour to the contractors. The wages which they get for their labour are meagre in proportion to the hard work which they are required to do. Ban on home distillation takes them to the liquor shops where they have to spend considerable money as they require large quantities of liquor for some of their socio-religious rites and ceremonies. The money-lenders and the middle-man have entered the field to make their economic collapse complete. Although some of their freedom of the forest has been gradually restored to them in the shape of permission for *shikar*, only a nominal charge for bamboo required in basket-making, freedom to collect wild fruits, edible roots, tubers etc., and concession rates in the annual lease of fisheries, they could not get back the lost equilibrium of their self-sufficient economy. Today their economic condition is very unsatisfactory and calls for immediate attention.

In the primitive societies changes in the technique of production come first but institutional and organizational changes are very slow and are generally the last to come. It is difficult for us today to

imagine what the social organization of the Kamars was in the earlier period.

The Kamars still talk of two endogamous divisions —the Bundrajiya and Makadiya. But as I have pointed out earlier, the Makadiya section cannot now be traced in the Raipur district and in the adjoining Kamar villages of the Khariar Zamindari. In order to look more respectable in the eyes of their neighbours, some aboriginal tribes have shown a tendency towards giving up eating beef, monkey's flesh etc., It may be that there was a monkey-eating section among the Kamars of the Raipur district in the past which has with similar motives given up eating monkey's flesh.

The nature of the problems which face the local groups of the Kamars has also undergone a change. The type of exclusive tribal settlements which we come across in the Fingeshwar Zamindari are not commonly met with in Bindranawagarh. Persons of different tribes and castes can and do settle in the immediate vicinity of the Kamar settlements. This encourages contact between Kamar children and children of other groups. The possibility of contact between men and women of different castes and tribes also increases. When disputes arise with outsiders they cannot be settled in their tribal Panchayats, and the Kamars have to participate in the common Panchayat of all the village-folk.

The clan organization of the Kamars seems to have been borrowed from more advanced tribal neighbours like the Gonds. While recording the genealogies we observed that sometimes a person did not remember the name of his son-in-law, but he always remembered his *got*. Various other relatives may not be remembered by their personal names but their clan names are never forgotten. The totemic significance of some of the *got* has been lost, and in some cases observance of totemic rites is gradually declining. A Wagh-Sori of Mainpur takes seriously the token purification when he hears the news of the shooting of a tiger ; his clan fellows in the Gariaband and Chhura circles regard it more or less as an unnecessary formality which has never-the-less to be gone through. Their ideas regarding *mur-mati* have become very confused now. Many Kamars can not definitely point out the places of their original settlements ; its knowledge is confined only to a few individuals who are well-versed in the traditions, legends and lore of the tribe.

Their relationship system unmistakably bears the impress of their contact with their neighbours. The old classificatory system has been definitely modified as a result of their contact with Hindu village-folks living around their settlements. Being bilingual, in some cases, they have now two or more terms for the same relationship, such as, *bhacha, jawai and damad* for son-in-law. Of these *damad* is the term current in Chhattisgarh.

The advent of the new administrative and judicial system has dealt a severe blow to the powers and status of their tribal Panchayat. In the past when the Kamars were 'the undisputed lords' of Bindranawagarh, they had no King ; 'five *Panch* were everything'. Even now what five *panch* say is deemed to be correct. But the police stations, Indian Penal Code and the Law Courts have taken away much of the authority from the voice of the *Panch*. Today the Panchayat wields power mostly in socio-religious matters, and in a few other disputes of a minor nature. Even some marriage disputes, such as cases of marriage by elopement, instead of being decided in the Panchayats are now taken to the police. In many cases, we find that the laws of Indian Union come in conflict with the tribal law and ethics of the Kamars. In all such cases, it is the law of the Union which prevails, and it has its own effect on the life and institutions of the Kamars. Notwithstanding the strict liquor policy followed by the gorverment, the Kamars still distil liquor illicitly on a sufficiently large scale, for they do not find anything wrong in it according to their tribal standards of ethics. But convictions for the breaches of the excise laws are the most numerous, and they often create complications in the family and village life of the Kamars.

In an earlier chapter it has been pointed out that in some groups of Kamar villages there is a superficial hierarchy of tribal officers. Indeed many of the Kamars themselves confess that this new hierarchy is an imitation of the system prevailing among the Gonds. Another significant change in their tribal jurisprudence seems to be the exaggerated importance given by them to the offence of killing a cow or a bullock. Although the Kamars have not yet admitted the Brahmin into their socio-religious rites, for the expiation of this particular offence they do not regard the old ceremonial of 'son sunawani' as enough ; instead, they now think it necessary to expiate the offence at Narsinghnath through a *panda*. Further, in inter-tribal disputes the voice of

their tribal Panchayat is not authoritative ; they have to abide by the decisions of the larger Panchayat of the different tribes and castes.

It is difficult for us to point out today, how the rites and ceremonies of the Kamars connected with birth, marriage and death etc., have been influenced by these culture-contacts. In this connection only a few general remarks can be made.

The old custom of naming the child after one of the ancestors is gradually being abandoned. In not a few cases, the *Kotwar* registering a birth records it with a name of his own fancy, and later the same name is continued. Names of the old type, such as, Jhitru, Tingali, Durka and Birjhu are now giving place to new names, such as, Ruplal, Mohan and Deonath. Among women we now come across such names, as Rajni, Mathura and Rupa. Some old Kamars assert, that formerly their ceremonials connected with marriage were simpler and took less time. Now it is considered more respectable to make the ceremony rather elaborate and to extend it to a period of about four days, so that people may say, 'for four days relatives were eating at his place'. On the whole institutional changes in their socio-religious life have been comparatively few in the recent times.

The domain of their religion and ritual too has been very greatly influenced by the contacts of the outside world. The Kamars have always shown their willingness to worship alien gods if they are considered to be of any service to them. The pantheon of the Kamars, today, includes the names of many gods regarding whom they themselves do not know anything. Hindu gods are being increasingly worshipped by them. Their annual round of religious ceremonies very markedly resembles that of their neighbouring Hindu village-folks. Hareli, Nawakhai, Dasera, Diwali, Chherchhera, Pola and Fagun-tihar are all observed by the Hindus also. In the field of magic the Kamars have little rare and marked skill. Some of the Kamar Baigas who have established for themselves a certain amount of reputation and practice, are called for help even by persons outside their tribe. In many difficult cases, which do not easily yield to the magic of the lesser Kamar Baigas, the Kamars take advantage of the services of more skilled Gond and Bhunjia Baigas. Witches among the Kamars are rare, and the few which do exist are supposed to have been initiated into the mysteries of their black art by witches of some other tribe or caste.

The Kamar society, living as it does in the wide region of Chhattisgarh inhabited by a number of tribes and castes, is not a closed group and it has necessarily to assimilate a number of alien traits. By reason of their close contact with different cultural groups they have been partially brought out from their seclusion into a wider world, and have been forced to make necessary adjustments in their life and institutions. This contact, however, has not been an unmixed blessing to them, specially in the field of their primitive economy which shows signs of rapid disintegration and increasingly jeopardises their self-sufficient economy of the past. The beliefs, ideas and mental attitudes of the Kamars are also gradually changing. The Kamars living in the plains are increasingly becoming more akin to the men of the neighbouring tribes and castes and more different from their compatriots still living in the remote hills and forests of Mainpur and Khariar.

CHAPTER VIII

PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL ADJUSTMENT

In the recent years culture contacts in the Kamar country have increased considerably. With the numerous schemes of development which are being worked out or contemplated by the Government, specially the plan for converting the road between Raipur and Deobhog into a first class road and the projected railway line which may run right through the heart of the Kamar country, the occassions for these contacts would multiply, and with the settling down of new populations in their neighbourhood the Kamars may have to face new problems of tribal adjustment. The mineral and forest wealth of Bindranawagarh may attract still another stream of aliens into their land. The several comprehensive plans of social, political and economic development launched by the government of the Madhya Pradesh will unmistakably influence the Kamars. The Madhya Pradesh government, today, is making a unique experiment in the field of Local Self Government, through the schemes of *Janpad*, *Gram Panchayat* and *Nyaya Panchayat*. How far the backward tribes like the Kamars will be able to participate effectively in village self-government through bodies like these, however, is still open to doubt. The drive against illiteracy and the Social Education movement have not yet touched the Kamars; but the government may soon carry them even to the remotest parts of the Province. The scheme for prohibition, plans for better medical facilities, and specially the activities of the newly constituted department for the welfare and uplift of the *adibasis* and other backward classes will influence the Kamars greatly. The contact situation for the Kamars, thus, is likely to change radically in a decade or two, raising the vital questions of tribal adjustment and adaptation of the Kamars to a new cultural milieu which will be of equal interest to the anthropologist, administrator and social worker alike.

