TEXT FLY WITHIN
THE BOOK ONLY

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_162859

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OUP—730 28-4-81—10,000.

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

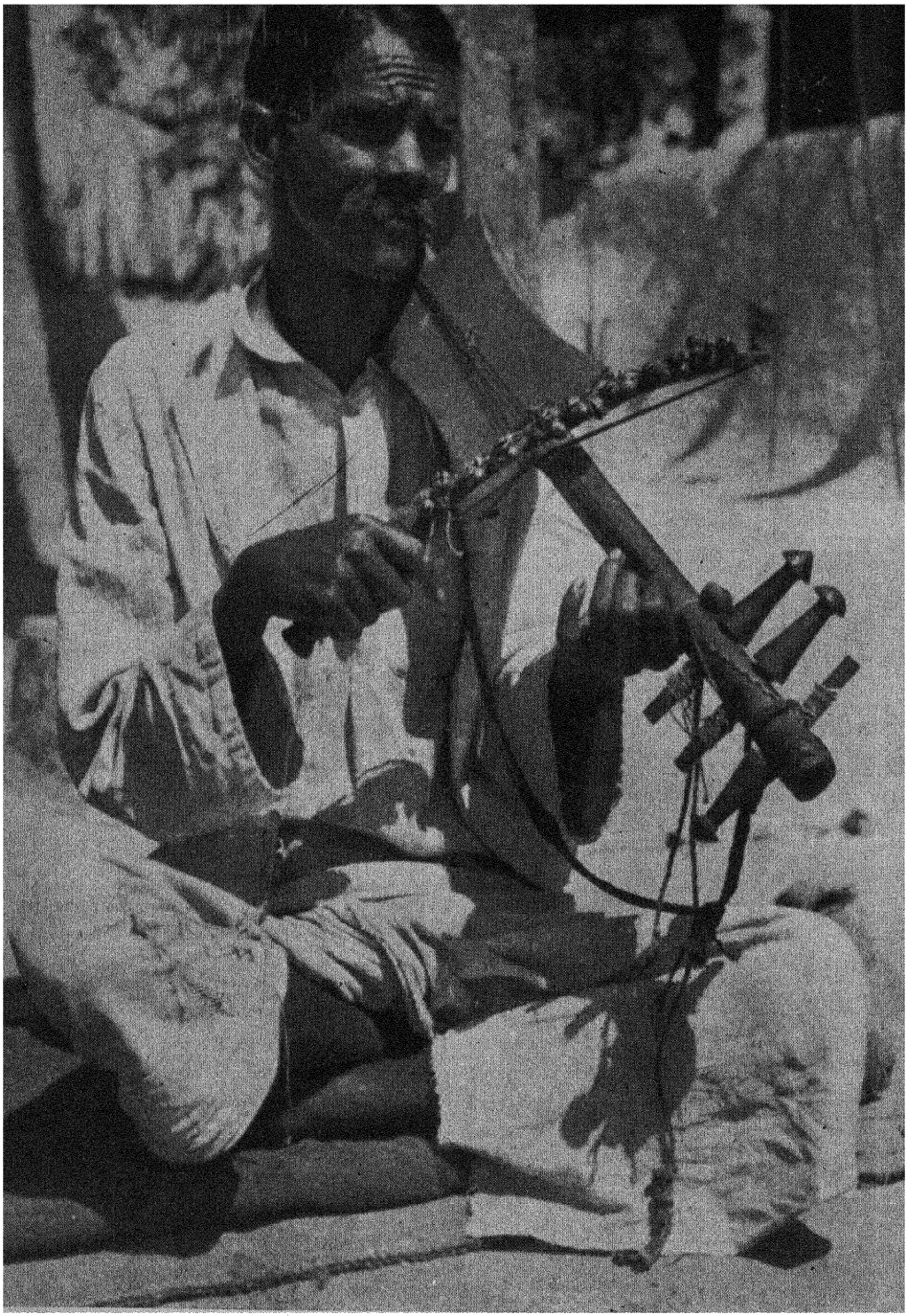
Call No. 572.9543 Accession No. 2974

Author H67P

Title

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below

THE PARDHANS
OF THE
UPPER NARBADA VALLEY



Dani with his bana

THE PARDHANS
OF THE
UPPER NARBADA VALLEY

SHAMRAO HIVALE

WITH A FOREWORD BY
VERRIER ELWIN



PUBLISHED FOR *MAN IN INDIA* BY
GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, LONDON, E.C. 4
EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPETOWN
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS
GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

PRINTED BY V. V. BAMBARDEKAR AT THE INDIA PRINTING
WORKS, FORT, BOMBAY AND PUBLISHED BY GEOFFREY
CUMBERLEGE, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, FORT, BOMBAY

TO MY BROTHER

BHASKAR PANDURANG HIVALE

TUTOR, GUIDE AND FRIEND

FOREWORD

THE name of Shamrao Hivale is not unknown to social anthropology. He is the author of some excellent articles and notes in *Man in India*; his name appears on the title page of two considerable collections of Indian folk-songs; above all, his labour for fourteen years among the Gonds and Pardhans of the Dindori Tahsil has won him the affection and respect of a large circle of friends, both in India and Europe.

In the present monograph Shamrao Hivale has given us the fruit of many years of study. It is over a decade since I suggested to him that the Pardhans among whom we lived were worthy of investigation. On this book therefore he has spent nearly twelve years—and what years! Shamrao Hivale is not, it is true, a Pardhan, but he is an Indian. There are no artificial barriers of colour, language or manners to divide him from the people. He has been able to spend his whole time among them and give them his entire attention. Wisely he has not hurried. He has approached his task with the most becoming humility. He is not a trained anthropologist; he lays no claim to extensive reading (though he has had access all these years to an excellent library and has made good use of it); he has no theories to exploit. He has lived with the people as their doctor, teacher, magistrate, champion, above all as their friend. They love him. He is their Chhota Bhai (little brother). His house is always thronged with visitors. Villagers sometimes come a hundred miles for his advice. When he goes out he finds it hard to get along the road, so many people want to see him. He has always had a special relationship with the Pardhans, of whom he is very fond. He has thus had a unique opportunity to obtain the facts about them. I will not say that nothing is hidden from him but I do say that few investigators have entered more fully into the life of their people.

The great Gond race has thrown out many cadet branches, but none to my mind is more delightful or fascinating (except possibly the Muria) than the Pardhan. The Pardhan is the youngest brother and every student of folk-lore knows how the youngest brother is privileged. He is the pet of the family. He has his bad moments, but he always wins in the end. He has all the best adventures. Everybody likes him. Where the elder brothers

are stupid or wicked, the youngest is filled with an almost superhuman intelligence. The Pardhan is, in fact, the professional younger brother. Amid the weary decline of a great race he still stands out jovial, original and witty. While the Gond now thinks the sum of human ambition is to be a railway clerk, an Excise Inspector, or an E. A. C., the Pardhan still believes that life itself matters more than life's achievements, that a poem is more important than a file, that to know how to make love to your wife is a much more important bit of knowledge than how to read or write. The Pardhan is always poor because at heart he does not care about riches.

It is an extraordinary sign of the deep-rooted Puritanism still surviving among us that most writers, even European writers, refer to the Pardhans as an inferior branch of the Gonds. They are inferior because they are poets and musicians. Few people would consciously allot a lower social position to the man of arts or letters but, particularly in Indian society, there can be no doubt that the professional musician has not yet established himself. This is particularly true of the attitude of the Gond to the Pardhan. It is a very ungrateful and dishonest attitude, for the Pardhan is the brain of the tribe, its heart and its voice. Through the Pardhan the dull bovine Gond finds self-expression. The Pardhan alone has preserved the memory of the heroic past of the Gond Rajas. In his songs and epics he does not recount the glories of his own tribe but always that of the Gond, though it must be confessed that these Gond heroes are in character and wit much more like Pardhans than Gonds.

Through the Pardhans alone—for all the Educational Department can teach Gond students is of such heroes of Indian history as Lord Linlithgow or some good loyal Rao Bahadur—are the grand and moving legends of the past preserved: Hirakhan, the great bull of the princely herd; Mara, the tempestuous lover; the exquisite Kamal Hiro; the princess Machhal Rano. In these tales also is the great reserve of humour that nothing can destroy.

This is how cultural India has survived. When I see Dani cuddling his Bana and hear his ecstatic cries of joy as each line of poetry is shot out, lovely and complete and into oblivion (unless there is someone like Shamrao Hivale to take it down) I realize the strength of this great nation, the joy that no man can take from it, the dignity and power that even in its beggars rises above

the force that would subdue it. I have known many Pardhans in the last fourteen years ; every one of them stands out in my mind as a *person*. Every one has character, individuality, interest. It is not possible to say that of the Gonds. The men whose names are preserved in this book are unusual and remarkable men and are not easily forgotten. The women are no less full of character, just as they are often models of primitive beauty. One of the most beautiful, as she was one of the best, women that I have ever known was a Pardhan. Her name was Satula and she was a leper. She was the youngest of the three wives of the savage and hideous old leper Raunu who died in our Leper Home many years ago. Satula was of a beauty so exquisite that the whole of Pardhan manhood was at her feet. She could have left her husband and married a young and well-to-do youth at any moment and no one would have condemned her. Yet she stayed with the old man, tending him devotedly, bathing his sores, bearing his continual grumbling and abuse, without complaint, without annoyance. When he died and set her free, she married a young man with whom she had long been in love. But she was, as I have said, a leper and she herself died soon afterwards, but before her terrible disease had made much inroad on her beauty.

The most important ethnographic discovery of this book is in its description of the economic relationship of the Gond Thakurs and the Pardhan Dasondis. I know of no similar description in any account of an Indian tribe. Earlier writers who described the Pardhans were content to say that they were the musicians of the Gonds and then they let their imagination run on a little and told us how the Pardhan played and sang at Gond marriages (which they rarely do) and at Gond festivals (which they never do). We were lucky if we escaped without reference to the bright fire in the evening and the absorbed faces of children listening to the story-teller and the long empty evenings which were enlivened by his songs.

The Pardhan songs have very high entertainment value. That will be realized by any reader of the songs given in this book or in the volumes of *Specimens of the Oral Literature of Middle India*. But the songs are something very much more than recreation. Their essential aim is not even the teaching of history or the consolidation of the morale of the race. Their primary purpose is simply and frankly an economic one. The Pardhan is not exactly

a beggar; he is rather a collector of ceremonial dues, for he has the right to certain gifts from Gonds of his own clan. The gifts are collected during what are known as the Mangteri expeditions. These are the occasions on which the Pardhan sings his songs.

This relationship of the Gond and Pardhan is a very real one. I once asked my wife, who is herself a Gond, what she thought of this invasion of her home by the Dasondi. 'Did not her parents find it a great burden and did they not resent it?' 'Not at all', she said, and she went on to tell me how her family used to look forward to the coming of the Pardhans and how they would get worried if they did not appear in due time. She said that the Pardhan Dasondi used to come many miles from the low country to her home in the hills. He would bring his wife and children with him. Her mother would at once go out to welcome the visitors and wash their feet. She would bring them into the house and sit them down with honour. They would prepare, my wife herself has often prepared it, the best food that they could provide and they would all sit together for the meal, the Pardhan and his wife and children on one side of the room and my wife's father and brother on the other. Then my wife and her mother would bring the food, serving the Dasondi himself first and then his family and after that her own father and brother. The coming of the Pardhans was an event that brought life and excitement into the monotony of daily life and was always anticipated with pleasure.

Shamrao Hivale has, very rightly in my opinion, not burdened his book with long lists of relationship terms and many genealogies. This is an important and valuable technique for surprizing the realities of kinship and social organization of some unknown tribe in a new and difficult country. But in India the facts of kinship have been recorded again and again. What we now need is some light on the skeleton descriptions that we have already. This Shamrao Hivale has admirably given us in his chapter on family life, particularly in the sections on the Dewar-Bhauji relationship, the Lamsena and the plural marriage. How many books have not given us the bare outline of the Lamsena system? But who has ever told us what a boy working under such an arrangement really feels like? I would draw the reader's attention to the imaginary conversations whereby Hivale has attempted to reveal some of the intimacies of daily life. Such a technique is possible only to one

who has a perfect command of the language and has lived so long with the people that he has even begun to think like them. The conversations may be imaginary, but I can testify that they show exactly how the people do in fact talk to each other.

I am glad that Shamrao Hivale has tried to give us some account of each of the many Pardhan clans. It is said that there are as many Gond clans as there are grains of rice in a field. It is hopeless to try to bring any order into the clan system as it is today. It has almost completely disintegrated and the most we can now do is to study each great clan almost as if it was a separate tribe, for actually, as Hivale clearly shows, each of these clans does have its special characteristics. I think he is the first in India to have brought this out so clearly.

Shamrao Hivale commands a clear and attractive English style. He persuaded me to go carefully through his manuscript and to make what alterations I preferred. I gave myself a certain amount of liberty in clearing sentences and correcting idiom. Here and there sentences of my own were necessary to make a point clear. But the book—and let there be no misunderstanding on this point —was not written, or even re-written, by me. I have had the privilege of living with the author while he was preparing it; I suggested lines of research and proposed amendments and additions; I have known all the chief actors in this little ethnographic drama; I have made some corrections in the language. But the work is Shamrao Hivale's own. The whole of the material, except for a few footnotes, is his. The discovery, the arrangement, the expression, the glow and light that fills the book, belongs to him.

I commend this all too short book as the most important contribution to social anthropology by an Indian writer since death ended the devoted labours of Sarat Chandra Roy. Its novelty, its simplicity, its supreme authenticity give it a unique distinction. The author's own life, given in toil and sacrifice to the people he loves, is the book's guarantee.