For the great bulk of tribal population in Middle India and the Deccan, segregation is wholly out of question. In exceptional cases, for primitive communities residing in geographically remote areas, it may serve as a useful temporary measure, but on the whole it does not afford a satisfactory solution for the problems of the general tribal

populations, both from the point of view of the integrity of a progressive, secular, democratic Indian society and of the tribes as well. On the other hand, experience shows that unregulated and misdirected effort at immediate reform, uplift and assimilation of the tribes may ultimately be destructive of its own purpose in the case of still very backward 'primitive' tribes like the Kamars. Socio-cultural integration of the tribes in the main stream of Indian society must be our ultimate ideal, but transition of the tribes from primitiveness to civilization should be planned with care and caution, so as to ensure the survival of the still vital elements in the tribal cultures and save them from decay, degradation and disintegration. There is much to be said in favour of the anthropological study of individual tribes and cognate tribal groups and their problems. Old-fashioned planning for tribes as a whole is not likely to meet the specific needs and problems of individual tribes or tribal groups, and as such the necessity of field surveys of representative tribes in different areas can not be over-emphasised.

To safeguard the Kamar's freedom from want and fear it is necessary to take immediate steps in the direction of their economic rehabilitation. In this sphere, equal attention will have to be paid to the four major sources of Kamar livelihood. Freedom of the forest, at least temporary provision of the facilities for shifting cultivation or effective help in settling them to permanent cultivation, check on oppressive money-lenders and officials, and organization of Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies with an eye on their specific needs, are the pre-requisites for their socio-cultural advancement.

Although some tribes in the Central Provinces including the Kamars have the right of free chase with bow and arrow, they do not seem to know it clearly. During my investigations many cases of extortion came to my notice in which police constables and other petty officials had illegally collected unauthorised fees for permission to enter the forest for hunting. Horns and skins are invariably seized from them by the police or Court of Wards officials, on the ground that the Kamars have a right only to the meat, and not to the horns and skins which belong to the government. Similarly, there should be no interference with their food-gathering from the forest. Wild fruits, edible tubers and roots etc., constitute an important part of the diet of the Kamars, and restrictions on their age-old privileges in this sphere cause great heart-burning among them. Cases have come to my notice

where illegal fees were charged for collecting *Mohua*, or unauthorized *ghusoni* (tax for entering the forest for food-gathering) had been extorted from them. Steps should be taken to control the subordinate staff, and the tribal populations should be unequivocally assured regarding their rights and privileges in this respect. Thirdly, for their house-hold and agricultural needs they should be permitted to take timber and bamboos from the forest without any payment. If a permit from one of the officials of the forest department is insisted upon, it will only lead to collection of illegal fees in many cases. The Kamars have been helped considerably by a generous gesture of the Court of Wards in Bindranawagarh, which has allowed them to cut bamboos for basket-work on the payment of a nominal fee of rupee one only per annum per household. Proposals for curtailing these privileges are bound to disturb badly the economic life of the Kamars in most areas. It is to be earnestly hoped that this nominal fee would not be enhanced in the near future. In areas where this privilege is not allowed provision for it would go a long way in the economic rehabilitation of the Kamars.

The question of shifting cultivation is indeed a vexed one. Time and again the possibility of permitting *dahi* on a restricted scale has been examined ; but no concrete plans have yet been formulated. According to some, *dahi* and *beora* cultivation must be regarded as particularly destructive modes of agriculture as they inevitably lead to soil erosion and deforestation and have consequently been put under severe restrictions in some parts and altogether prohibited in others. There is a rival school which persistently contests the above view, and holds that through this system of agriculture soil fertility can be maintained indefinitely. The question should be re-examined thoroughly by competent authorities, and the possibilities of permitting *dahi* should be explored once again with a view to formulating concrete plans in such areas as can admit it conveniently. Shifting cultivation is deep rooted in Kamar sentiment and its introduction in specified areas with enough alternative sites for rotation, will remove a long-standing grievance of the Kamars and will enable them to revert back to an economic pattern which has the sanction of their tradition and mythology. If however, this is found impossible the proposed Multi-Purpose Co-operative Organizations of the tribes will have to take upon themselves the extra-heavy duty of making

provision for bullocks and agricultural implements coupled with liber. advances to enable them to improve their nominal jungle fields which in their present state are quite ill-suited for the purposes of settled cultivation. Protection of small *dahi* and *beora* fields from the ravages of wild beasts is not particularly difficult ; but the protection of bigger fields is not so easy. Years of repressive policy have failed to wean the Kamar from his traditional mode of agriculture. Unless the plans for settling them to plough cultivation are made with sympathy, foresight and imagination and piloted carefully in the initial stages it is difficult to visualise the day in the near future when they would have adapted themselves to the new mode of agriculture.

Land alienation has not yet become a problem in most parts of the Kamar country. Enough virgin soil is still available in this area for being broken for agricultural purposes. Very few Kamars work hard to improve their fields, and as such not many people are interested in acquiring their land which they would not be too unwilling to leave. In future, with greater pressure of outside populations the ugly features of the land alienation problem may begin to manifest themselves in this area and serious enforcement of the Land Alienation Act may become necessary.

The problem of the elimination of the money lenders who give petty loans on fantastically high rates of interest, or buy their crops well in advance in lieu of the payment of interest and part payment of the loans is indeed difficult but essential. The proposed Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies can do much in this field; although misuse of credit and needless extravagance will have to be checked. The middle-man who buys grains and basket-work at unreasonably cheap rates by advancing small sums of money to them at the time of their need must similarly be eliminated. If the Co-operative Societies could undertake to market their baskets and other bamboo articles directly, considerably larger profits could be assured to the Kamars. In fact the practice of granting virtual monopoly to the contractors for buying minor forest produce such as *harra*, shellock, tendu leaves, honey etc., places the Kamars in a position of disadvantage. They are expected to sell these things only to the authorised contractors who take advantage of their monopoly and buy them at rates which are very much lower than the rates current in the market.

When the felling, shaping, carting and floating of timber is done departmentally or through contractors, comparatively low wages are paid to the Kamars who have no alternative but to accept them. If they grumble or show reluctance in any other way, pressure and coercion generally induce them to accept the work even on unfavourable terms. A constant threat held out by the Zamindars and in a lesser degree by the Court of Wards and Forest Department officials is that they would stop their cattle from grazing in the forest. Similarly, to harass them the authorities may start investigations and searches on the false pretext of alleged thefts of timber by them. Years of experience have taught them some valuable lessons. Naturally, therefore, the Kamars can anticipate these difficulties and following the line of least resistance they invariably agree to work on any conditions and wages that may be offered to them.

A beginning has now been made in the direction of introducing co-operative principles in the economic life of the tribal people in Madhya Pradesh. It is proposed to establish four Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies per year per zone in the ten tribal zones under the District Organizers. In five years it is expected that 200 such co-operative societies will come into existence. This work is by no means easy, and specially because these societies in the tribal and backward areas will have to be run by officials provided by the Co-operative department itself, special training for these officials to acquiant them with the peculiarities and complexities of their new jobs will be necessary. With imagination and foresight these officials will have to proceed slowly to win the sympathetic co-operation of the tribal populations. In order to make these societies really useful for still very primitive folks like the Kamars, it will be necessary to safeguard them from being monopolized by rich and influential Gond land-lords who alone, of all the tribal groups, can claim a certain degree of literacy. The Gonds too are a tribal people; but they also must not be allowed to exploit the backward Kamars and Chaukhutia Bhunjias. These organizations should be so organized as to comprise at least the following aims :

i. Provision of credit at a low rate of interest.

ii. Help in agricultural pursuits with cash, seeds, bullocks etc.

iii. Collection of forest produce gathered by tribal people and marketing it directly in the towns by eliminating the middle-man.

Handicraft products of tribal labour could also reach profitable markets through these Co-operative Societies. Contracts for minor forest produce could as well be taken by them.

iv. Contract for work in the forest i.e., felling, carting, floating etc. should be made through these Cooperative Societies. Under capable guidance these organized units should be able to negotiate well and secure additional profits for their members.

v. Provisions and other requirements of the people should be bought wholesale by these Societies and sold to the people with a small margin of profit.

Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf has described in eloquent terms the achievements of the introduction of co-operative principles in the eonomic life of the Hill Reddis of Hyderabad-Deccan. The co-operative centre at Koida, run under the guidance of the Social Service Department of Hyderabad has rendered a great service to the Koyas and the Hill Reddis. These jungle-folk who were leading a wretched life because of their ruthless exploitation by the forest contractors who had come to exercise an almost complete control over their lives, reacted marvelously to the experiment of co-operative organization and activity which brought about a transformation in their lives. With proper direction and control, specially in the earlier stages, these Societies hold out new hopes and possibilities for the backward tribal people.

In the field of village self-government, the administration of Madhya Pradesh is making a novel experiment. The reorganization of *Gram Panchayats*, establishment of *Nyaya Panchayats* with wide judicial powers, and the decentralization of district administration through the *Janapada* organization may well revolutionize local government in India. For inter-tribal matters the Kamars will have to participate in larger composite regional Panchayats. In these bodies even the backward tribes will have their individual representation. But the unfortunate experience of the Central Provinces has been that it is almost futile to send ill-equipped tribal representatives to local bodies. While *Nyaya Panchayats* should be given special instructions to take into account traditions and customs of the tribes before coming to their final judgement, it will be perhaps more useful to explore the possibility of giving some official recognition and status to the different tribal Panchayats, with powers to decide disputes falling in cer-

tain specific categories, such as socio-religious matters, rules of inheritance, marriage disputes, divorce etc. This will save the Kamars from much unnecessary waste of time and money ; and possibly prevent needless outside intervention in their tribal matters. It will increase the self confidence of the tribe if able Kamars and other tribal elders are given more offices such as those of *Mukaddam* or *Panch* in the villages and areas in which they enjoy numerical preponderance.