20 April 1945 VERRIER ELWIN
Patangarh,
Mandla District, India

CONTENTS

Page

I. INTRODUCTION

The Pardhans—The Distribution of the Pardhans —The Dindori Tahsil—The Pardhans in Literature—The Relation of Gonds and Pardhans—The Former Criminal Tradition 1

II. THE TRIBAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PARDHANS

The Origin of the World—The Rajnengi and the Gogia—The Clan Organization of the Pardhans 20

III. THE PARDHAN AT HOME

The Pardhan Village—The Routine of Every day 43

IV. THE PARDHAN'S PROFESSION

A Relationship of Economic Dependence—Different kinds of Dan — The Mangteri Tour — Adventures on the Mangteri Tour—The Muar Dan—Variations in the Mangteri System—The Bana—Pardhan Humour—The Bana Songs—The History of Dalpat Sai—The History of Hirakhan Kshattri—The History of Lakshman and Machhandar Kaina 50

V. THE PARDHAN AS PRIEST AND PROPHET

The Religion of the Pardhans—The Pardhan Gods —The Pardhan Magician—A Pardhan Priest—The Religious Year—The Laru Kaj—The Fight against Witchcraft 103

VI. THE PARDHAN AS LOVER AND POET

The Pardhan Woman—The Character of a Pardhan's Love — The Tradition of Pre-nuptial Freedom—Pardhan Dreams 146

VII. THE PARDHAN IN LIFE AND DEATH

Birth—Marriage—Death 164

VIII. THE PARDHAN AND HIS FAMILY

Domestic Realities — Domestic Jealousy — The Plough Punishment—The *Dewar-Bhauji* Relationship — Polygamy — The Serving-Marriage—Divorce—Scenes of Daily Life—Conclusion .. 186

GLOSSARY 223

INDEX 227

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		*Facing page*
I.	Scene in Patangarh village	16
II.	A young Pardhan and his wife	17
III.	A Pardhan girl	32
IV.	A Pardhan humourist	33
V.	A Pardhan girl fetches water	48
VI.	An angry husband yokes his wife to the plough	49
VII.	The Laru Kaj: 1. Bathing the Kamri 2. Feeding the pig before sacrifice	64
VIII.	Pardhan couple, wearing marriage crowns, go round the pole	65
IX.	Gogia Pardhan plays the bana	180
X.	Pardhan mother and child	181
XI.	Pardhans imitating weavers Two Pardhans, one dressed up as a woman, pretending to be drunk	188
XII.	Two Pardhans pretending to be a Baiga and his wife, stage a quarrel for the entertainment of the village	189

FIGURE		*Page*
1.	Wall-pattern in a Pardhan house	43
2.	Wall-decoration representing Dhuti Hill in the Upper Narbada Valley	45
3.	Pardhan representation of Lingo Hill in Rewa State	48
4.	Pardhan wall-pattern done in mud, of Bodrahin, a fantastic character in the Gondwani songs	56
5.	The Raj-Nengi Bana	69
6.	The Gogia Bana	72
7.	Maradlangha, the Kotwar	74
8.	Dalpat Sai and Kari Rani. Pardhan wall-decoration	75
9.	Hirakhan Kshattri, Shriyal Jango and Dhiro. Pardhan wall-decoration	77
10.	Kamal Hiro, the maiden	86
11.	The *phulera*	137
12.	A silver bracelet sometimes worn by Pardhans	146
13.	A finger-ring	147
14.	A ring made by a Hindu silversmith for a Pardhan woman	149
15.	An elaborate silver ring sometimes worn by Pardhan women	151
16.	A belt made by a Hindu silversmith and worn by Pardhans and other villagers	155
17.	*Dhar* and *sutia*, elaborate silver ornaments for head and ears	157
18.	An anklet	158
19.	A heavy silver bracelet	160
20.	A light brass bracelet	167
21.	An anklet of bell-metal	170
22.	Heavy brass anklet, now rarely worn by Pardhan women	171
23.	Pardhan wall-decoration in mud relief	174
24.	Pardhan wall-decoration	176
25.	Pardhan wall-pattern	206
26.	Crab-motif in Pardhan wall-decoration	208
27.	Pardhan wall-pattern	210

PREFACE

IT WAS in January 1932 that I first went to live in the Upper Narbada Valley, in the eastern ranges of the Satpura Mountains and within a few months I was in close touch with the Pardhans and had many friends among them. Those friendships have now lasted for nearly thirteen years. That is my excuse and one of my two qualifications for writing this book. The other is that although I do not pretend to be a scholar or an anthropologist, I have lived all these years with one who is both these things.

I returned from England at the end of 1931 to join Verrier Elwin on his first aboriginal expedition. Since then we have lived together and he has taught me much about the scientific approach to human problems, the need of exactitude and patience, the necessity for checking and rechecking, above all how enthusiasm and love for the object of study can illuminate it.

I count many Pardhans among my dearest friends, but without Verrier Elwin's help I would have been unable to interpret that friendship and translate it into writing. In addition to giving me general principles, he has guided me about lines of research and suggested many things for further investigation. When I had completed the book, although he was overwhelmed with his own work, he went through it page by page and even line by line, correcting faulty idioms and seeing that the language was clear. Then he wrote his Foreword and worked continually to get the book published and published well.

For the last twelve years, and specially since we made Patangarh our headquarters, I have lived in a real Pardhan atmosphere. The village is dominated by the Pardhans, though the majority of the population is Gond. The woman who looks after my little son is a Pardhan. The chaprassi in my court is also a Pardhan, our cook and the gardener are Pardhans. My nearest neighbours are Pardhans. Most of the twenty-four hours therefore I have to talk and deal with Pardhans. And my most constant helpers in preparing this book, to whom I would express my gratitude, are the Pardhans, Dani, Dayaram and Tabalchi. The members of the research staff of the Bhumijan Seva Mandal, Sundarlal, Gulabdas and Shankarlal, who have been trained by Dr Elwin for many years, also gave me constant assistance.

My wife was with me during most of my later inquiries and her help was invaluable in producing the right atmosphere in which people will reveal themselves. Kosi Elwin too was most helpful in this and her knowledge of the area often threw light on our problems.

The line-drawings were made from specimens and photographs by the adept hand of Mr R. F. Motafram. Most of the plates are from photographs by Dr Elwin.

To this book Miss B. M. Smith gave her unbounded sympathy for everything that affects the Indian aboriginal together with her knowledge of print and paper. Despite the heavy claims of office and home, she found opportunity in what is so oddly called 'spare time' to god-mother my manuscript into its final form, and I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude. That gratitude I also extend to my fellow Maharashtrians, the Manager and staff of the India Printing Works. The printing of the book was done in the last days of the World War, when much of the type available was worn out by constant use. This is the reason why it has not been possible to accentuate properly the italicized words in the text, an unavoidable fault for which I particularly crave the indulgence of Indian readers familiar with Hindi.

1 November 1945 SHAMRAO HIVALE
Patangarh,
Mandla District, India

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PARDHANS

THE PARDHANS are a branch of the great Gond tribe now some three million in number, and although they are only four per cent in numerical strength of the whole tribe, they have always made an important contribution to its life. In the old days they were probably the official genealogists of the Gond courts. They acted as priests and diviners. They were the musicians of the tribe, retaining in their memories and constantly recounting the glorious history of the ancient Gond kingdoms. Their women acted as midwives to the Gonds, and tattooed Gond girls.

With the collapse of the Gond kingdoms, the Pardhans shared the failing fortunes of the race. Always dependent on the senior tribe, they now found the Gonds unable to support them properly. They were driven to crime and sank in the social scale. Later they recovered themselves and today the Pardhans remain, what apparently they always have been, a tribe of witty, charming, intelligent people, whose fundamental interest is in music and song. Their connection with the Gonds, which I study in a later chapter, is of an intimate and peculiar kind. Through their relation as ritual beggars, they stand in a position of economic dependence upon them. It is unthinkable that the Pardhans should exist apart from the Gonds. It is equally impossible for Gond life and culture to find its full expression without the Pardhans.

The Pardhans are known by a number of different names. The word Pardhan itself comes from the Sanskrit and means a Minister, sometimes a Prime Minister. The Gondi word seems to be Pana. A very common name, but one which the Pardhans themselves sometimes resent, is Pathari. They are also called Desai, a relic from Maratha days, and Parganiha. In Balaghat they are called Mokasi or Bhau. For all these words the Pardhans have fantastic derivations. Pana is traced to *pahuna*, a visitor. Pardhan is said to mean 'one who eats other people's rice—*para*: 'others' and *dhan*: 'rice'. Another derivation is from *par*: 'embankment' and *dhan*: 'rice', and refers to a tradition that the first Pardhan was born on the embankment of a rice-field. Pathari is said to mean 'one who lives on a *pathe*, flat tableland' or 'one who worships

a Pat' or hill-god. Desai is supposed to mean 'one who wanders from *des* to *des*, from country to country.' Mokasi is a synonym for Mukhiya or chief, and Bhau means 'elder brother'.

II. The Distribution of the Pardhans

The Pardhans are distributed in small colonies throughout the Central Provinces and Berar and in some of the neighbouring States. In 1911 they numbered nearly 120,000.[1] In 1931 there were 115,813 in the British Districts and 3,742 in the States, making a total of 119,555. Their distribution in round figures in 1931 was as follows:

Distribution of the Pardhans by Tahsils

Amarwara	2000	Katol	1000
Arvi	3000	Kelapur	8000
Baihar	1000	Lakhnadon	6000
Balaghat	1000	Mandla	5000
Betul	1000	Multai	1000
Bilaspur	1000	Nagpur	2000
Brahmapuri	4000	Niwas	2000
Chanda	6000	Sausar	2000
Chhindwara	4000	Seoni	9000
Darwha	1000	Umrer	1000
Dindori	4000	Waraseoni	1000
Garhchiroli	5000	Wardha	2000
Gondia	1000	Warora	4000
Hinganghat	2000	Wun	8000
Jubbulpore	1000	Yeotmal	3000

The status of the Pardhans varies greatly from place to place. In 1931 no fewer than 71,906 of them were recorded as untouchable in the British Districts. They were so regarded throughout the old Nagpur and Berar Divisions (except in the Balaghat District) and in the Nimar, Chhindwara and Raipur Districts. In the States their standing was better but in the Kanker, Nandgaon and Surguja States they were held to be untouchable. On this point the Census Report says,

It will be noticed that one or two aboriginal tribes are included among the untouchables. For instance the Pardhan minstrels of the Gonds, whose position is degraded even among the Gonds

[1] There were also some 8000 in Hyderabad.

themselves, are regarded as impure by Hindus in a large number of districts. It is hardly within the scope of this note to discuss whether the idea of untouchability originated in the attitude of their fellow-tribesmen or was assimilated from Hindu ideas.[1]

In three Districts, Saugor, Jubbulpore and Seoni, the Pardhans were classified by the Education Department as a criminal tribe. In Mandla, however, their standing is much higher. They are not regarded as untouchable or as criminal and indeed they have built up for themselves a comparatively respectable position in society. To this their very close social and economic association with the Gonds has undoubtedly contributed.

As a sign of their improved status it is worth noting that Mr W. V. Grigson proposed in 1944 an extension of the Land Alienation Act to Pardhans in a number of Districts where members of the tribe hold important properties. In Jubbulpore there are two Pardhan malik maqbuzas; in Betul there is one Pardhan malguzar and two malik maqbuzas; in Wardha there are seven malik maqbuzas; in Balaghat there are nine malguzars and in Mandla, Nagpur and Chanda there are a sufficient number of Pardhans with landed property for them to require the protection of the Act.[2]

III. The Dindori Tahsil

This book will deal only with the Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley in the Dindori Tahsil of the Mandla District. It seemed to me that the only alternative to a survey of the whole province, which would have involved touring on a scale far beyond my means, was to concentrate on the study of a comparatively small area. This has the advantage that it is possible to give an intimate account of the people of that area and has the additional merit that it is not necessary to overload the book with a great quantity of comparative material. In Middle India, where tribal life is now greatly broken up, any attempt to describe one of the larger tribes as a whole involves the comparative description of widely differing customs; indeed it is practically impossible to make any unified study at all.

In Mandla District the Pardhan population in 1931 was 12,393

[1] *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. XII, p. 388.
[2] W. V. Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* (Nagpur, 1944), pp. 112 ff.