Education for the tribal areas in the initial stages must be planned differently. A mere literacy will be of no help to the Kamars and the other aboriginal tribes on their cultural level, for they are likely to relapse soon into virtual illiteracy and ignorance after completing their formal courses. What they need is not so much a certificate of literacy as an education for life. From the very start the psychological attitudes of the teachers will have to be well directed. A teacher who has no appreciation for tribal ways and standards and goes to the tribal areas only for earning his living, with several biased notions and prejudices, is likely to do more harm than good to the aboriginals. The Hyderabad experiment of recruiting teachers from the tribes themselves and then giving them adequate training for their work has admirably succeeded there ; and can well be tried elsewhere also. Utmost care should be taken to safeguard education from becoming a disintegrating force in tribal life; it must not be allowed to 'pervert' the minds of younger people and thus make them disloyal to their tribal culture and obvious misfits in their socio-cultural setting. In time, education is bound to influence tribal ideas, ideals and attitudes, but any premature efforts at swift reform are sure to create suspicion and distrust which will destroy the very purpose of our efforts. Education should not only help them to conserve and develop, it must also arm them sufficiently to make themselves strong enough to face the onslaught of such trends and forces as are out to disintegrate and detribalise them. It must also equip them better for their battle on the economic front. Education will not have served its purpose if its sole achievement is the granting of primary school certificates to some individuals to enable them to become peons and forest-guards. Literary education will of course have its own place in the curricula, but useful crafts and arts, gardening and agriculture, carpentry etc. should also receive the degree of emphasis they deserve. Although Hindi doubtlessly

will ultimately develop into the *lingua franca* of India, I do not know how far it can serve the needs of the earlier stages of tribal education. To start with, it will be better to provide them with books in their own dialect written in the *devnagri* script. Meterial for these books will be provided by their folk songs, folk-tales, legends and ballads. Their traditional oral literature, if it is presented in a suitable form, would provide several excellent, useful and thoroughly enjoyable text books. Tribal children will be able to grasp their contents better, because these books will have the rural setting in their background, and will not have the artificial atmosphere of some of the current school books which appear to be completely alien in the context of tribal life. In this respect as well the success of the Hyderabad scheme for tribal education augurs well for the other areas. Spinning and weaving which occupy such an important position in the various plans for basic education are not likely to find much favour with the aboriginals, as these crafts are forbidden to them by their tribal custom. They could be replaced with profit by useful handicrafts such as wood-carving and carpentry or by gardening, agriculture etc. An impression still persists among the Kamars and other tribes that the rather severe ideal of 'spare the rod and spoil the child' persists in the present day schools also, and this generates a needless fear in the hearts of children and their parents. Much has yet to be done to improve the school and the school teacher. The school must really become an attractive place where play, literary education and vocational training can be happily blended together.

The problem of public health and sanitation too is important and deserves serious consideration. Prohibition is perhaps necessary for urban labour, both on economic and ethical grounds as well as on the considerations of public health. But because of its socio-religious implications it raises some delicate issues for the tribal areas. A substitute for liquor can not easily be found. Besides liquor has its own distinct food value in the meagre diet of the Kamars. If prohibition is forced on them it leads to numerous hardships because its logical consequence is illicit distillation, and when they are detected, either prosecution or bribery. It may perhaps be better to go slow in this matter, and allow economic rehabilitation and education to have precedence over such forced reforms. More urgent than prohibition today are effective plans for giving them adequate protection against

malaria, cholera, smallpox, venereal diseases, yaws and leprosy. Rather than spending money needlessly on digging wells or on organizing *bhajan* singing parties it will be better if attention is concentrated upon setting up cheap plan dispensaries, appointing touring doctors and providing mobile hospital vans to render effective medical help to the interior villages. Elements of sanitation and public health can be tought through schools as well. In this respect unfortunately, there has been too much talk and propaganda and very little effective work ; it will be better to concentrate on work now.

On the administrative side the Kamars have, and I think rightly, many serious complaints which need to be looked into immediately. Forced labour still flourishes, and payments for it, if ever made, are meagre and inadequate. Touring officers, with a few notable exceptions, expect the village-folk to supply for their use rice, milk, ghee, fowls etc. These are again either not paid for at all or are very insufficiently paid for. The petty officials expect annual presents of forest produce from the jungle-folk. Revenue and forest officials, in addition to this expect small presents in cash every year. Baskets, bamboo boxes etc. are taken from them invariably on a nominal payment. It is particularly unfortunate that black-listed officials are still transferred to the tribal areas by way of punishment. In the comparative seclusion of these areas, these corrupt officials find a safe refuge and get a free scope for practising their evil habits uncontrolled and unchecked. In the Zamindaris the evil of forced labour assumes worse forms and adds to the uncertainty of tribal life. It is necessary, therefore, to select officers for these areas with some discrimination, and if necessary give them special pay and bad climate allowances. The superior officers of the subordinate service should be given some training in the special problems of the tribal areas. All districts having considerable tribal populations should have a specially trained executive officer whose duty it should be to look after the welfare of the tribal people and give advice on administrative matters concerning them. Short anthropological training for these officers should be regarded as indispensable. Periodic but regular inspections by responsible officers should be made compulsory, and they should be directed to investigate promptly and on spot all cases of bribery and corruption which are reported to them. The association of the anthropologist with the administration in an advisory capacity has in the past yielded very

valuable results. In several sectors of the globe it has come to be regarded as indispensable for areas which contain large sections of primitive humanity. India could as well emulate their example with profit.

In the field of social and cultural welfare work, it is essential to define our attitude clearly at the very outset. The government of Madhya Pradesh propose to spread general knowledge through lectures, pictures on the screen, organize *bhajan mandals*, to start circulating libraries, to arrange music parties and competitive games and dances with a view to affording facilities to them for the expression of their artistic interest.[1] This is all indeed rather high sounding, and lacks a sense of realism. I do not think that any useful purpose can be served by destroying the innocent recreations of the aboriginals or by interfering with their delightful songs and dances and imposing drab *bhajans* on them. Their cultures have a peculiar beauty and simplicity, and most of them have a distinct vitality. Let us not be instrumental in destroying this vitality and sapping their joy of life. These so-called reforms, merely for the sake of a change, can by no means be regarded as an ideal, and our mad zeal for them should not be allowed to become destructive. Dynamic as the tribal cultures are, changes are bound to come in slowly both in their fabric and values of life. The only caution that is necessary at this stage is that our ugly haste should not prove detrimental to their healthy cultural development.

In the Constitution of India the Excluded and Partially excluded areas appear as the Scheduled Areas. According to the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, the Union Government will require from the Governors periodic reports regarding the Scheduled Areas and the tribes. With regard to these areas the Union Government will exercise the power of giving directions to the constituent states on matters of administration relating to them. Seven provinces including Madhya Pradesh will have Tribal Advisory Councils consisting of ten to twenty members of whom three fourths shall be elected representatives of the scheduled tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State. These Councils will generally advise the Governors on all matters pertaining to the administration of these areas and the welfare of the scheduled tribes; and regarding the

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[1] A. Aiyappan, *Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras*, p. 180.

suitability or otherwise of Union laws or State Acts for the scheduled areas. The Governors will act with regard to the application of laws relating to marriage, inheritance, social customs, land and village administration and Panchayats only if so advised by the Advisory Council. Seats are to be reserved for the tribes in Legislatures, land alienation will be made illegal and through provision in state laws money lending will be regulated. One of the ministers in Madhya Pradesh will devote himself exclusively to tribal matters. This is all very hopeful but it is indeed a little surprising to see that the anthropologist is conspicuous by his absence in this picture. The Madhya Pradesh Government has launched a five-year plan for welfare work in Backward areas which is estimated to cost nearly Rs. 90 lakhs. In order to be in a position to give any verdict on it, it will be necessary for us to watch its progress for some time. It is, however, strange that the ten District Organizers and twenty Circle Organizers appointed under the scheme have neither been given any anthropological training nor any special instruction in the technique of the specialized type of social work which they have to undertake.

The fundamental unity of Indian civilization emerges through the diversity of her regional cultures. Rather than requiring the tribes to conform to one dull and uniform pattern, it will be better if we allow the primitive cultures of our land to retain their peculiar and distinctive features, their charm and simplicity and above all their rare vitality. If they are left to themselves to choose their own course and pace for their ultimate integration into the main stream of our culture, in time to come they will add a vital force of considerable strength to the Indian society.

APPENDIX 1

THE SYSTEM OF KINSHIP AMONG THE KAMAR

S. No.	Description of Persons	Relationship term in Kamar Dialect	
		Male speaking	Female speaking
1	Father's father	Dadi	Dadi
2	Father's father's brother	Dadi	Dadi
3	Mother's father	Ajo	Ajo
4	Mother's father's brother	Ajo	Ajo
5	Father's maternal uncle	Ajo	Ajo
6	Mother's maternal uncle	Dadi	Dadi
7	Father's father's maternal uncle's son	Ajo	Ajo
8	Mother's father's maternal uncle's son	Dadi	Dadi
9	Father's father's paternal aunt's son	Ajo	Ajo
10	Mother's father's paternal aunt's son	Dadi	Dadi
11	Spouse's mother's father	Dadi	Dadi
12	Spouse's father's father	Ajo	Ajo
13	Father's father's sister's husband	Ajo	Ajo
14	Mother's father's sister's husband	Dadi	Dadi
15	Father's mother	Bapi	Bapi
16	Father's mother's sister	Bapi	Bapi
17	Mother's mother	Bai	Bai
18	Mother's mother's sister	Bai	Bai
19	Father's maternal aunt	Bai	Bai
20	Father's father's maternal uncle's daughter	Bai	Bai
21	Mother's father's maternal uncle's daughter	Bai	Bai
22	Father's father's paternal aunt's daughter	Bapi	Bapi
23	Mother's father's paternal aunt's daughter	Bai	Bai
24	Father's father's sister	Bai	Bai
25	Mother's father's sister	Bapi	Bapi
26	Spouse's father's mother	Bai	Bai
27	Spouse's mother's mother	Bapi	Bapi
28	Father	Baba	Baba
29	Father's brother(a) elder (b) younger	Bada-baba Kaka	Bada-baba Kaka
30	Mother's sister's husband	Mauwsa	Mauwsa
31	Mother's brother	Mama	Mama
32	Spouse's father	Mama	Mama
33	Spouse's maternal uncle	Kaka	Kaka
34	Brother's or sister's father-in-law	Mama	Mama

S. No.	Description of Persons	Relationship term in Kamar Dialect	
		Male speaking	Female speaking
35	Father's sister's husband	Mama	Mama
36	Step-father	Kaka	Kaka
37	Mother	Yai	Yai
38	Mother's sister (a) elder	O-day	O-day
	(b) younger	Mauwsi	Mauwsi
39	Father's brother's wife		
	(a) elder	O-day	O-day
	(b) younger	Kaki	Kaki
40	Step mother	Mauwsi	Mauwsi
41	Father's sister	Ata	Ata
42	Mother's brother's wife	Ata	Ata
43	Spouse's mother	Ata	Ata
44	Spouse's paternal aunt	Ata	Ata
45	Brother's or sister's mother-in-law	Ata	Ata
46	Brother (a) elder	Dada	Dada
	(b) younger	Nona	Nona
47	Father's brother's son	As in 46	As in 46
48	Mother's sister's son		
49	Father's sister's son	Mito	Mito, Sakhi
50	Mother's brother's son	Mito	Mito, Sakhi
51	Father's sister's daughter's husband	Dada	Dada
52	Mother's brother's daughter's husband		
53	Spouse's sister's husband	Sadhu	Sadhu
54	Spouse's elder brother	Susra	Susra
55	Spouse's younger brother	Sala	Babu
56	Elder sister's husband	Bhato	Bhato
57	Younger sister's husband	Jawai	Jawai
58	Spouse	Na	Na[1]
59	Father-in-law of son or daughter	Samdhi	Samdhi
60	Sister (a) elder	Bai	Bai
	(b) younger	Noni	Noni
61	Father's brother's daughters	As in 60	As in 60
62	Mother's sister's daughters		
63	Father's sister's daughter	Sakhi	Sakhi
64	Mother's brother's daughter	Sakhi	Sakhi
65	Father's sister's son's wife	Bai, Noni	Bai, Noni
66	Mother's brother's son's wife		
67	Spouse's elder brother's wife	Bai	Bohar

[1] In general, husband and wife do not address each other by name; their term of mutual address is "Na"

S. No.	Description of Persons	Relationship term in Kamar Dialect	
		Male speaking	Female speaking
68	Spouse's younger brother's wife	Noni	Deorani, Noni
69	Spouse's elder sister	Ai	Ai[1]
70	Spouse's younger sister	Sali	Noni
71	Elder brother's wife	Buhu	Buhu
72	Younger brother's wife	Bohar	Bohar
73	Mother-in-law of son or daughter	Samdhin	Samdhin
74	Son	Beta	Beta
75	Brother's son	Beta	Bhacha
76	Spouse's sister's son	Beta	Bhacha
77	Maternal uncle's daughter's son	Beta	Bhacha
78	Paternal aunt's daughter's son	Beta	Bhacha
79	(a) elder sister's son	Bhacha	Beta
	(b) younger sister's son	Bhacha	Beta
80	Spouse's brother's son	Bhacha	Beta
81	Maternal uncle's son's son	Bhacha	Beta
2	Paternal aunt's son's son	Bhacha	Beta
83	Son-in-law	Babu	Babu
84	Brother's daughter's husband	Babu	Beta
85	Sister's daughter's hausband	Beta	Babu
86	Daughter	Beti	Beti
87	Brother's daughter	Beti	Bhachi
88	Maternal uncle's daughter's daughter	Beti	Bhachi
89	Paternal aunt's daughter's daughter	Beti	Bhachi
90	Maternal uncle's son's daughter	Bhachi	Beti
91	Paternal aunt's son's daughter	Bhachi	Beti
92	(a) Elder sister's daughter	Bhachi	Beti
	(b) Younger sister's daughter	Bhachi	Beti
93	Spouse's brother's daughter	Bhachi	Beti
94	Spouse's sister's daughter	Beti	Bhachi
95	Son's wife	Bhachi	Bhachi
96	Sister's son's wife	Beti	Bhachi
97	Brother's son's wife	Bhachi	Beti
98	Son's son	Nati	Nati
99	Daughter's son	Aju	Beti-Nati
100	Brother's son's son	Nati	Beti-Nati
101	Brother's daughter's son	Aju	Nati
102	Sister's son's son	Aju	Nati
103	Sister's daughter's son	Nati	Nati
104	Son's daughter	Natnin	Natnin

[1] She is regarded as her "Dedh-Sas."

S. No.	Description of Persons	Relationship term in Kamar Dialect	
		Male speaking	Female speaking
105	Daughter's daughter	Natnin	Natnin
106	Brother's son's daughter	Natnin	Natnin
107	Brother's daughter's daughter	Natnin	Natnin
108	Sister's son's daughter	Natnin	Natnin
109	Sister's daughter's daughter	Natnin	Natnin
110	Son's son's wife	Bhai-Bahu	Patte-Bahini
111	Daughter's son's wife	Bahini	Bhai-Bahu

Note: Male cross-cousin's son's son, male cross-cousin's daughter's son, female cross-cousin's son's son and female cross-cousin's daughter's son is called "Nati". A man calls his son's daughter's husband his "Bahin-damad", a woman will call him "Bhai".

A man calls his daughter's daughter's husband his "Bhai", a woman will call him "Dewar".

APPENDIX 2

VILLAGE CENSUS

In the pages which follow house to house census of five Kamar settlements has been given. The name of the head of the family is in block letters, while the names of those who are actually living in the house are in italics.

CENSUS OF FIVE KAMAR SETTLEMENTS

(i) GARBHANTORA

House 1.	BHURWA (Markam)	
	Wife :	*Phulmat* (Netam)
	1st s.	*Ghasiram*
	1st d.	Ghasnin (died)
	2nd s.	*Jesiram*
	3rd s.	*Pesiram*
House 2.	TINGALI (Markam)	
	Wife :	*Sukhmat* (Chedaiha)
	1st s.	*Jhuru*
House 3.	PANCHO widow of Ama (Chedaiha)	
	1st s.	Dasru (House No 4)
	2nd s.	Satmasi (village Bhainsatara)
House 4.	DASRU (Chedaiha)	
	Wife :	*Phulmat* (Sori)
	1st s.	*Baratiya*
	1st d.	*Phulbai*
	2nd s	*Pati*
	3rd s.	*Ratiram*
House 5	DESIR widow of Samaru (Sori)	
	1st s.	*Chema*
	2nd s.	*Rema*
	1st d.	*Remin*
House 6.	MOTIRAM (Netam)	
	Wife :	*Birjhi* (Sori)
	1st s.	*Budhram*
	1st d.	*Sukhbati*
House 7.	JAGDEO (Chedaiha)	
	Wife :	*Dokri* (Netam)
	1st s.	*Heerasingh*
	1st d.	*Ghurwa*
	2nd d.	*Heerbati*

House 8. LALATIN widow of Nohru (Markam)

House 9. DEONATH (Netam) son of Bhainsa Kamar
- Wife : *Sundari* (Markam)
- 1st d. *Nandni*
- 1st s. *Phulsingh*
- 2nd s. *Sunder Singh*
- 2nd d. *Birajo*

House 10. BHAINSA (Netam) the celebrated Baiga.
- Wife : *Sukhi* (Sori)
- 1st s. Deonath (House 9)
- 2nd s. Deosingh (House 11)
- 1st d. Jarhi, was married to a Sori, died
- 3rd. s. *Jaisingh*
  Wife: *Chemti* (daughter of Jarhi)

House 11. DEOSINGH (Netam)
- Wife : *Mangli* (Markam)
- 1st d. *Sukhbati*
- 2nd d. *Asbati*

House 12. MEGHNAD (Netam)
- Wife : *Asin* (Sori)
- 1st d. *Nandi*
- 1st s. *Nandu*

(ii) BHAINSATARA

House 1. SANICHARAJO widow of Gargatiya (Sori)
- 1st s. Sonu (died)
  Wife : *Thubri* (Netam)
  1st s. *Sukhlal*
  Wife : *Kanaujin* (Netam)
  2nd s. *Shivlal*
- 1st d. Dhanmat, married to Birsing (Netam)

House 2. BALDU (Netam)
- Wife : *Sonwari* (Sori)
- 1st d. Phulmat, went *paithu* in the house of Meghnad (Netam) of Timanpur.
- 2nd d. Sukhmat, went *paithu* in the house of Matthu (Sori) of Bhiralat
- 3rd d. *Sukli*
- 1st s. *Kondwa*
- 2nd s. *Fagnu*
- 3rd s. *Mangal*
- 4th d. *Sukhbati*
- 5th d. *Budhbati*

House 3. LAKHMA (Sori)

Wife :	*Chaiti* (Netam)
1st d.	Asin, married to Meghnad (Netam) of Garbhantora
1st s.	Chamru (House No. 4)
2nd d.	Manglin, married to Bhainsa (Netam) of Rankadadar.
3rd. d	Jhini, married to Jagdeo (Netam) of Chikhli.