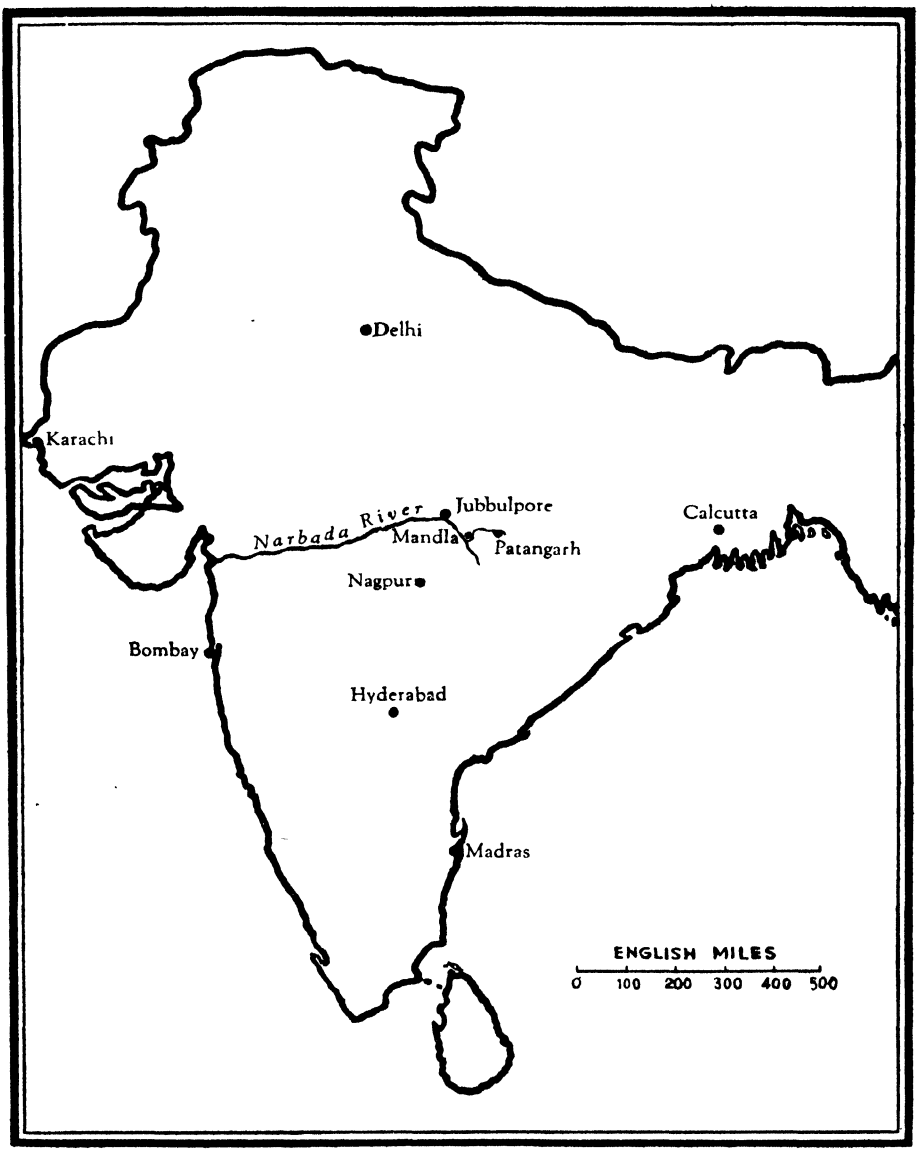
as against 11,538 in 1911. In 1931 there were 219,136 Gonds. In the Dindori Tahsil there were about 4,000 Pardhans to 68,000 Gonds. Since the Pardhans are largely dependent on the Gonds the comparative strength of the two tribes is important.

Mandla District, still lonely and beautiful, lies between 23°.22′-22°.12′ North and 80°.1′-81°.50′ East, at the eastern end of the Satpura Mountains. To the north is the Jubbulpore District and the Rewa State, from which the District is separated by the Narbada River. Across its great southern forests lies the equally wild and remote Balaghat District. To the west is Seoni and an eastern spur thrusts into Bilaspur. Dindori Tahsil occupies the eastern portion of the District and is set among the lovely Maikal Hills. From Dindori to Amarkantak the traveller passes along a great plain, the fine black soil of which is fully cultivated. To his left rise the hills of Rewa on the far side of the Narbada River. To his right, some miles from the road, begins the great expanse of forest in the midst of which is the Baiga Chak. Much wheat and gram is grown on the black soil of the Tahsil and during the War it was an important source of supply to troops in Jubbulpore. But the inhabitants themselves rely rather on the crops of small millets and oil-seed growing on the red murram and barra ground.

This Dindori Tahsil was formerly the Ramgarh Pargana and many of the older men still refer to it by its ancient name. Here there was once a Raja who lost his estate at the time of the Mutiny; his village is now in ruins.

The Tahsil is still very largely occupied by aboriginals, though many of the villages have passed under alien influence and there are colonies of Hindu and Mussalman adventurers in most of the larger bazaar centres. But even now this part of the District is what (in Rudman's words) the whole District was in 1912, 'the Ultima Thule of civilization, the dreaded home of the tiger, the Gond and the Devil'.[1] It is with the greatest difficulty that officials are persuaded to go to the outlying police stations and revenue circles. School-masters in the District Council schools spend their time intriguing for transfer to a more clement atmosphere and more sophisticated company. Yet to the people themselves these hills have a fascination which nothing can rival. 'Once you have slipped in the mud of Mandla, you will always long to

[1] F. R. R. Rudman, *Mandla District Gazetteer* (Bombay, 1912), p. 2.


Delhi
Karachi
Narbada River
Jubbulpore
Mandla
Patangarh
Calcutta
Nagpur
Bombay
Hyderabad
Madras
ENGLISH MILES
0 100 200 300 400 500

MAP OF INDIA

return to it', and it is said by the Pardhans that, however far they may wander, they desire to return to their own villages to die.

IV. The Pardhans in Literature

The Pardhans made their first entry into literature with the publication of the Rev. Stephen Hislop's *Papers Relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces,* which was edited by Sir R. Temple and printed by him in 1866. Hislop's papers are rather disappointing but owe what fame they have to the legend of Lingo, a long and remarkable account of the origin of the Gond race which was recited by a Pardhan priest in Nagpur. Curiously, since so much of his book is derived from a Pardhan, Hislop tells us very little about the tribe itself. Indeed he seems to identify the Pardhans and Gonds. On one page, for example, he speaks of a woman as a Gond and on the next admits she is a Pardhan. His account, however, may be quoted, as it is the earliest we have.

My informants, whether seven or six-god worshippers, call themselves Koitors, and say that although the Pardhans follow the same religion and are sub-divided according to the number of their gods, yet the caste is different, and they neither eat nor intermarry with them. The Pardhans will eat from the hands of the Koitors, and are reckoned inferior. Mohani, one of the seven-god worshippers, is a Pardhan, and goes to the house of Tami, where she may eat: but if Tami goes to Mohani's house, she may not eat. The Pardhans, like Mohani's husband, who, however, is employed in secular service, discharge the functions of Bhats, sing songs and give information on genealogical matters. But these are few. They also think it no indignity to play on stringed instruments; they call themselves Raj Pardhan, as Tami is a Raj Gond. Beneath them there is a sub-division whose women tattoo Gonds and Hindus. Beneath them again is a sub-division who play on wind instruments of wood, while there is still a lower class who speak more Marathi than Gondi, and play on wind instruments of brass and spin thread like the Mahars. All these, however, worship the same gods, and are sub-divided accordingly.[1]

To Hislop the Pardhans were mainly priests. In the Mahadeo Hills, he says, the 'highest Pardhans act as Pujaris and the lower as rude musicians'. The Koitors seemed to look down upon both offices as somewhat menial; indeed most of Hislop's references to the tribe are somewhat contemptuous, hardly befitting

[1] Hislop, Appendix I, p. ii.

one whose sole claim to ethnographic recognition lies in the Pardhan epic which was generously given to him by its narrator. He describes how the first Pardhan was appointed, suggesting that the incident was inserted by the Pardhan singer 'for the glorification of himself and his class'[1] and he also describes how the Pardhans are 'averse to any sort of industry'.[2] Hislop says that the Pardhans perform the important function of negotiating marriages for the Gond, a duty which they still achieve to the best of their ability; for naturally, as they go from place to place and meet many people, it is easy for them to bring families together.

Dalton gives a brief summary of the Lingo legend but says that, 'it is so obviously derived from Hindu teachers of wild imagination that it cannot be regarded as embodying any true Gondi traditional lore'.[3] But Dalton has nothing to say about the Pardhans and indeed he was by no means attracted to the somewhat Hinduized tribes of the Central Provinces. The legend of Lingo was turned into the metre of *Hiawatha* by Forsyth[4] and has been reproduced by various other writers such as Russell and Hiralal and Eyre Chatterton. Verrier Elwin has given a number of new versions of the legend in his book on the Murias[5] and I understand that C. von Furer-Haimendorf has yet another version in his forthcoming work on the Gonds of Adilabad. The Pardhans of Dindori, however, do not know the legend and to them Lingo is simply a god dwelling in a fine mountain of the same name on the far side of the Narbada River.

The earlier Settlement Reports continue the tradition of speaking with some degree of contempt about the Pardhans. Ward has very little to say about them at all. Thomson gives them the worst of characters. Lawrence says of the Bhandara Pardhans:

The Purdhans occupy a peculiar position. Though professedly Hindoos, yet they are more closely connected with the Gonds than with any other tribe. They are sometimes found as the servants of Gonds, and are employed to serve the pleasures and to administer to the wants of their superiors. They are the Gond bards and in the families of Gond Zamindars are accustomed to recount the deeds and sing the praises of the ancestral line. The

[1] ibid., p. 50. [2] ibid., p. 51.
[3] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 282.
[4] J. Forsyth, *The Highlands of Central India* (London, 1871), pp. 179 ff.
[5] Verrier Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Bombay, 1945).

Gonds, however, have not the reputation of being good paymasters; and it does happen that, in these days, the Purdhans get their food by making baskets, and sometimes by petty pilfering of grain.[1]

All that P. N. Bose (who wrote an account of Chhattisgarh in 1890) has to say of the tribe is:

The Pardhans form a small caste. Their social status is considered lower than that of the other Gonds. The Agarias appear to form a sub-section of them, as also the Patharis who correspond to the Bhats of the Rajputs. The village 'Baiga' not unoften belongs to the Pardhan caste. The name Pardhan appears to be of Sanskritic origin signifying 'chief'; and it is rather strange that the caste should be held in such low estimation.[2]

After this the Pardhans figure in literature mainly as criminals and as such they are discussed in the works of Gayer[3] and Gunthorpe.[4] I have no doubt there are many accounts of their criminal activities hidden away in official records.

The account of the Pardhans in Russell and Hiralal's *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* is singularly inadequate. This book describes them as 'an inferior branch of the Gond tribe whose occupation is to act as the priests and minstrels of the Gonds'.[5] It gives a brief account of their origin and describes some of their endogamous divisions. But its account of Pardhan religion entirely misses the point of the sacred character of the Bana, which indeed is not mentioned. Instead Russell and Hiralal say that the Pardhans play the Kingri,[6] a statement that would be refuted with indignation by anyone in Dindori. There is some mention of the Pardhans' former methods of cheating and a brief note on their function as musicians and priests, but there is no reference at all to the most distinctive thing about the Pardhan tribe, its relationship of economic dependence on the Gonds.

[1] A. J. Lawrence, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Bhundara District* (Bombay, 1867), p. 51.

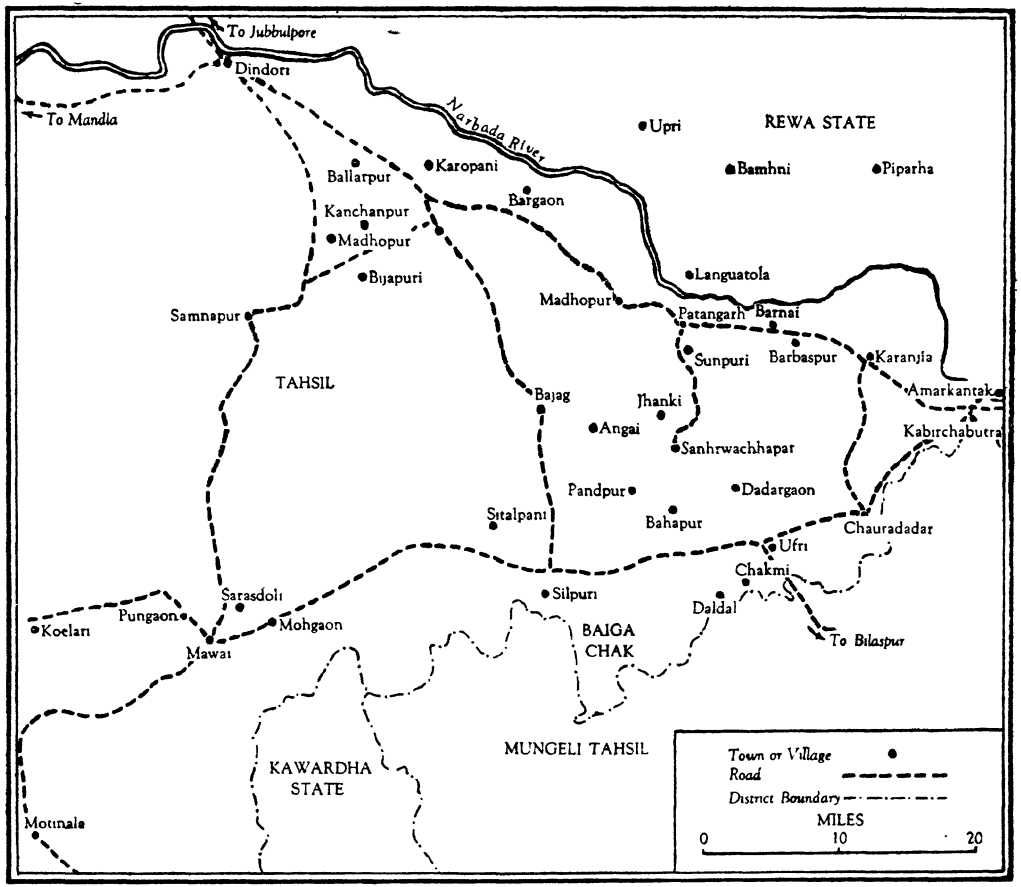
[2] P. N. Bose, 'Chhattisgarh: notes on its tribes, sects and castes', *J. A. S. B.*, Vol. LIX (1890), p. 284.

[3] G. W. Gayer, *Lectures on Criminal Tribes.*

[4] Major Gunthorpe, *Criminal Tribes of Bombay, Berar and the Central Provinces.*

[5] R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), Vol. IV, p. 352.

[6] The Gondi word for the Pardhan Bana is Kikri. The Kingri or Kindri is an entirely different type of instrument, made with gourds and played with one finger. It is used by the wandering Bhima minstrels and sometimes by Gond Gunias in divination.



THE UPPER NARBADA VALLEY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

In 1935 Verrier Elwin and I published a number of Pardhan songs in our small book, *Songs of the Forest* and in 1944, a larger selection, together with an account of a Pardhan marriage, in *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills.* Verrier Elwin has studied Pardhan ideas of conception, birth and the puerperium in one article ; [1] their attitude to menstruation and the climacteric in another ; [2] and the divorce-situation in Patangarh, a largely Pardhan village, in a third.[3]

V. The Relation of Gonds and Pardhans

The close connection between the Gonds and Pardhans is illustrated by the popular proverb :

'*Gond aur Pathari an ga. Marthan sarthan ta ek sath dhuti ma tangthan.*

We are Gonds and Patharis and when we die and rot, we are hung up together in one fish-basket.'

This is a very interesting saying for it suggests that, whatever happens here, after death the Departed of both tribes live together in the other world. This is further emphasized in the Kunda ceremony when symbols of the dead are offered to Bara Pen. On this occasion the offerings of both Gonds and Pardhans are tied together with the saying, 'We are of the same tree' and the priest exclaims, 'O you ancestors, all of you are of the same family. Lie down together in one place'.

The most important connection between Gonds and Pardhans is that they have the same clans, a fact that leads to the fundamental economic relationship between them that I study fully in a later chapter. Gonds and Pardhans have the same mythology ; indeed the majority of the Gonds owe what little they know about the legendary origin of the world and the genesis of their own tribe to the Pardhans. The two tribes have the same religious practices. They observe the same festivals. They share each others' magicians. The Pardhans often act as genealogists to the Gonds. They do not, however, in Dindori act

[1] 'Conception, Pregnancy and Birth among the Tribesmen of the Maikal Hills', J.R.A.S.B., Vol. IX (1943), pp. 99 ff.

[2] 'Primitive Ideas of Menstruation and the Climacteric in the East Central Provinces of India', *Essays in Anthropology presented to S. C. Roy* (Calcutta, 1942), pp. 141 ff.

[3] 'The Duration of Marriage among the Aboriginals of the Maikal Hills', *Man in India,* Vol. XXII (1942), pp. 11 ff.

as midwives or tattooers of the senior tribe. The very name Pardhan, which is derived from the Sanskrit, is the title of the Prime Minister of a Rajput State. The Pardhans are also known sometimes as Diwan and this suggests that once the Gond Rajas kept Pardhans as their Ministers and not only as their minstrels and genealogists. When Gonds and Pardhans sit together at marriages or such ceremonies as the Laru Kaj, they behave as if they belonged to the same family. They mix together entirely naturally and address one another as mother, aunt, father or uncle just as the Gonds do among themselves.

A Gond does not treat a Baiga or an Agaria like that. Although they have been neighbours for centuries, the Gond avoids the Agaria and only goes to him when he needs his axe or sickle sharpened. He calls the Baiga to free the village of disease or to drive a man-eating tiger away but he looks down upon him and hardly ever meets him socially. But the Pardhan is in every way his younger brother, and like any younger brother ubiquitous and privileged.

But there is a definite limit to this connection. The Pardhan is very different from the Gond both in his physical character and in temperament. The Pardhan is a romantic. The Gond is a businessman. The Pardhan's devotion to his Bana (the sacred fiddle which is the home of Bara Pen) fills his life with poetry and the stolid steady Gond looks dry and arid beside him. The Gond has the power of sticking to a job and of accumulating wealth. There are many Gond farmers even today who are substantial men of business employing many servants and owning large properties. This is almost unknown amongst the Pardhans. To the Pardhan a song is more important than a sack of grain and this is ultimately true even though the Pardhan insists on getting what he can from the material world. The Pardhan is certainly not an ascetic indifferent to his material comforts, but it is probably true, I think, that he does not put these first. The Pardhan is much more intelligent than the Gond, quick-witted, humorous and a charming companion. He shines and sparkles in the company of his heavy-going slow-spoken Gond brother. If I have to go on tour I always try to take Pardhan rather than Gond porters with me, for to travel with a party of Pardhans is an unending delight. The long miles are soon forgotten in the ceaseless stream of amusing anecdotes,

snatches of song and clever sayings. But the Gond is more reliable than the Pardhan. You may send a Pardhan with a message to another village and he will quietly go to his house and hide there all day, returning in the evening with the news that he was unable to find the person to whom you had sent him. He will work steadily for some weeks, but he must from time to time let off his feelings in a drinking bout. On the other hand I think the Pardhan is more loyal and faithful than the Gond, whose treachery is proverbial.

Physically it is often possible to distinguish a Pardhan from a Gond simply by his appearance. The Pardhan is more wiry, more alert, his features are finer drawn. On the whole, I think he is a smaller type than the Gond. It is very difficult, however, to distinguish the women of the two tribes until you talk to them.

The Gonds recognize their connection with the Pardhans and often stress their unity. But they will not marry with them and although the Pardhan will take cooked food from the Gond, the Gond does not return the compliment. The Gond considers the Pardhan to belong to a lower social order than himself. In order to emphasize his superiority he will not let a Pardhan sit on his bed, for this would be regarded as a sign of familiarity[1] and might lead to intrigues between Pardhan men and Gond girls who are often fascinated by the wit and poetry of the younger brother. The Pardhan for the same reason is not permitted to go inside a Gond's house and when he visits his Thakur he must sit in the courtyard.

On the other hand, the Pardhans do not think very highly of the Gonds. Dani said to me once, 'It is almost impossible to love a Thakur'. To the quick-witted Pardhan, the Gond seems exceptionally stupid. A Gond's jokes are always very heavy. 'He can't tickle anyone without skinning him. He can't joke with a younger sister-in-law without making her exhausted with the whole subject of joking relationships.' The sort of thing that seems funny to a Gond—this is how the Pardhans put it—is to say to a younger sister-in-law as she is going into a dark room to fetch wood, 'Be careful, there is a cobra there and we'll have to drag your body out'. To the Pardhan the Gond's 'mouth

[1] Another reason for this prohibition is that it would be disrespectful for the 'young' Pardhan to sit on a bed in the presence of the very senior Gond brother.

is dry', there is 'no honey in it'; he calls the finest horse an ass and a beautiful sari a rag (*chitara*). Beside the generous impulsive Pardhan, the Gond seems hard-hearted and hard-boiled. 'Never trust a wife, a dream—or a Gond.'

In Balaghat, there is a move among certain reformers to unite the two tribes and to permit inter-marriage between them. In Seoni some years ago there was considerable agitation among the Pardhans on the lines that they would not take food from the Gonds unless the Gonds took food from them.[1]

The Pardhan Malguzar of Madhopur said to me, 'We are always ready to eat their leavings so as to get something better. Who knows if the dirty Gond children have dabbled their fingers in the pots or blown their noses on the plates, yet we accept that water and eat that food. So when the Gonds do not treat us properly, we get very angry and say, "If you would eat with us, we would never ask you for anything".'

VI. The Former Criminal Tradition

In the Districts of Saugor, Jubbulpore and Seoni, the Pardhans were classified, even as late as the 1931 Census, as a criminal tribe and such studies of the criminals of the Central Provinces as those by Gunthorpe and Gayer give the Pardhans an important place in their discussions.

The first Land Revenue Settlement Report for the Seoni District gives the darkest possible account of the Pardhans:

> They bear the very worst of characters, being many of them regular cattle lifters and gang robbers. In parts of Seonee, and Raegurh too, they are the terror of the Malgoozars, whose houses and granaries they fire, if in any way reported or molested: so bad had it become, that I thought at one time of recommending that they should be collected into separate villages, on a system something like that of the thieves' villages in the North-West Provinces, and I think it would be an excellent measure, even now, if all the contingent questions could be satisfactorily settled. They alone understand the manufacture of native spirits, and generally keep the liquor shops, where bad characters assemble.[2]

The *Mandla District Gazetteer*, published many years later, says that the criminality of the Pardhans was then mainly a thing

[1] Pardhans sometimes say jokingly, 'The only difference between Gond and Pardhans is that Gonds can kill cats and dogs, and Pardhans can't'.

[2] W. B. Thomson, *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Seoni District* (Bombay, 1867), p. 43.

of the past, but even this Gazetteer refers to them as a 'so-called criminal tribe'.

These are found in small numbers throughout the District, but their principal habitat is in the North, where a line of police-posts stretching from Jamgaon on the Rewa border to Maneri on the Jubbulpore border was established in times past to hold them in check. The great majority of them, except perhaps a few in the neighbourhood of Anjania, have now settled down to agriculture and other honest employments and many of the village watchmen are recruited from their ranks. Their operations, where they have any criminal tendencies left, are confined mainly to petty thefts, small house-breakings, and occasional excursions into cattle-lifting; but they have forgotten their distinctive methods of crime, and no case worthy of special mention has of late years occurred in Mandla.[1]

Russell and Hiralal reproduce some interesting notes taken from a report of Captain McNeil written in 1872.

The Pardhans procure a quantity of the dry bark of the pipal, mahua, tamarind or gular trees and set it on fire; when it has become red-hot it is raked into a small hole and a piece of well-polished brass is deposited among the glowing embers. It is constantly moved and turned about and in ten or fifteen minutes has taken a deep orange colour resembling gold. It is then placed in a small heap of wood-ashes and after a few minutes taken out again and carefully wrapped in cotton-wool. The peculiar orange colour results from the sulphur and resin in the bark being rendered volatile. They then proceed to dispose of the gold, sometimes going to a fair and buying cattle. On concluding a bargain they suddenly find they have no money, and after some hesitation reluctantly produce the gold, and say they are willing to part with it at a disadvantage, thereby usually inducing the belief that it has been stolen. The cupidity of the owner of the cattle is aroused, and he accepts the gold at a rate which would be very advantageous if it were genuine. At other times they join a party of pilgrims, to which some of their confederates have already obtained admission in disguise, and offer to sell their gold as being in great want of money. A piece is first sold to the confederates on very cheap terms and the other pilgrims eagerly participated.[2]

The old organization appears to have been very complete and the *Mandla District Gazetteer* says:

The sexes have their appointed sphere; the men take the more active duty of thieving while the women act as spies, receivers and

[1] Rudman, op. cit., p. 89.
[2] Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 356.

guards. Their three implements of house-breaking are the *kanta* or wooden handled crow-bar, about eighteen inches long, the *sarota*, a pair of handled blades similar to betelnut cutters, and the *hassia* or ordinary sickle. Armed with these weapons three or four men, who have been chosen from the general community, are sent out to 'crack' the selected 'crib'. The proceeds are all brought back to the village and distributed by a panchayat presided over by a Mukhya or Mukasi. This officer is the Sir-panch or arbiter in all the social affairs of the community, and also represents it in its dealings with neighbouring Kotwars and Malguzars. The post requires some tact, as bribery is a delicate matter; he is therefore elected by the community for life, but is liable to removal if his work is unsatisfactory. He is usually the oldest and most influential member of the community, with some material wealth and knowledge of the outer world, none the worse for having had some experience of the inner workings of a goal. Nowadays, however, the old Pathari organization is dissolved, or if it exists at all, is but a shadow of its former self; and the caste is burdened with an unsavoury reputation, which it little deserves.[1]

To this Russell and Hiralal add a few details about the position of the Mokasi.

All the property acquired is taken back to the village and there distributed by a panchayat or committee, whose head is known as Mokasi. The Mokasi is elected by the community and may also be disposed by it, though he usually holds office for life; to be a successful candidate for the position of Mokasi one should have wealth and experience and it is not a disadvantage to have been in jail. The Mokasi superintends the internal affairs of the community and maintains good relations with the proprietor and village watchman by means of gifts.[2]

The Pardhans today are very sensitive about the use of the word Mokasa, which is sometimes given as the name of their tribe. Once when I was talking with a group in Patangarh, Tabalchi mentioned the word as one of the many given to them and the elder men were extremely annoyed and a quite unpleasant quarrel followed.[3]

[1] Rudman, op. cit., p. 91.
[2] Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 357.
[3] The word Mokasa is not, however, in any way a derogatory one. A. J. Lawrence, writing about the Bhandara District in 1867, says: 'Zamindars and Maafeedars (rent-free holders of villages) are indifferently called Mokassas: the word implies free-holders, and was once, though not now, justly applicable to Zamindars, as when estates were first conferred they generally paid nothing. The word appears to be a relic of the old Bejapoor Kingdom, and was first applied to Mahrattas, when Sivajee obtained