House 4. CHAMRU (Sori)

Wife :	*Bisahin* (Netam)
1st d.	*Soni*

House 5. JHANGLU (Sori)

Wife :	*Milki* (Netam)

House 6. NANDIRAM (Sori)

Wife :	*Dhanwa* (Netam)
1st d.	Jhitki (died)
2nd d.	*Kukdi*
3rd d.	*Marha*
	Chaiti (widow of Dhaniya) who is Nandiram's mother also lives in the house.

House 7. MANGLU (Sori)

Wife :	*Aso* (Netam)
1st d.	*Budhwari*
1st s.	*Budhram*
2nd s.	*Sudhram*

House 8. BUDDHU (Sori)

Wife :	*Sanmat* (Netam)
1st s.	*Naklu*
2ns s.	*Chaklu*
1st d.	Jamma (died)
3rd s.	Bhaklu (died)
2nd d.	*Chamri*

House 9. SUKHDEO (Sori)

Wife :	*Kari* (Netam)
1st s.	*Chundu*
1st d.	*Mahrin*

House 10. BALDU (Sori)

Wife : 1.	Chamrin (was driven away by Baldu, now in Boirgaon)
1st s.	*Ratu*
1st d.	Itwarin (died)
2.	*Hirondi* (Netam)

House 11. SATMASI (Netam)

Wife :	*Manglin* (Sori) has come *paithu* from Khamaripara.
	Banwa (son of Satmasi's sister Badri)

House 12. CHAMRU (Sori)

Wife :	*Chemti*(Netam)
1st s.	Sagram (house No. 13)
1st d.	Sagni (died, was married to a Netam in Timanpur)
2nd d.	Safura (died, was married to a Netam in Bamhni)
3rd d.	Mathura, married to a Netam in Timanpur
2nd s.	*Pardeshi*
	Wife : *Sukri* (Netam)
4th d.	Rajni (died, was married to a Netam in Satdhar)
5th d.	Nawli, went *paithu* in the house of a Netam in Kantidadar
6th d.	*Kaoli*
3rd s.	*Kawlas*

House 13. SAGRAM (Sori)

Wife :	*Gautarin* (Netam)
1st s.	*Baisaku*
1st d.	*Chiunti*
2nd s.	*Khaisaku*
2nd d.	*Jhithi*

(iii) CHIKHLI

House 1. DUKALU (Sori)

Wife :	*Lakhmi* (Netam)
1st d.	Jhitki, married to a Chedaiha in Dhamandih
1st s.	*Sonsah*
	Wife : *Bhuri* (Chedaiha
2nd s.	*Kochya*
3rd s.	*Chemta*
2nd d.	*Bodrahin*
4th s.	*Manihar*

House 2. SUKALU (Sori)

Wife :	*Manglin* (Netam)
1st s.	Bisram, has ran away with Chamrin
	Wife : *Tisai* (Netam)
1st d.	Mathura, married to Thanwar (Netam) of Chikhli.
2nd s.	*Rauna*
3rd s.	*Chiunti*

House 3.	SUKHDEO (Sori)	
	Wife :	*Lachhani* (Netam)
	1st s.	*Fagnu*
	2nd s.	*Agnu*
	1st d.	*Agni*
House 4.	GOUNTHU (Netam)	
	Wife :	*Jhundi* (Sori)
	1t s.	*Thanwar*
		Wife : *Mathura* (Sori)
	2nd s.	*Banwar*
House 5.	CHAMRU	(Sori)
	Wife :	*Birjha* (Chedaiha)
House 6.	JARHI	widow of Baldu (Sori)
	1st s.	Chamru (house No. 5)
	2nd s.	*Somnath*
	1st d.	*Nawadin*
House 7.	BAISAKHU (Sori)	
	Wife :	*Jamin* (Netam)
House 8.	MANGLU (Sori)	
	Wife :	*Sukri* (Netam)
	1st s.	*Soniya*
		Wife : *Ghasnin* (Netam)
		1st s. *Baiga*
		2nd s. *Samaru*
	2nd. s.	*Sanjhu*
		Wife : *Sukaro*
		1st d. *Buli*
		2nd d. *Ghonghi*
		1st s. *Chemtu*
	3rd s.	Baisakhu (house No. 7)
	4th s.	*Barmu*
House 9.	DHIRJU (Sori)	
	Wife :	*Baihi* (Netam)
	1st s.	*Daugha*
	2nd s.	*Jarhu*
	1st d.	*Chemti*
House 10.	BODHNI	widow of Chitru (Netam)
	1st s.	*Nohru*
		Wife : *Manki* (Sori)
		1st d. *Soni*
		2nd d. *Chamrin*
	2nd s.	*Jaru*
		Wife : *Ronhi* (Sori)

1st d. Baihi, married to Dhirju (Sori) of Chikhli.
2nd d. Dhanwa, married to Nandiram (Sori) of Bhainsatara
3rd d. Jamin, married to Baisakhu (Sori) of Chikhli.
4th d. *Nawdin*

House 11. SINGHAT (Marai)
Wife : *Sukli* (Sori)
1st d. *Thanwarin*
2nd d. *Binjhwarin*
3rd d. *Budhwarin*

House 12. GOKUL (Netam)
Wife : *Dhukhi* (Jagat)
1st d. Phulmat, married to Bhurwa (Markam) of Garbhantora.
2nd d. Sanmat, married to Buddhu (Sori) of Bhainsatara.
3rd d. Bisahin, married to Chamru (Sori) of Bhainsatara.
4th d. Tisai, married to Bisram (Sori) of Chikhli.
1st s. *Bisnath*
5th d. *Kasai*

House 13. MELARIN DOKRI widow of Melariya (Sori)
1st s. Bhurwa (died)
Wife : Rupetin (ran away to Hatbay)
1st d. *Aswati*
2nd s. *Raiamiya*

House 14. GURAM widow of Konda (Sori)
1st s. *Jhuru*

House 15. Formerly occupied by Lampetiya, but now deserted.

House 16. DOKRA (Netam)
Wife : *Likhandarin*(Sori)
1st s. *Dokri*

House 17. JAGDEO (Netam)
Wife : *Jhini* (Sori)
1st d. *Gagri*

(iv) KOCHENA

House 1. BIRAJO widow of Kochwaiha (Sori)
1st d. *Dasri* widow of Darbari
1st s. *Kanwal*
1st d. *Kanwli*
2nd d. *Bhaira*
3rd d. *Baiha*

House 2. HEERASINGH (Markam)
Wife : 1. Bodri (ran away)
1st d. Thanwarin, married to Kuarsha (Netam)
1st s. *Mehtar*
2nd d. *Chanti*
2. *Malti* (Netam)
1st s. *Ghasiya*
1st d. *Dharmi*
2nd d. *Kaoli*

House 3. LALSAH (Netam)
Wife : 1. Ghasnm (Netam) died. This marriage had created a stir in the tribe as it constituted a breach of the rules of clan exogamy.
1st d. Neera (died)
1st s. Cherku (died)
2nd s. Ghasiram (died)
2. *Badhani* (Sori)
1st s. Kuarsah (house No 4)
1st d. *Neera*
2nd s. *Cherku*

House 4. KUARSAH (Netam)
Wife : *Thanwarin* (Markam)

House 5. SAGRAM (Sori)
Wife : *Manjhnin* (Netam)
1st d. Ase, married to Dasru (Netam) of Maragaon.
1st s. *Thadu*
2nd d. Sundri

House 6. SAMARU (Sori)
Wife : *Budhiyarin* (Netam)
1st d. died unnamed
1st s. *Thanwar*

House 7. SAMARU (Netam)
Wife : *Mahli* (Sori)
1st d. Budhi, married to a Sori in Kesodar
1st s. *Sukhada*
2nd s *Sonu*

(v) BAMHNI

House 1. NOHARSINGH (Netam)
Wife : 1. Bafura (died)
1st. d *Bisahin*
2nd. d. *Kasahin*
2. *Thanwarin*

House 1A Appended to house 1
BUDHWARIN (Netam)—mother of Noharsingh

House 1B Cattleshed of Noharsingh

House 2. DASRU (Markam)

Wife :	*Chawri* (Netam)
1st s.	*Itwari*
2nd s.	*Sangram*
1st d.	*Sukwaro*
2nd d.	*Budhiyarin*
3rd s.	*Mangalsingh*
3rd d.	*Dukhdei*

House 2A One part of it is used as a cattleshed and in the other half Itwari and Sangram sleep in the night.