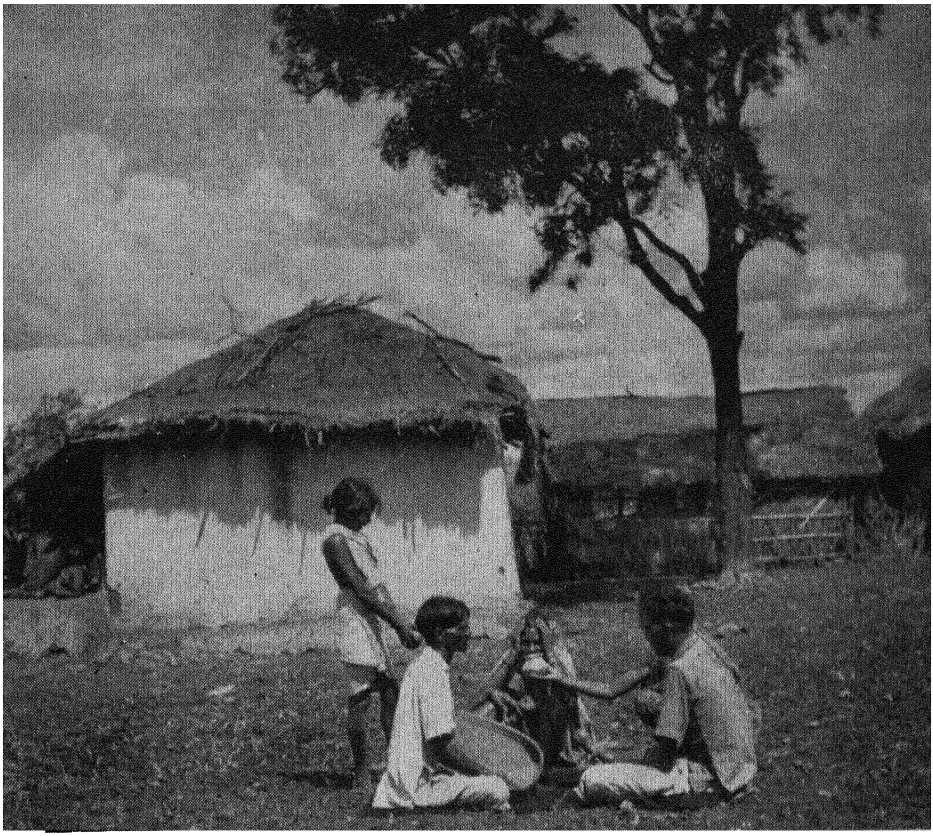
The villagers are naturally reluctant to talk about their criminal past, particularly as today in the Dindori Tahsil the Pardhans are the most law-abiding of people and many of them hold the office of village watchman or Kotwar whose duty it is to assist the police in their investigations. Many others are Mukkadams or village headmen. But I have been able to record a few reminiscences from the older men. One of these from Madhopur attributes the criminality of the Pardhans to the Hindu invasion of the country. What is probably true is that the general disturbance of the Gondwana in the first half of the nineteenth century broke up the economic relations of Gonds and Pardhans, and drove the latter to crime. My informant described how:

In the old days there were only Gonds and Pardhans in this part of the country. Little land was cultivated, but the harvests were good and the few people there could easily make a livelihood. There was so much grass for the cattle that even the wild deer would come and feed near the villages without anyone troubling them. Our difficulties began when the Hindus and Mussalmans came into the Gond villages and took the fruit of the harvest. The Pardhans, who were entirely dependent on the Gonds, were unable to get support and the only thing to do was to steal. Then came the great famine and the Pardhans could not even find anything to steal and had to go to the Relief Works. But they found that Government only gave rice and this was not good enough, so they began to steal goats and chickens from the officials. After this, when the famine was over, they again began their ordinary method of stealing but Government was ruthless and drove them to ordinary field-work. Our elders also began to feel ashamed and wanted to become respectable. They formed a panchayat and declared that any Pardhans engaged in stealing would be fined. It was the fine imposed by our own people, not the police, that really stopped our criminal work.

There are many stories about a famous Pardhan criminal of Siuri and his methods resemble those already quoted from Russell and Hiralal.

He used to go to visit people as a guest and enjoy their hospitality all the evening. Early next morning he would accuse his host of stealing money from his bundle. He would threaten to go and bring the police with a search warrant. The host, who would naturally be a Gond, would collapse immediately. But

Berar in 1667 as a jagheer from the Imperial Court of Delhi. It was used in Gond territories long before the Mahratta rule commenced, in the same way that Kamaishdar, revenue officials, were in those days designated as "hoddars"'.—Lawrence, op. cit., p. 56.



Scene in Patangarh village

Plate II



A young Pardhan and his wife

it is said that the Pardhan's exactions were not heavy. He was content with two rupees worth of liquor and even this he would distribute to everyone present, including the host. Then he would talk agreeably. 'Accept my Ram Ram, I will come again some time'. 'Come, old man', would be the affectionate reply of the villagers, who were quite pleased with the free drinks and ready to forgive the trick. This man would openly take goats or pigs from people and no one liked to report them, for the trouble and expense of having police in a village was greater than the loss of an animal. When the man went to a liquor shop the Kalar would always give him a bottle or two free. 'The Pardhan has come. Do not let us have trouble.' Even the Telis would give him free clothes.

Another of this man's tricks was to arrange for some one to start a quarrel with him in a bazaar. It is almost impossible to resist joining in a quarrel, especially when people are a little drunk. When anybody else joined in the fray he would threaten to take a case against him and force him to pay money in compensation.

Another old Pardhan remembered a famous thief.

He would slap the privates and twist the udders of a barren buffalo until they were swollen and sell it to a Gond as pregnant. He would put chilly into the eyes and privates of exhausted horses so that they pranced about and he could sell them for double their value. He would take hot ashes with him and when he broke into a house would throw them in the owner's eyes. He smoked his *hukka* all day and devoured the Gonds' grain all night. He was so rich that his house always looked as if the family was celebrating a marriage or a festival. He made his followers kill cows and she-buffaloes for him; he specially liked them pregnant, for he would remove the foetus and roast it in ghee for his wife and himself.

To those days the Pardhans look back with a sort of wistful admiration. The tradition is that they were then enormously prosperous. 'A woman always had enough grain to husk. Our ancestors sowed kodon and reaped rice. It was Rat Mai[1] who helped them. All day they would sleep and the night was their time for cultivation. Saluting Rat Mai, they would gather round their leader to consult together and then they would go round in little groups to find their spoil.'

Usually women were left at home on these occasions, but there

[1] The tradition is that Shriyal Jango, the Rani of Raiyya Sindhola, the mother-in-law of Hirakhan—the typical Parteti Raja—turned into Rat Mai after her death. Rat Mai is thus a proper patroness of the Pardhans.

are a few traditions of women thieves. There were three sisters, the eldest of whom had two young and pretty daughters. They were famous as pickpockets. They would go to a shop which was thronged by many people and would pass things to one another. If they got into trouble they would use the young girls as a bait to get away.

Further details of the older criminal tradition will be found in the following autobiographical reminiscences of an elderly Pardhan from the Samnapur area.

As a child I was under the influence of a famous Mokasa and his brother. They had another brother and these three were famous for their thefts. I used to sit listening with great excitement to their stories. I remember one of them describing how he went one night and was trying to steal a horse. He had removed the tethering-peg, but the horse neighed. He lay as if he was dead spreading out his hands. The owner came and, seeing that the peg had been removed, drove it into the ground again but in the darkness nailed it through the palm of the thief's hand. But he lay absolutely quiet and when the owner had gone he got up and removed the peg from his palm. There was not a drop of blood because Chor Deo saved him from any hurt. After this he got up and rode on the very same horse to his village and was able to sell it next day.

One day the three brothers went to the Kukarramath bazaar and robbed a Teli of his cloth while he was asleep. Another Pardhan heard about this and asked the thieves to give him a share of the cloth, but they were too proud to do this and the Pardhan got very angry. He reported the matter to the police. When the police came to arrest the Mokasa he suddenly rushed out of his house with a sharp axe and the police were terrified. He ran towards the Narbada and jumped into the flooded river, crossed it and was able to get into Rewa State. I was about twelve years old at that time and was working in the fields.

I had always admired the Mokasa and he always liked me and so he came and told me how hungry he was and I used to go to my house and bring some food before he left for the big city of Bilaspur. I gave him some food, for which he gave me a good present, and then he left for Bilaspur. There he pretended to be a Raj Gond. He was very good looking, tall and fair, and he was able to marry a beautiful Raj Gond girl.

His method of theft was to use a very large betelnut-cracker with which he would cut the bamboo and a little wood on the roof and thus climb into the house. He always carried this cutter and a rope with him. When he came back from Bilaspur he had so much wealth that he had to have two porters to carry it for him. He had a beautiful daughter from the Gond girl

who was afterwards married to my elder brother. He was ultimately caught and was jailed for years. After he came back from jail he used to say that his house in the village was only a little hut from which he kept a watch on his fields and that his real house was the jail in Jubbulpore. Jail life had no effect either on his health or on his mind. He was always as happy as he had been in youth.

My first excitement of theft was in a dacoity. I accompanied forty to sixty men and women, mostly Gonds, who had decided to rob a wealthy Gond named Didwa. He had not much money but he had huge bins of grain. We were starving and so we decided to go and rob him of this grain. The leaders went first posing as police and warned the man that a gang was coming to rob him. They took him out into the field to hide and the rest of us removed every grain of wheat from the house. Didwa Gond was so frightened that he did not report the theft to the police. After the theft we kept awake the whole night quarrelling about the distribution of the booty.

I have earned a lot from stealing but I have always been a generous host. No one ever left my house without rice and at least chicken curry. It was easy to get a goat or pig to feed my guests and the Kalars never failed me. If a Kalar refused to give me liquor he would piss in his bed that night.

But today I am an old man. None of those people whom I fed so generously ever entertain me. I am called a thief now, but not in those days when I could steal and feed them. I was never even slapped by the police. I picked up whatever I saw in others' houses. We were very fond of stealing goats and rice. We never went after money. I have jumped from high roofs without hesitation. Fear has never stopped me from entering into a house. I have often hit people till they fainted, to save myself and my companions. Sometimes to annoy the police we used to hide gold pieces in human excrement and the constables had to handle it if they wanted to recover them. I have stolen alone and that I liked best. When I went I always felt I had ten men in front and ten men behind to help me. I have never stolen in fields. That is only done by women, for such a theft is enough only for one meal. I cared very little for money. Once on the stupid advice of a timid Gond I went after cash and was jailed for six months. This Gond was so frightened that next morning he went and confessed to the police. When I came back from jail my relatives asked for a feast. I had nothing to give, so I had to steal again and gave two goats and a tin of liquor.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRIBAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PARDHANS

I. The Origin of the World

The Pardhans connect the complicated details of modern tribal organization with the history of the world and of mankind. Everything has proceeded from the beginning in an unbroken continuity. It is not possible for a Pardhan to discuss how his particular sub-clan came into being without his wanting to tell you all about the first man and woman and how the Gonds established themselves in Garha-Mandla. I am, therefore, beginning this chapter with accounts of the creation of the world, the origin of mankind, the establishment of the Gond race and the separation of the Pardhans from the original stock. I will then continue with a description of the two main divisions of the Pardhan tribe in Dindori, the Rajnengi and the Gogia, and will conclude with a discussion of the clan-system of the tribe, giving special attention to certain of the leading clans.

The Pardhan's account of the creation of mankind follows the lines already made familiar to anthropologists by the researches of Hislop. The following version of the legend, which was recorded in Jhanki, lacks much of the vividness and freshness of Hislop's story, but it must be remembered that it has been written down eighty years afterwards. I think that many of the old myths are, like ancient pictures, slowly losing the richness of their colour and are often overlaid by later and inferior work. But this is the story as the modern Pardhan of the Dindori Tahsil remembers it:

After the earth was fixed in place Bhagavan formed the fifty-two gods of the Gondwana. After that he gave the order for Raja Inkar to be born. Because this Raja was born from the word of Bhagavan he was like fire. He had to stand one cubit and a quarter above ground, for had he touched it the earth would have been burnt to ashes. Bhagavan wanted to give the Raja a wife and he created Akaina. She stood before Bhagavan with folded hands and said, 'Why have I been made? I am very hungry. Show me some way to earn my living'. 'Go,' said Bhagavan. 'You are to be the wife of Inkar. Live with him and take your pleasure with him and he will care for you.' The girl went to Inkar and stood before him with folded hands. 'You are my lord and master. Enjoy me and keep me as your

woman.' But this displeased the Raja and he opened his mouth to swallow her. 'O Raja, if you swallow me how will mankind be created?' 'But how can I enjoy your body? If I touch you, you will be burnt to ashes. We must have intercourse with our eyes.' So when their eyes met the woman conceived and after a year she gave birth to sixteen boys.

Of these, one died, eight went to the Upper World and became Dut[1] and Bhut,[2] six went to Bindraban and turned into animals and one became the Raja Himanchal. This Raja went to the mountains and began to do penance. From time to time he would rub off some of the dirt from his body and make it into images. One day he made a beautiful image of a girl. He called this image Parvati. As he named her she suddenly came to life. When she was twelve years old, the seat of Mahadeo trembled and he left his heavenly abode and came in search of her.

When Mahadeo found Parvati he took her to Kailas and made a hut for her there on the mountains. He prepared a garden with three hundred and sixty beds of flowers and a strong fence all round. He said to his wife, 'Do not touch any of these flowers'. Then he went away into the dark Kajliban to get wood to make a plough. But in his absence Parvati looked at the flowers and said in her mind, 'Why did he tell me not to pick them?' In a few days she picked one flower and then another until at last she had picked flowers from every one of the three hundred and sixty beds. She dressed herself in flowers and slept on flowers. Their sweet smell entered her body eternally and she conceived. In due time she had two daughters, Angarmati and Pichlo. Angarmati was a Hindu and Pichlo was a Gond.

From Pichlo the fifty-three lakhs Gondwana were created and from Angarmati the fifty-two lakhs Hindwana. Parvati was very upset when she saw so many children and her sorrow troubled Mahadeo while he was making his plough and he came home quickly to see what had happened to his wife. When he tried to get into his house he found it crammed with children and there was no place for him to sit. So he went into the jungle and made a great trench eighty hands long. He took the fifty-three lakhs of Gonds and put them in the trench and covered it with a long flat stone. He appointed Madan Pat to look after them and protect them from wild animals. The fifty-two lakhs of Hindus he sent away telling them to look after themselves, for he thought they were well capable of doing so. He kept Pichlo and Angarmati in the house.

Now the fate of the Gond children worried Bhagavan and his throne began to tremble. 'If these children die', he thought,

[1] Angelic messengers. [2] Ghosts or demons.

'I will be cursed'. So he created five kinds of trees, *barro, dumar, pipar, thuha* and *bharela* and planted them near the trench. These trees gave abundant milk and both the Hindus and the Gonds were able to drink the milk for twelve years. The two girls Angarmati and Pichlo were now also twelve years old and had begun to go with little earthen pots to fetch water. One day after they had bathed and were about to lift up their pots and go home Angarmati shouted to Pichlo, 'Be careful. Don't touch my pot.' Pichlo said, 'Why not?' Angarmati replied, 'Because I am a Hindu and you are a Gond'. Pichlo replied, 'Have we not the same parents? How then can we be different? Tell me this or there will be endless quarrels between us'. So saying she broke Angarmati's pot and they began to fight. Bhagavan heard the noise and quickly went down to the stream to try to pacify them. 'Why are you two sisters quarrelling?' Pichlo said, 'Because she told me not to touch her pot'. Bhagavan said, 'But she is right, for you are really a Gond'. At that Pichlo began to weep loudly. 'If I am a Gond then show me where my own people are living.' Bhagavan took the little girl to the great trench and showed her the children living there. She was very annoyed and kicked the stone aside and with it its guard Madan Pat. Pichlo stood at the edge of the trench weeping and the fifty-three lakhs of children began shouting 'Who are you?' 'I am your sister Pichlo. Come out of the trench and possess the land, for it is yours.' 'O sister, we cannot come out unless whoever put us here helps us to escape.' Bhagavan came and told them to come out but they said, 'How can we come out when we are naked? Are you going to give us clothes?' Bhagavan was troubled about this and he went down to the Under World where the four great cobras lived. Their names were Hansa Dhari, Bara Dhari, Sis Dhari and Khes Nang. From them he begged for twelve lakhs of bullock-carts laden with cloth. The cobras said, 'How are we to give you cloth?' 'If you do not,' said Bhagavan, 'I shall sit down and die here'. Then said the cobras, 'If you go to Jalhaldip and ask Dhur Nangin and Basmotin Kaniya they will give you the cloth'. Bhagavan went to them and they gave him what he wanted. He came back followed by a great train of twelve lakhs of bullock-carts laden with cloth and began to distribute it to the children. When he began distributing he gave more. To the first eighteen he gave fifteen cubits apiece, but as he found the cloth decreasing he gave less and less until at last when all but two had received a share, he only had one and a quarter cubits left. He threw this bit of cloth into the trench. One of the children grabbed it and tying it on as a loin-cloth ran away from the others. They all shouted, 'Catch him, Catch him', but Bhagavan said, 'Let him alone. He will be called Nanga Baiga. He will live in the great mountains and will rule over the forests. Whenever you are in

trouble he will come to help you'. One last child remained and he was naked. They cried, 'Catch him and throw him away', but he climbed out and began to run. Bhagavan said, 'Let him go. He will live in the jungle and will be called Ban Manus (Jungle Man). He will live on wild fruits and roots and you will never see him. If a pregnant woman crosses his footprints she will get a dumb child like him'. Then said Bhagavan again, 'Go away and live happily in the world'.

Out of the fifty-two lakhs of Hindus there arose Kawar Raja who ruled in Garha-Mandla. He had a bamboo bow and a bamboo arrow. With this one arrow he could kill a hundred thousand men.[1] The fifty-three lakhs of Gonds came to his kingdom but when they heard about his arrow they turned back and went instead to the kingdom of Phuljhar. When they reached the boundary they found two flowers of many colours growing under a saja tree. When they saw the flowers they all tried to pick them, but failed. Then they tried to destroy the flowers but at that moment from one flower Motijhar was born and from the other Aginjhar. As their eyes met Aginjhar gave birth to Bara Pen and then Dulha Deo and all the other gods. Last of all was born Narayan Deo who stood aside in a corner. Once the gods were born Motijhar and Aginjhar disappeared. The fifty-three lakhs of Gonds crowded round Bara Pen and asked him who he was. 'I am the great god of the fifty-three lakhs of Gonds. Worship me and serve me.' But they refused to believe that he was their god. 'We will not trust you unless you help us to conquer Garha-Mandla.' Bara Pen went down to the Under World and said to the four cobras, 'Look. I am relying on your strength. When the Kawar Raja comes out riding on his horse, break the earth beneath him and get hold of the four legs of his horse'. Then Bara Pen went secretly to Garha-Mandla and finding the great bamboo bow whose name was Kari Surung, he folded his hands and bowed before it. 'Listen to me, O Kari Surung, and I will always serve you. If you do what I wish you will be honoured first and I afterwards. When the Raja shoots you from his bow fall short and do not injure anyone.' But the bow replied, 'No, Bara Pen, I can't do this. It is the bow that is responsible and as the bow shoots me I have to go'. Bara Pen summoned all the gods and they turned themselves into culm-borers. They got into the wood of the bow and ate its inside so that it was very weak. Then Bara Pen returned to the Gonds and said, 'Come, let us attack the fort'.

[1] A similar magic bamboo, this time a fan, is said to have been possessed by Raja Ben Chakravartti, known in Central India as Raja Ben Basor. The Raja used to make every year a fan of bamboo which possessed such miraculous powers that, whenever he cut a piece of it, a portion of his enemy's army was at once cut in pieces and his forces dispersed. *North Indian Notes and Queries*, Vol. II (1892), p. 56.

The army got ready for the assault and their leader blew loudly on his hunting-horn. When the Kawar Raja heard the noise he prepared to fight. He rode out on his horse and made it stand on a platform of sandal wood. Then he drew his bow but when he fired it, it broke in half and the arrow fell short. Bara Pen took the form of a dwarf and ran to it and picked it up. Then the Raja took his sword and tried to make his horse jump into the air towards the Gond army but as he did so the earth broke and the cobras caught the horse's legs from below. Then the women came out of the palace and fell at the feet of the Gonds saying, 'Let our bangles be unbroken and we will leave this kingdom'. So they allowed the people to leave it and go away.

Afterwards from amongst the Gonds was born Dudesal Sai. He became a great Raja and built a fort in his own name. He had three queens—Karka, Kunja and Kare. Kare's son was Raja Dalpat Sai.

His four sons were married, but while their wives were still pregnant the children were taken from the womb by Bara Pen in anger because the royal family had given up worshipping him. Bara Pen said to Dalpat Sai, 'Have your four grandsons sacrificed to me or I will devour your sons'. 'What do you desire?' 'I want *rot malida*' (a kind of sweet made of ghee, wheat flour and gur). So the women of the Gondwana put their frying-pans on the hearth to make *rot malida*. While a woman was sitting before the fire and cooking she said to the rest 'Don't touch it', but the others said, 'It isn't only your god but belongs to us all'. With that, eighteen of the women caught hold of the frying-pan and it broke into eighteen pieces. Bara Pen went to Durgawati Rani and Kare Rani and told them what had happened. They said, 'This means that the brothers have separated into eighteen houses. Now, O Bara Pen, you must take your sacrifice from each house'. Bara Pen said, 'I will no more take food from these broken bits, but instead I will have a bearded goat'.

The Gonds of the Gondwana were worried about this, for they thought that the gods might later be angry and destroy them. They sent some one to fetch Nanga Baiga from his mountain. The man reached there and said to Nanga Baiga, 'Come and speak to Bara Pen on our behalf'. The Baiga said, 'I have nothing to offer him; I have not even a chicken. What can I do?' Now Nanga Baiga had six sons and six daughters and he said in his mind, 'I will take my own children and offer them to Bara Pen'. He put his sons in a great basket and started off for the Gondwana. But as he went Bhagavan saw him and was afraid. He sprinkled water and the Pankas were created. 'O Panka, take goats and go to the Gondwana, for the Gond gods demand goats in sacrifice.' Bhagavan went to relieve himself and from the water left on his hand, he created the Basors. 'Go, O

Basor, and take these pigs to the Gondwana, for the Gond gods would have them in sacrifice.' He tapped his bow and arrow and the Dhanwar was created. 'Go, O Dhanwar, take these chickens to the Gondwana, for the Gond gods would have them in sacrifice.'

The Panka, Basor and Dhanwar were going along the road with their animals. When they met Nanga Baiga they asked him where he was going and he told them that he was going to offer his sons to Bara Pen in sacrifice. But they said, 'If you give your beautiful children, how will the world be populated and where there will be Baigas to keep the earth steady with their nails? Let your sons go and take these animals instead'. Nanga Baiga sent his sons home and went on to Garha-Mandla with the others. The gods were all there standing a cubit and a quarter above the ground; they would not touch it, for the earth was impure. When he saw this Nanga Baiga went to the Under World and brought the Surhi cow from there. He plastered the earth at Garha-Mandla with her dung and then the gods came and stood on earth and Nanga Baiga in the name of all the Gonds offered them goats, pigs and chickens in sacrifice.

But now the Gonds found that they had no grain to eat, so Nanga Baiga went down below the Under World where a great cobra lived. On her head were the twenty-one kinds of grain. Nanga Baiga flattered her and made her laugh and she gave him grain and he brought it back to Garha Mandla.

Nanga Baiga cut a *saja* tree and set it up outside the fort. He made a platform of mud round it and dunged it with the dung of the Surhi cow. Then he began to sacrifice. For the great bow and arrow of the Kawar Raja he offered a black goat and sacrificed a speckled goat for Bara Pen. But when he offered them rice they refused to eat it as a sign that the gods were displeased. The Gonds came and made every kind of offer to please the gods. They promised them every sort of gift, but they took no notice. The youngest of the eighteen brothers had gone to hunt and now he returned. 'Play on your Bana and perhaps that will please the gods', said the others. He sat down and began to play crying, 'O Bara Pen, O Narayan Deo', and as he said these words Sarso Mata and Sarada Mata took possession of his throat and revealed to him the names of all the gods of the Gondwana. As he played for the first time, from his Bana came sweet music and the gods began to eat. But the other brothers at once said, 'Little brother, don't touch us lest the gods get angry with you. Do not come into our houses, but go on playing on your Bana'. They sent someone to go and tell the youngest brother's wife not to touch the pots of the other seventeen wives and then they said to the youngest brother, 'Now you are a musician. You are born behind our backs (*pith ke has*) and so we will call you Pithari'. The boy's

music pleased the Gonds so much that they gave him many presents of cattle, money and pots. He said, 'Why are you giving me this?' 'If the gods are pleased with you, should not we also be pleased?' In the house the elder women also were giving presents to the youngest daughter-in-law. 'Now you will always be called Rajnengi Pithari.' But when they gave the boy his water in a separate pot and his food on a separate plate, he began to cry. 'Why do you trouble about this brother? We drink from an earthen pot worth one pice, but to you we give water in a brass pot worth five rupees. We sit on a string-cot worth four annas but we give you a hempen sack worth five rupees. We will always give you cows and buffaloes from our own shed, a horse which we ourselves have mounted, vessels from which we have eaten and ornaments for half your body. Every year we will give you one rupee.'

There was also trouble with the boy's wife. She had gone to fetch water. When the other women saw her coming, they said, 'Sister, put your water in your own room, for your husband is coming drunk and he will be very thirsty'. Then gradually they explained to her that she must not touch their pots or enter the kitchen. The poor girl wept bitterly and left the house.

Next morning the younger brother sat for his Dan and was given what had been promised. 'There are eighteen brothers; go and get Dan from them all. Of rupees and pice there will be piles and you will not be able to count the pots in your house.' The boy then made his Bana in the shape of a bow and decorated it with bells and peacock feathers. From that day he became a singer and a beggar. Yet he was always poor, for the Pardhans give all their blessing to the Gonds and it is they who grow rich, for though they share their wealth with us we are always poor.

A much shorter version of the legend—this time from Madhopur—may be given for comparison.

A Gond and his wife, the two, husband and wife, lived in Barahangarh. They had six sons. The Gond and Gondin went below Chaurdongri, to the flat ground below the forest, to cut the grass and make a field. When the field was ready they sowed rice in it. When the rice was almost ready, they made a platform from which to guard the crop. Every night they went to sleep there. At that time the Gondin was pregnant; the day for the birth approached. When the rice was ready they began to reap it. When half the field was cut, and half remained, on that very day, on the border of the field, that Gondin gave birth to a child. The Gond said, 'Let us make a pile of rice in a winnowing-fan and put the child to sleep on it'. When the Chhatti day came they gave the child its name. The six brothers said, 'We who have been born in the house have names of the house, but this boy who was born outside should take his name from outside'.

And so saying they gave him the name Pardhan, for he was born in the *par* of the *dhan*-field. And because he was born outside the brothers decided that he should not live or eat inside. And because the boy was born when half the field was cut, they decided to give him half the share of a brother. Since he was put to sleep in a winnowing-fan, the Gond always gives the Pardhan his Sukhdan in a winnowing-fan. 'He is our brother, it is true, but we will not give him a full brother's share. And when anyone dies, he will sit with us and receive a turban with the others. But he cannot eat with us or go inside our houses.'

At the time of the child's birth the father buried the placenta and cord in the field and lit a fire above it. It was from a half-burnt bit of wood from this fire that the first Bana was made. The brothers made the bow of *surteli* reed and the strings from the *chanahur* creeper. Thus they made the boy play. A brother took him on his lap, held the Bana against his shoulder, covered the boy's hand with the bow and thus taught him to play.