House 3. DARBARI (Markam)

Wife :	*Sukwaro* (Netam)
1st d.	*Manglin*
1st s.	*Manbodh*

House 4. NANDU and CHHANNU, sons of Mahajan (Netam) live with their mother *Kari*, wife of Mahajan.

House 5 MANSINGH, 2nd son of Mahajan (Netam)

Wife :	1.	Sukri (died)
		1st s. *Besan Singh*
	2.	*Manglin* (Sori)
		1st d. *Bahura*
		2nd d. *Jahura*
	3.	*Sukwaro*, sister of Manglin

House 6 SAMDU, son of Mahajan

Wife :	*Manglin* (Markam)
1st d.	*Budhi*
1st s.	*Chaitu*
2nd s.	*Manglu*

House 6A Temporarily being used for keeping *harra*. Normally, Mahajan lives in this room and takes his meals with Samdu.

House 7. HEERASING. Mahajan's eldest son.

Wife :	1.	*Budhiyari* (Markam)
		1st s. died young unnamed
		1st d. *Bhuri*
		2nd s. *Budhram*
		2nd d. *Fagni*
		3rd d. *Sagni*
	2.	*Sukwaro* (Markam)

Nouse 8. **RAMDU son of Mahajan**

Wife :		*Dukli* (Sori)
1st	s.	*Samaru*
1st	d.	*Sonwati*
2nd	d.	*Sukhwati*

House 9. BAISAKHU (Markam)

Wife :		*Mohli* (Netam)
1st	d.	Sagni (died)
2nd	d.	died very young
3rd	d.	*Pankin*
1st	s.	*Samaru*

Rati, Baisakhu's mother, also lives with him.

House 10. DHENI widow of Luku (Netam)

1st	s.	*Itwari*
1st	d.	*Jhanglin*
2nd	d.	*Lunji*

House 11. SUKHLAL (Netam)

Wife :		*Pachin* (Markam)
1st	d.	*Ramjatin*
2nd	d.	*Banjatin*
1st	s.	*Asaru*

At a distance of about four furlongs from Bamhni, there are two more Kamar houses which are regarded as a part of Bamhni.

House 12. DHANU (Netam)

Wife :		*Kari* (Sori)
1st	s.	Bahoran (died)
1st	d.	Ghasi (died)
2nd	s.	died very young
3rd	s.	*Inchu*

House 13. DHANSINGH (Netam)

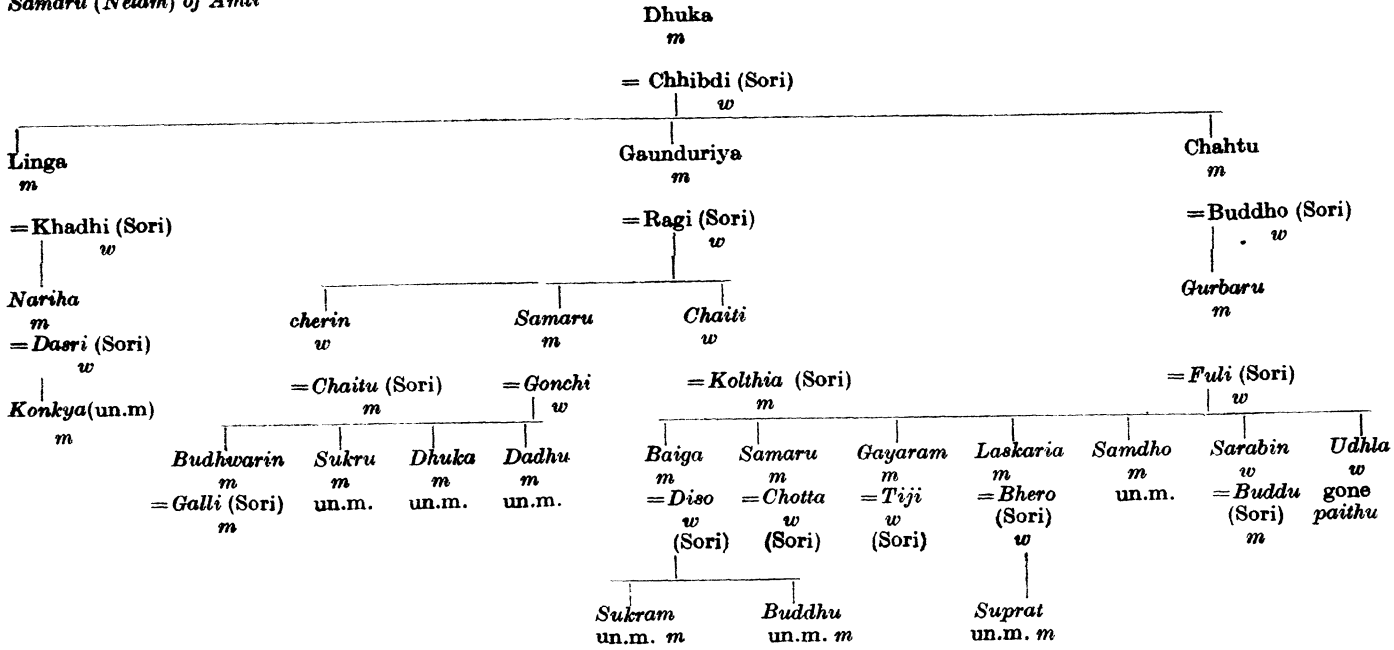
wife :	1.	*Janki* (Sori)
		1st d. Jugri, married to a Chedaiha boy in Toiamuda.
		2nd d. *Rukhmin*
		1st s. *Thanwar*
		2nd s. *Dukal*
		3rd d. *Makdin*
	2.	*Jakhi* (Sori)

APPENDIX 3

GENEALOGIES

GENEALOGY No. 1

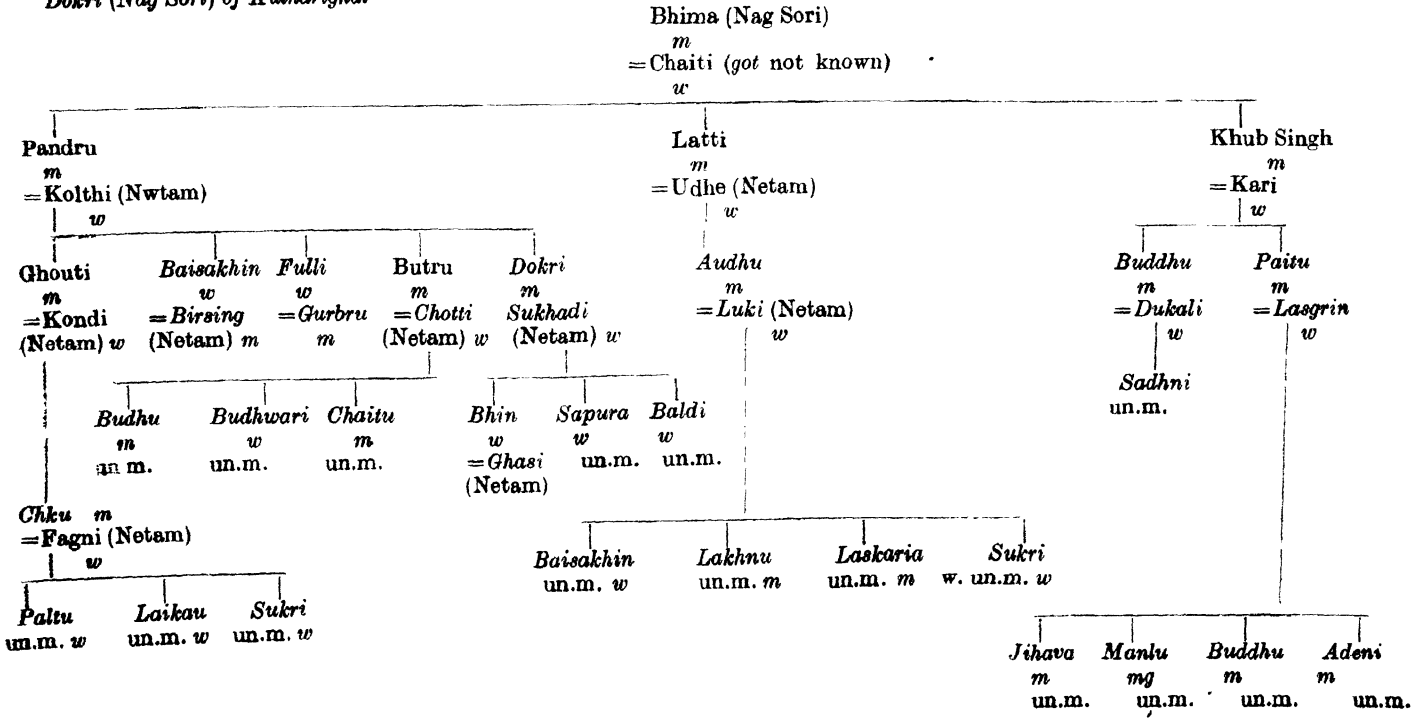
Samaru (Netam) of Amli



m = man
w = woman
un.m. = unmarried.
The names of persons who are living are given in italics.