Since that day there have been Pardhans among the Gonds. The Pardhans get half a share, for the Pardhans and Gonds have the same parents and at first the Gonds themselves played the Bana.[1]

II. The Rajnengi and the Gogia

In the Upper Narbada Valley the Pardhans are divided into two sections—the Rajnengi and the Gogia.[2] In other parts of India there are many other sub-divisions of the tribe, but these two are the most important in Dindori. The two sections have the same clans and the same general customs. In this book I base my main account of the Pardhans on the Rajnengis, indicating wherever necessary, points on which the Gogias differ.

Between the two sub-divisions of the tribe there is considerable animosity and conflict. The Rajnengis consider themselves not only superior to the Gogias, but of an entirely different race. They are unwilling to admit that the Gogias have any Pardhan blood in them at all. They refuse to recognize their Bana and call it Gugumbaja. The Gogias themselves admit their inferiority and if they are able to get a Rajnengi girl or boy in marriage he is received by them into full tribal privileges.

[1] There is no end to these stories. Yet other versions will be found in Hislop, *passim*; Rudman, op. cit., pp. 89 f.; Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 353.

[2] They are also known as Kikadiha and Lakadiha: Kikadi is the Gondi word for the Rajnengi Bana and Lakadiha refers to the Gogia theft of a bit of half-burnt wood from a pyre to make a Gugumbaja. The syllable 'neng' in Rajnengi describes the common custom of demanding a customary present on some ritual occasion like a marriage.

But the Rajnengis refuse to intermarry or eat with the Gogias and even refuse to eat from the hands of any Gond who accepts a Gogia as his Dasondi. Such a Gond is called by the Rajnengis a Nirrapotta or Jamati Gond and is considered definitely of an inferior type. The Rajnengis greatly resent the Gogias' habit of imitating their Mangteri tours and their style in playing on the Bana. I once received a petition in my court from the Rajnengis begging Government to make a law to stop the Gogias using the Bana. In the old days, they said, 'When we had our own Rajas, if we smashed a Gogia's Bana we were not punished, but nowadays under the British Government the Gogias are flourishing and the law gives us no kind of help'. The first person who sold a Bana to a Gogia and taught him how to play it was put out of caste by the Rajnengis.

There are several stories to account for this divergence between the two sections of Pardhans. The Rajnengis of Patangarh describe how:

Long ago two orphan boys of the Badi caste were staying in the house of a Pardhan. One day when they went to a funeral one of the boys picked up a half-burnt bit of wood from the pyre and began to play on it in imitation of the Pardhan. As he grew up he continued to play on his bit of wood and he made a regular fiddle out of it—out of the wood from a dead man's pyre. Playing on this the boy and his brother wandered across the country till they came to the land of the Kurkus. Here not one Kurku would allow them to enter his house. So the boys sat outside and played and sang. Soon the villagers became pleased with them and received them as their Pardhans. The Kurkus gave them the name of Nirrapotta Gogia.

Here we see the attempt of the Rajnengis to prove with the help of mythology that the Gogias have a different origin from themselves, that they are descended in fact from the inferior caste of Badi acrobats and musicians. But the Gogias themselves naturally tell a somewhat different story:

The first Pardhan had two sons. The boys grew up and married and each had a son. After their birth, the grandfather and both the fathers died. We the Gogias are the descendants of the elder brother and the Rajnengis descend from the younger brother. At first these two brothers lived very happily together. The younger was a great singer and he went out constantly on his Mangteri tours. One day while the younger boy was away

a Gond died in the village. The elder brother went to get his Muar Dan but the widow said, 'We don't know what the dead man wants you to have. Go and ask him'. The Pardhan went to the pyre and sat before it asking the dead man's ghost for Dan. The ghost was excited and upset by this request for he could find nothing to give. At last he picked up a half-burnt bit of wood and threw it at the Dasondi. The Dasondi took it back to the house of the dead man and sat in his courtyard playing on it as if it was a fiddle. When the younger brother came home and heard what had been done he was shocked and said that he would never touch his brother again. 'You are of lower caste and must live separately.' But the elder brother would not part with his fiddle and so the younger brother had to make a different one out of another kind of wood.

As we will see later, one of the most obvious points of difference between the two sections of the tribe is the difference in their Banas, and their general method of conducting the Mangteri tours. To an outsider the distinctions seem very small and it is a pity that these pleasant folk should be so divided. But divided they are, and their division is intensely real to them.

III. The Clan Organization of the Pardhans

Since the Pardhan economic and religious system depends on the community of clans between the Gonds and Pardhans, the clan organization of the latter closely resembles that of the Gonds and in its main outline is based upon it. In detail, however, and especially in the development of local sub-clans there is considerable divergence.

I have been unable to find among the Pardhans of Dindori any clear division of their many clans into phratries, although groups of clans regard themselves as *saga*, that is as related to each other. Each clan also in any particular locality has a group of neighbouring clans with which its members can intermarry; such clans are known as *nat*. There does not seem to exist any longer the classification of clans according to the number of gods worshipped that has been recorded in other parts of the province,[1] although the fact that the Dhurwa and Parteti clans worship five gods suggests that the system existed here in former times.

[1] See, for example, Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 66.

A saying that 'every clan in olden days had a Raja with a *garh* (fort) to himself' suggests that there was a time when the clans were fundamentally territorial in character. The Baigas still have a *garh*-system of exogamy running parallel to the ordinary clan system;[1] many other tribes, such as the Juang and Bondo of Orissa, are more concerned to marry into a different village than into a different clan. There are relics of this old system among the Pardhans in the names of various sub-clans, but there is now no rule of territorial exogamy and people freely marry girls of their own village.

But the clan system of the Pardhans is clearly in a state of decay and it is difficult to bring any ordered system out of it.

The following list of clans, together with such few totems as I was able to discover, represents those known to the Pardhans of Patangarh. Each of the first four groups consists of clans that are related to one another and cannot intermarry. Each member must marry outside not only his own clan, but his own group. I am not certain, for the Pardhans themselves are rather vague about it, whether he can marry a member of *any* of the clans in the other groups, but in the main he can. The clans of the fifth group could not be placed in relation to the others.

I

Chicham (Hawk)
Khusro (Tiger)
Landam
Marapachi (Tortoise)
Markam (Tortoise)
Netam
Orram
Purkam
Pusam
Salam
Sarreti
Saryam
Sindram (Palm)
Tekam
Tilgam
Turram (Horse)
Urram (Cockroach)

II

Bedarkebadaria
Bhagadia
Dhurwa
Kachchimurri
Pendo
Potta
Udde
Uike
Urweti
Wadali

[1] Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), pp. 173 f.

III

Ghorsam
Kadopa
Kawachi
Khursenga
Korram
Kucham
Marabi (Cobra and bones of cattle)
Masaram
Pandro
Parcham
Sadagam
Syam
Tikam

IV

Kadopa
Karpeti
Kolhia
Korcho
Parteti
Thalko
Walko

V

Armu
Bhaisa (Buffalo)
Bidariya
Ghopi (Thief)
Irpachi
Kawade (Crow)
Kunjam
Marai
Muryam
Neti (Betel-cutter)
Parwar
Pawale
Saraso (Oil-seed)
Sori (Tiger)
Warkar (Wild cat)

I will now give an account of the special traditions of some of the most important clans.

The Bhagadia

The Partetis are said to have originated from five brothers but the Bhagadias, who form a sort of understudy to the Partetis, came from only three. This clan has the rule that the descendants of the first two brothers can marry girls who come from the third brother and this does not count as clan-incest. On account of this privilege they are described as consisting of two-and-a-half brothers and as often where there is something unusual in the history and custom of a clan, they are given the task of re-admitting the excommunicate into the tribe. It is said that the existence of this clan acts as a check on the arrogance of the Partetis who also have this duty, for should the latter refuse to admit some-

body the Bhagadias may step in and with the consent of the other villagers perform the duty for them.

The first Bhagadias to migrate to Dindori came as beggars with their drums. Their first deed was to save a village from a man-eating tiger which had taken a hundred *gundris*[1] to its cave: in other words, it had killed a hundred women.

The Dhurwa

The Dhurwas (whose name may be derived from *dhur*, dust) are another large clan and they seem to preserve here something of the old arrangement whereby the different Gond clans each worship a different number of gods. The Dindori Dhurwas are a five-god clan,[2] worshipping Dulha Deo, Dulkhoria Deo, Narayan Deo, Rat Mai and Bara Pen.

The Dhurwas are also divided into a number of sub-clans. The Pakhamutta people have to urinate on a wall before they go to any sacrifice. Sometimes when the other people want to embarrass them they say 'let the wife piss' and the poor woman has to do it publicly standing before the wall. The reason for this curious custom is said to be that when the original Pakhamutta met the redoubtable Bodrahin, she waved her umbilical stump at him and he pissed through fear.

Other Dhurwa sub-clans are—

Bichhiya	Khajartariya
Chautaria	Kudaraha
Chhedaphor	Nandolia
Gaychatiya	Pathmukhi
Ghopichor	Sukumgadhia
Jhalaria	

The Nandolia have to make an imitation bag out of *saja* leaves before sacrifice. This bag represents the leather sack which hangs in every Chamar's house for curing leather. Into this bag members of the clan put flour made of myrabolams, white *kausis*

[1] The *gundri* is a roll of cloth placed on a woman's head below her water-pot to keep it steady. Hence it is a convenient woman-symbol.

[2] But in Betul the Dhurwa worship seven gods. The clan is known among the Agaria, Baiga, Kolta, Kalar, Maria, Muria and Nat. In Bastar the Parja tribe has adopted Dhurwa as a tribal, not merely a clan, title. The Maria derive the name from the fact that the members walked in front of their clan-god like Dhurwas preceding the Raja of Bastar in a procession.—W. V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (Oxford, 1938), p. 243.



A Pardhan girl



A Pardhan humourist *Plate IV*

and a little leather. The Ghopichor, on the other hand, use the *ghopi*-snare (which is used to catch partridges) for sacrifice.

Three other sub-clans are divided from the others on account of their special customs at the time of a funeral. The Chautaria make a platform out of the ashes of the dead man in the very place where he was cremated. The Gaychatiya throws salt on to the ashes of the pyre and cattle then go and lick it.[1] The Jhalaria have the custom that, after the ceremonial bath at the end of a funeral when the women come home, their daughters hide and will not come out until their mothers give them a present of one rupee four annas saying, 'O daughter, I am not rich enough to give a sufficient present to the daughter of a big house like you'.

Dhurwas are supposed to love meat cooked wrapped in leaves and baked: other clansmen laugh at them saying '*Dhurwa pan purwa*: Dhurwa and leaf-cooked meat'.

The Kumra

Members of the Kumra clan have the goat as their totem and of course never eat its flesh. If a goat touches an earthen pot, the pot is thrown away. The story of the origin of this clan is that its ancestor once stole a goat and sacrificed it to Bara Pen. When the police came to inquire, the man prayed, 'If you are a true god, turn the head of this goat into the head of a pig'. As the police were approaching the shrine, the goat's head, which had been placed as usual before the god, turned into that of a pig. That night the god told the worshipper in a dream that he was never to eat a goat again.

The clan seems to be widely distributed, and elsewhere belongs to the six-god group of Gonds. In Betul its members do not kill or eat the goat and throw away any article smelt by one: according to Russell and Hiralal, however, the name which they spell Kumarrha or Kumarra is a bird.[2] They account for the goat-totem by a story that the clan-ancestors used to sacrifice Brahmin boys to their gods. Once they were caught in the act and prayed to the gods to save them and the boy was turned

[1] Cf. the custom of the Lonchatia clan in Betul District.—Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 384. This same authority gives the names of three other Dhurwa sub-clans—Gajjami, Gouribans and Kusadya.—Vol. III, p. 68.

[2] Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 381.

into a goat.[1] Trench gives a vivid account of a similar incident: here the Kumras used to steal any child and take it to their Pen-Kara.[2]

The Khusro

The Khusros[3] have the tiger as their totem and they are very proud of it. They talk about the tiger as if it was a pet dog in the family. There are many tales about how tigers have caught Khusro men in the jungle and how another member of the family has had to go and, standing on one leg, beg the tiger to release the arrested man promising that he would give the necessary sacrifices without delay. When a Khusro woman goes through the jungle she covers her head with her sari out of respect to the tiger which she regards as her *jeth*, or husband's elder brother.

When a Khusro girl is married, the tiger god is supposed to resent the departure of a girl from his clan. While bride and bridegroom are going round the sacred pole the girl's father, brother or father's brother suddenly falls to the ground and begins to behave like a tiger. A goat or a pig is brought forward and if it is a goat he kills it with his own teeth and drinks a little of the blood. He does not seem able, however, even in a state of trance, to do this to a pig, and so instead it is killed with a knife immediately in front of him. The man rushes about scattering the attendants at the ceremony and is only quietened when the people bring one of the marriage lamps to him. It is the belief that just as a tiger is afraid of fire, the tiger god is driven away by the lighted lamp. In some families, however, the lamp only serves to excite the 'tiger' further and it has to be carefully shielded from him with a fan.

The real bond between different clans is not in the clan-name, but in the clan-totem. The wide distribution of similar clans is obscured by the fact that the name changes in every language

[1] ibid., Vol. III, p. 70.
[2] C. G. C. Trench, *A Grammar of Gondi* (Madras, 1916), Vol. II, pp. 42 f.
[3] An account of the origin of this clan, current among the Gonds of Chhattisgarh in the last century, which describes how a tiger cub was born to the wife of a Gond named Kusru, how it protected his crops, finally died and appeared in a medium during a marriage, is given in an article in *J. A. S. B.*, 1872, Pt. I, pp. 115-20. The Agaria have a curious version of the origin of this clan, associating both the tiger and the *khussera* bird. —Verrier Elwin, *The Agaria* (Bombay, 1942), p. 78.

area. I do not know why the usual name—Baghel—for the tiger-clan is here changed to Khusro. The Baghel is essentially the name of the great Rajput clan which has given its name to Baghelkhand. Almost every forest tribe has a tiger clan: the word Baghel has been recorded for the Bhilala, Dhanwar, Gond, Lodhi, Mali, Panka. The Gondi-speaking peoples, such as the Bison-horn Maria or Muria, call their tiger clan the Sori.