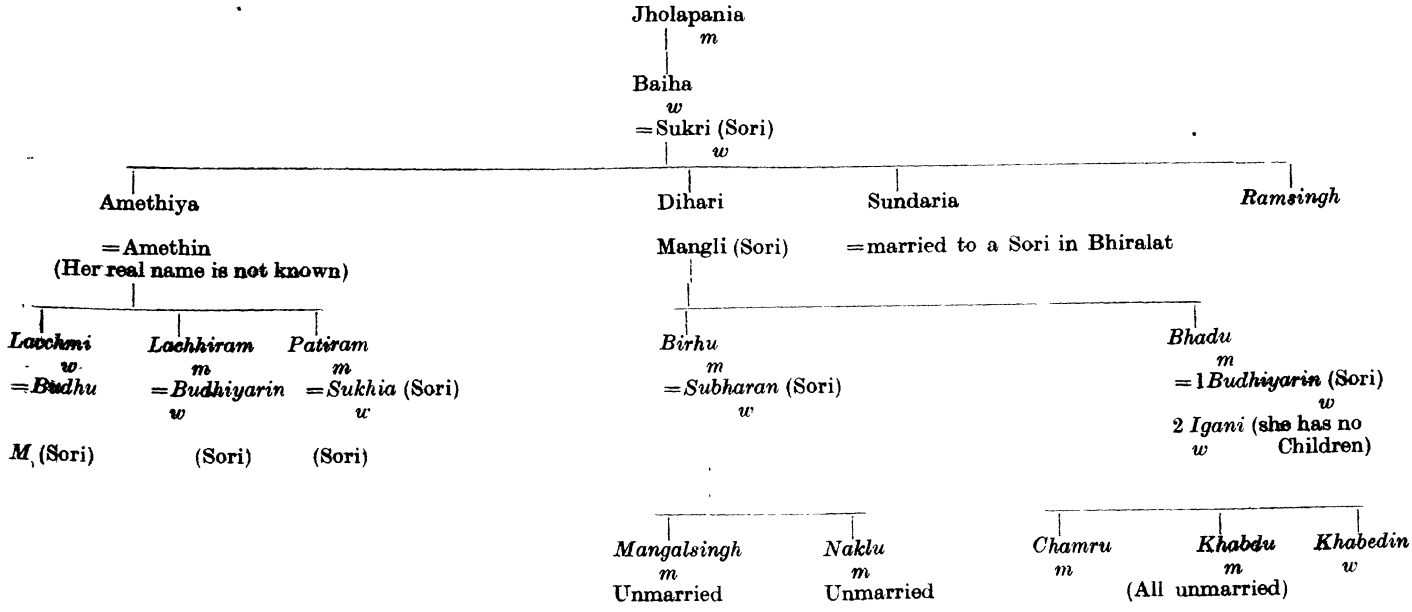
GENEALOGY No. 2

Dokri (Nag Sori) of Kulharighat



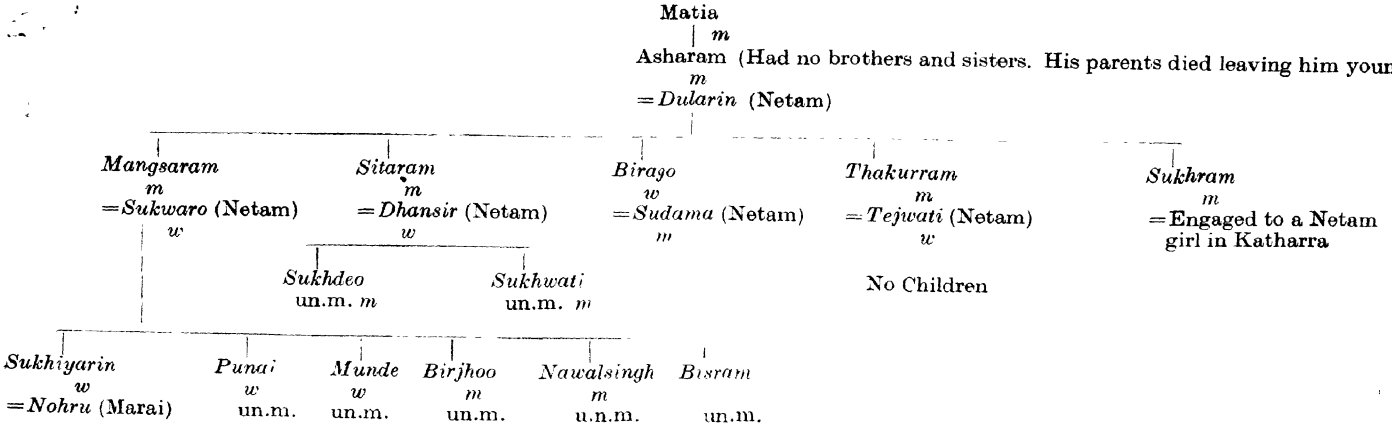
Bhadu (Netam) of Kesodar

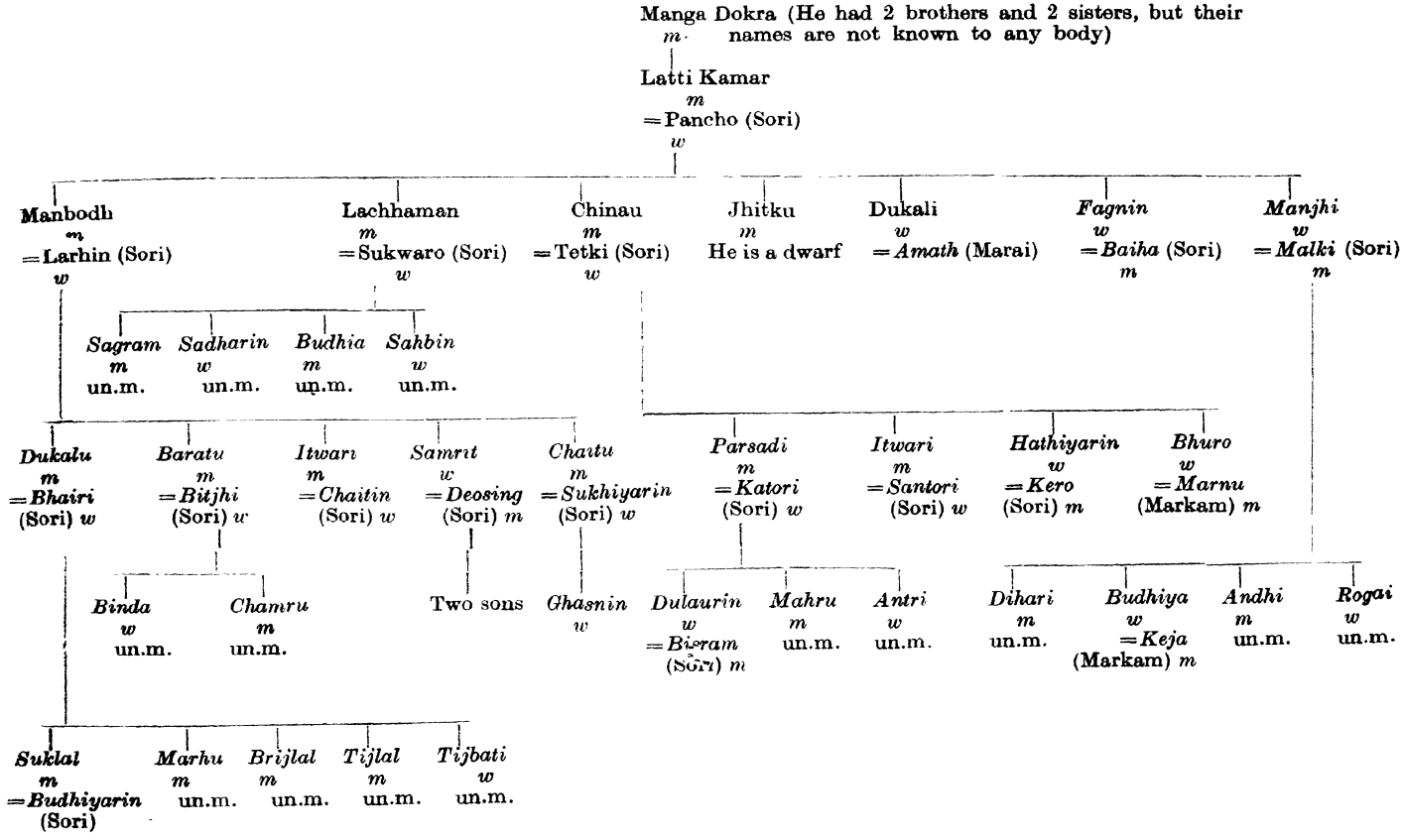
GENEALOGY No. 3



Mangsaram (Sori) of Pantora

GENEALOGY No. 4




Manga Dokra (He had 2 brothers and 2 sisters, but their names are not known to any body)
m
Latti Kamar
m
=Pancho (Sori)
w
Manbodh
m
=Larhin (Sori)
w
Lachhaman
m
=Sukwaro (Sori)
w
Chinau
m
=Tetki (Sori)
w
Jhitku
m
He is a dwarf
Dukali
w
=Amath (Marai)
Fagnin
w
=Baiha (Sori)
m
Manjhi
w
=Malki (Sori)
m
Sagram
m
un.m.
Sadharin
w
un.m.
Budhia
m
un.m.
Sahbin
w
un.m.
Dukalu
m
=Bhairi
(Sori) w
Baratu
m
=Bitjhi
(Sori) w
Itwari
m
=Chaitin
(Sori) w
Samrit
w
=Deosing
(Sori) m
Chaitu
m
=Sukhiyarin
(Sori) w
Parsadi
m
=Katori
(Sori) w
Itwari
m
=Santori
(Sori) w
Hathiyarin
w
=Kero
(Sori) m
Bhuro
w
=Marnu
(Markam) m
Binda
w
un.m.
Chamru
m
un.m.
Two sons
Ghasnin
w
Dulaurin
w
=Biram
(Sori) m
Mahru
m
un.m.
Antri
w
un.m.
Dihari
m
un.m.
Budhiya
w
=Keja
(Markam) m
Andhi
m
un.m.
Rogai
w
un.m.
Suklal
m
=Budhiyarin
(Sori)
Marhu
m
un.m.
Brijlal
m
un.m.
Tijlal
m
un.m.
Tijbati
w
un.m.

APPENDIX 4

GLOSSARY

achchhar	knowledge of elements.
Aghan	Hindu month falling in November-December.
akas	sky.
andhra	blind.
Asar	Hindu month falling in June-July.
Ayak	father; a god of the Kolams of Hyderabad Dn.
baghmasan	spirit of a person killed by a tiger.
bahir	women's condition of remaining out during menstruation.
basi	rice left over from the previous night.
bewar	a form of shifting cultivation.
Bhadon	Hindu month falling in August-September.
Bhagwan	God.
bhaji	vegetable.
bhauji	elder brother's wife.
bhira	floats.
bidai	money paid at the time of departing.
bidi	country cigarettes.
bihaw	marriage.
bongi	digging stick.
boti	slice, a small piece.
Chait	the first month of Hindu calender.
chakmuhi	flat-faced.
chaprasi	peon.
char	a fruit tree (*Buchanania Latifolia*).
chench	a wild vegetable.
chhotki	the junior wife of a polygynous husband.
chhui	red, white or yellow earth used for colouring the walls.
chhuri	large knife used for splitting bamboo.
chikara	a stringed musical instrument.
chil	a creeper.
chindhi	a rag, a piece of torn cloth.
chingri	a small variety of fish.
chirounji	kernel of *char* (*Buchanania Latifolia*).
chitar cheetal	spotted deer.
chobha	an arrow used in fishing.
chongi	smoking pipe made of leaf.
choriya	a fishing trap.
choti	tuft of hair.
chulha	hearth.
dahi	a form of shifting cultivation practised by the Kamar.
dahya	another term used synonymously with *dahi*.

dandar	another type of fishing trap.
dandi	rod of wood which joins the yoke to the body of the cart.
dewar	husband's younger brother.
dhan	unhusked rice.
dhan ginna	counting paddy seeds.
dhenki	rice husker operated by foot.
dhoti	long sheet of cloth worn round the loin by man.
dhungiyana	suffocating with smoke.
dhup	resin.
dhur-putri	tiny doll.
didwa	unmarried.
dih-Baiga	local magician.
dohla	a fishing arrow.
fatuhi	an undershirt.
fuli	liquor made from *mohua* flowers.
fundra	multi-coloured strings used for tying the hair.
gadi	vehicle.
gali	abuse.
Gata-Dooma	Mother Earth and ancestral spirits.
genjimudi	an intoxicating tuber.
ghar-jawai	man who lives with his father-in-law.
ghodi	stand used for splitting bamboo.
ghutku-fanda	a trap.
godari	a kind of creeper.
godera	sparrow.
gondla	a weed growing in water.
got	clan.
guhad	a form of shifting cultivation practised in such areas where bamboo is abundant.
gun	skill, magical power.
guni	really skilled.
gupti	a small bag in which a few coins can be kept.
gur	unrefined sugar, jaggery.
guri	village resting house.
haldi	turmeric.
handi	large earthen pot.
hansia	scythe.
harra	Myrobalan (*Terminali a chebula*).
hola	bon-fire.
hom-kuhra	burning incense.
huzur	a term of respect used for addressing a person in authority.
jat	caste, also used in the sense of sub-division.
jata	bun.
jhala	temporary shed.
jhapi	a bamboo box.
jhunga	a variety of large beans.
jiv	soul.
johar-saga	the term commonly used for wishing a person of equal status.

jot dekhna	seeing the flame.
juda	bun.
jungli	belonging to the jungle.
kada	bracelet.
kaka	uncle, father's brother.
kaki	father's brother's wife.
kalaunji	a small earthen pot.
kalsa	a small earthen pot filled with water. used on auspicious occasions like marriage.
kang	a variety of millet.
kantop	hat.
kapsa	a local variety of cotton.
karan	a parrot of large variety.
karchhul	a large wooden spoon.
kardhan	a silver ornament worn round the waist.
kargha	loom operated with hand by the Kostas.
karra	name of a tree.
karu kanda	a bitter tuber.
katha	a measure used all through Chhattisgarh. Normally one katha is equal to 4 seers but there are considerable local variations.
kauru	name of a bird.
kaya	name of a tree.
kechuwa	a small earth-worm.
keu kanda	name of a tuber.
kewach	a fruit the touch of which creates itching sensation on the body.
khadar	a variety of grass.
khedha	a vegetable very popular in Chhattisgarh.
kheera	cucumber.
khichadi	gruel.
khilwa	an ornament worn on the ears by women in Chhattisgarh.
khumri	a rain-hat made of bamboo and leaves.
kochya	a middle-man who buys things from the villages and sells them in the market and *vice versa*.
kodon	a millet crop.
Kolam	a tribe of Hyderabad-Dn.
Koshta	the village weaver.
kosra	a variety of millet.
Kotwar	village watchman.
Kumhar	pot-maker.
kumni	fishing trap.
kurha	the chief.
lal	red.
lamsena	boy who serves for a bride.
lingoti	a strip of cloth, sometimes the only cloth worn by many poor people in Chhattisgarh.
lohar	a blacksmith.
lota	pitcher.
lotna	grain-bin made of paddy straw.

lugra	woman's *sari*.
luthi	a piece of wood burning on one end.
machan	platform built on a tree, specially for *shikar*.
madhee	the dead body or shade of a person which lives in the burial ground.
madwa	shed open on all sides.
Mahakantar	territorial name of Madhya Pradesh in some old Sanskrit texts.
mahala	betrothal.
mahalia	person entrusted with the task of negotiating marriage.
maighar	main house.
maina	a sweet singing bird.
mala	a necklace.
mandi	cooking meals for a group.
mandia (madia)	*Eleusine Coracana*.
manj	intoxicating substances thrown in the water before fishing.
manihar	a fruit which possesses intoxicating qualities.
maran	an animal (goat or pig) or bird (fowl) killed for a feast.
Marka	mango.
mar-pit	altercation and beating.
Marwari	persons coming from Marwar who have sottled as traders and money-lenders.
Mata-guri	a shed where *Mata* is housed.
maya	illusion.
miyal	rafters.
mohri	a musical instrument.
mohua	*Bassia Latifolia*.
mohuari	a tax paid for collecting *mohua*.
moosal	wooden pounder.
mora	a rain-hat usually worn by women while engaged in field work.
mundri	ring.
mungia mala	necklace of red beads.
mur mati	original earth, the place where the forefathers of a group lived.
nagar	plough.
nagin	she cobra.
nala	brook.
Nawa Khai	New Eating.
nei	dog.
nisan	large drum.
padree	a Christian preacher.
pairi	an ornament worn by women on their legs.
Panchayat	tribal authority, in the meetings of which representatives take decisions on socio-religious matters.
panda	priest living in places of pilgrimage.
pandit	a Brahmin priest.
patuka	a small *dhoti*.
peedha	a wooden seat.
peeth kanda	name of a tuber.
pharha	a form of shifting cultivation in which seeds are sown on ash and later transplanted to the fields.

pipal	*Ficus Religiosa*, a sacred fig tree.
prithvi	earth.
raj	kingdom, also used in the sense of territory.
rani-kajar	a local variety of rice.
saga	those who belong to the tribe, also guest.
sahib	officer, a term used to denote a person in authority.
sahukar	money-lender.
sakhi	a form of ritual friendship.
sala	brother-in-law, term of abuse.
samdhi	relation between two parents-in--law.
samdhin	wife of *samdhi*.
sarai gum	gum of the *sarai* tree.
sari	a woman's dress.
semar-rui	cotton-like fiber of the fruit of *semar*.
shikar	game in the forest, hunting.
shikari	a person skilled in shooting animals.
singha	a hollow horn in which oil is kept.
Sirpanch	chief in a Panchayt.
suin	an old woman who assists at child-birth.
supa	winnowing fan.
supa bajana	taking sound in the winnowing fan.
suraj	*Swarajya* or self-government, according to the Kamars government of the Congress.
suta	an ornament worn round the neck.
tangia	axe.
tant	bamboo mattress.
tatta	a criss-cross work of bamboo-strips, a bamboo screen.
tel	oil.
tendu	*Diospyros Melanoxylon*.
thaili	a bag.
tikhur	a tuber from the paste of which a white edible substance is prepared.
timsa	name of a tree.
tokna	basket.
tonhi	witch.
tooma	gourd.
tukni	small basket.
urid	*Phaseolus Radiatus*.
vidya	knowledge, it also denotes knowledge of special techniques.
Zamindar	a big land-lord.
Zamindari	an estate granted as a favour to an individual by the government.

APPENDIX 5

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