The Marabi

The Marabi is a widespread clan and has a number of sub-divisions. These seem to have arisen either from a ludicrous incident where a man was caught in a trap or from offerings that were made to Bara Pen at the time of worship.

The Lapsa sub-clan, for example, arose when a very poor Pardhan had nothing to give Bara Pen at the First Fruits Festival except a little *lapsa* (a sort of sweet).

The Kursingha similarly offered Bara Pen the hoofs and horns of a goat.

The Koliha sub-clan arose when a jackal howled at the very moment that their ancestor was worshipping Bara Pen. Now if they hear a jackal at the time of worshipping they stop.

The Phandkaria sub-clan arose because when a Marabi was returning to his village from a festival, some Baigas were setting traps by the roadside and the man was caught in one of them. For some reason they offer bread made of chaff to the gods at any ceremony. Similarly, the first Ghopi Marabi was caught in a *ghopi*-trap as he was on his way to worship Bara Pen.

The Hodra sub-clan has the hyena as its totem, for these people it is said, used to dig up corpses and eat them and even now their neighbours hesitate to eat with them.

Most Marabi have a vague reverence for the goat and do not eat it or sacrifice it to the gods.

The Markam

The Markam clan, which has as its totem the mango tree, is a very old and famous clan found also among the Agarias, Baigas, Basors, Bhunjias, Bison-horn Marias, Murias and Solahas. Its members have a special veneration for the mango tree and will never cut it. One of the first Markams in Pardhan legend

was a courtier at the palace of the famous Mara Kshattri. He was always looking up into the sky and had the nickname of Sarag Dikkha Markam. The Pardhan Dasondis love to tell how it was only this man who was able to discover the parrot sent by Mara Kshattri's lover. The parrot perched on a mango tree and it is interesting that it was only the man whose totem was a mango who could see it.

Markam families are said to have many more girls than boys. There is a story that once a Markam father had so many daughters that he despaired of marrying them. In those days human beings were very small and bazaars were held under charota bushes. One day the father took all his daughters to a bazaar with a sack full of grass-seed. They sat down under the bushes and he tied the girls in a row behind the sack, announcing that whoever could guess its contents might have them without paying any bride-price. A Parteti wearing sandals of rat-skin came swaggering along and kicked the sack scornfully in typical Parteti fashion. The skin on his sandal was so thin that when he kicked the sack one of the grains stuck on it. He went aside, examined the grain and then declared that he knew what was in the sack. The Markam father had to give him all his daughters as he had promised.[1]

There are a number of Markam sub-clans—

Chaotariha	Pakhamutta
Nungariha	Surajbansi
Padarabhatia	

There are the usual stories of origin, some of which may be historically true. The Surajbansi Markam was supposed to worship Bara Pen before dawn, but he was lazy and the sun caught him. Members of this clan never worship at night. The first Padarabhatia brought liquor from a still in Pendra Zamindari and offered it to Bara Pen. The Padarabhatias never drink liquor in Pendra. The Chaotariha made a platform (*chabutra*) in his court in honour of Bara Pen and it broke. Since then they do not make such platforms. The first Nungariha buried some salt at the time of worshipping Bara Pen. He lit a fire above it and the salt, hot and angry, came up. Now members of this clan never put salt in a fire or they may go blind. The first Pakhamutta pissed

[1] The Agaria have a different version of this story. *The Agaria,* pp. 77 f.

against a wall. Some friends saw him and gave him this nickname. Since then it is taboo for a Pakhamutta to relieve himself standing.

Pardhan members of other clans regard with tolerant amusement the Markam's supposed devotion to meat and especially the tasty marrow extracted from the bone. Once in Patangarh, at a feast when all the others had finished the Markams were discovered still breaking and chewing their bones. The others coined a proverb on the spot: '*Markam hada kor kam*: the Markam's job is carving bones.'

The Parteti

Members of the Parteti clan are notorious for their quick wit, independent character and arrogant domineering ways. The legend by which they account for their origin shows them already dominant over their slower-minded and more gentle brethren.

The Gond clans united in a war against the Moghuls. As they were coming home, they halted by a river for their mid-day meal. The Parteti Raja said to the Marabi and Markam Rajas, 'Cook your food quickly and we will soon reach home. Make the hearths of *gur*, for then the *gur* too will burn and the food will soon be ready'. The two foolish Rajas began to cook, but every time they lighted the fire the hearths of *gur* melted and the pots tipped over. Meanwhile Parteti had quickly cooked and eaten his food and crossed the river clinging to a *guggur* creeper. When he got to the other side he cut the creeper; that is why it is never able to grow right across a stream. When the Marabi and Markam Rajas found that there was no way of getting across the river, they wept, for they had not seen their wives and children for so long and they thought that now they would never get home. A tortoise heard their cries and in pity asked them to climb onto its back. Halfway across it began to sink. The Rai Gidhni came flying and saved them; he has always been called Rai Gidhni because on that day he saved the lives of Rajas.[1]

Now the two Rajas were very angry and they set out to catch and kill Raja Parteti. He fled for his life and entered the little hut of a Gond woman who had just given birth to a child. He persuaded her to let him lie down beside her; she smeared his body with blood and put the placenta beside him. Presently Raja Marabi and Raja Markam arrived. When they saw Raja

[1] For similar accounts of clans originating on a journey and specially during the crossing of a river, see Trench, *Grammar of Gondi*, Vol. II, pp. 8 f.; Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. 75; Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, p. 241.

Parteti lying there in terror and with his face covered with blood they burst out laughing and went away leaving him alone.

It is interesting to compare this story with a similar tale current among the Agaria [1] which describes the origin of the Potta sept. The cynical humorous character of the Pardhans is well illustrated by the contrast. In the Agaria story, when the pursuers saw the placenta and the blood, they thought that their victim must be a monster to have grown so big in a few minutes. The mother declared that the father of this terrible child had gone to make a hole in the sky, and they ran away in fright. The idea of the two Rajas forgetting their wrath in a shout of laughter is typically Pardhan.

The totem of the Parteti clan is the crocodile, but as this creature is not found in Dindori the fact does not put an undue strain on its members. Agaria Partetis honour the tortoise.

The Parteti clan is said to be descended from five brothers, who probably represent five ancient and distinguished families; the eldest was Parteti himself, then Karpeti, Walko, Thalko and Korcho. In Dindori the clan worships five gods. There are also two sub-divisions, the Chamar or Nandia Parteti, and the Sadabhadaha Parteti. The Chamar Parteti are so called because they have the task of readmitting the excommunicate back to the tribal fellowship and thus 'cure' sins as the Chamars cure hides. When a Parteti of this sub-caste performs the worship of Bara Pen, he makes a little bag of *parsa* leaves in imitation of the leather sack in which a Chamar cures his hides, and hangs this up before the god with water and a little bit of skin in it. The Sadabhadaha are so called because of their angry and quarrelsome character.

For indeed the popular story about the origin of this clan is reflected in the daily conduct of its members. They are arrogant and bumptious, swift to quarrel and independent of the fear of tribal censure. Because the first Raja Parteti was not excommunicate for cowering near a woman smeared with blood, members of the clan now have the duty of admitting the excommunicate back into caste.[2] This is a risky business, for they have 'to bear on their heads the sins of the whole tribe', but it also

[1] Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. 77.

[2] Among the Agaria, Ahir, Dhoba, Dhanwar, some Gond, Kawar and other tribes this function is performed by members of the Sonwani clan. The Partetis are actually called Sonwani, 'purifiers by water touched by gold'.

gives them an important position in the tribal councils, and people are careful to flatter them and keep on their right side. It is said that 'their privates are always smooth and oily with the seventeen seers of oil that are poured upon them'.

Moreover, because Raja Parteti was saved by the blood of a mother at child-birth, his descendants seem to think that it does not matter what they do. Sometimes a modern Parteti smears his moustache with blood at the birth of one of his children and swaggers about a bazaar to indicate his contempt for convention. In Patangarh a very rough and dissolute Parteti for some years terrorized the village. No one could criticize him. He openly had intercourse with a mare to show his scorn of ordinary custom. He abused his neighbours and beat them. Once when a woman was to be admitted into caste he publicly declared that he would not take food from her unless she lay with him—a suggestion that would never have been made by a member of one of the other clans.

For all this, the Parteti is respected. After all, he can take away the sins of his fellows and he is thus an invaluable member of the community. The famous hero, Raja Hirakhan Kshattri, was a Parteti and was in great demand to readmit to caste his licentious royal neighbours who were constantly being excommunicated for their affairs with low-caste Hindu women. Even today there is a famous Parteti Gond at Ramnagar. He is a notable Panda and Gunia. His whole courtyard is full of temples and pillars and no one can count the iron whips or the iron tridents. Many devout Gonds and Pardhans who desire the assistance of his magic powers bring these and just leave them lying anywhere in his courtyard. 'He has a regular court, where he tries gods and demons and passes judgment on them. He has shut up or hanged many evil spirits. He has trained a large number of Gunias and Pandas. Always when he sends a Pardhan out he gives instructions that his wife should wash the firewood before using it and should cover her mouth with a bit of cloth before cooking.' A story is told that one of his disciples was murdered and the great Parteti was sent for. He joined the head and body together and brought the dead man back to life. Unfortunately he put the head slightly on one side and so all his life this poor man had to walk with his face towards one of his shoulders. 'When there is a festival in his temples', a proud

Pardhan told me, 'even the English have to send their police to keep order. The English are also in his service.'

The Potta

The Pottas are believed to have a great passion for meat food. They are said to eat every kind of living creature and have even taken wild cats and hyenas. But on one occasion a member of the clan went too far and was excommunicated. He was the father of what is known as the Jamati Pottas, those who resemble Jama, the god of death. One day long ago, this man went with the other villagers to hunt but failed to get anything. As they were going home dejected, the man came to a place where he saw something on the ground that looked like a bit of meat. He picked it up, cooked it on the spot and ate it. But this actually happened to be the placenta of his own child. His wife had gone to the jungle for wood and on her way back had given birth to a child under that very tree. She left the placenta unburied and returned home. When the man's deed was known he was outcaste, and his descendants have been known as the Jamati Pottas.[1]

Girls of the Potta clan are supposed to be the most beautiful, as the men are said to be the ugliest, of the Pardhans. The girls are very free in their ways and some of them tie little bells to their tooth-twigs in order to attract men while they are doing their toilet down by a stream. It is said that a Potta wife will never let her husband look at her belly for fear that he will notice the marks on it caused by frequent abortions.

The Syam

The name is probably derived from the Gondi *soi*, the porcupine, and this creature is the totem of the clan. There are several sub-divisions. The Chhadaka-Phor Syams have the custom that at the time of worship their priest must sit in a little grass hut and conceal himself from the other worshippers. Whatever animal is to be sacrificed is held in front of the wall of the hut and he thrusts his hand through to kill it. He then withdraws

[1] Elwin is mistaken in saying that the Gond Potta sept does not have a tradition of a placenta totem. The Agaria have a different story resembling that told of the Partetis. *The Agaria*, pp. 76 f.

his hand with the head and a member of another clan takes the body for sacrifice.

The Chaura-Gadhiya Syams have the custom of building a small raised platform on the place where one of their dead is burnt or buried.

Other sub-divisions are the

Bandhini	Chukra
Chindi-Gadhiya	Hajariha
Chuki	Ratanpuriha

The Ratanpuriha sub-clan went to live in Ratanpur and were unable to attend the worship of Bara Pen or bring their dead to be 'mingled' with other members of the clan. Now they have to sit apart at festivals. The Hajariha were formerly so rich that they could offer 1000 goats at a time to Bara Pen. Now they give one real goat and 999 little lumps of earth to represent goats. The Chuki clan originated in an act of unprofessional conduct on the part of its first priest. When he was offering sacrifice a girl came and he kissed her *chu-chu* and Bara Pen was angry.

The Tekam

The totem of the Tekam clan[1] is a teak tree. Members of the clan do not eat off leaves of this tree, though they are not forbidden to cut it. Like the Partetis they also sometimes accept the first food from the hands of an excommunicated person at the feast which readmits him to caste. But they do not perform this duty in the case of very serious offences, such as marriage with a Mussalman, getting maggots in a wound or killing a cow.

The members of this clan are said to have the most charming voices and to be the most pleasant-spoken of the Pardhans. The legend is that there once lived in Bairath a young and very beautiful girl. She had, a very unusual thing for a woman, a Bana which she played divinely. Many a Pardhan came to marry her and tried to conquer her by his Bana. But she always defeated him and took his Bana from him. But Bisi the Tekam, son of the first Tekams, Addesirwa and Sauni Dokari, at last defeated her by playing a tune that imitated the swift movements of a rat.

[1] This clan is also found among the Agaria, Baiga, Bharewa, Binjhwar, Gond, Muria and probably several other tribes. The Muria Tekami have the tortoise as their totem.

He took her home, but refused to accept her Bana, dropping it in the jungle on the way. It turned into a stone and can still be seen. Afterwards the two died together while engaged in the worship of Bara Pen. The god was lying enchanted before them and Bisi had his foot on the god's back while the girl sat in his throat sweetening his songs. So they turned to stone and remain for ever. Now the girl has become Sarso Mata and always sits in the throats of the Tekams to give beauty to their songs.

The Uike

This is a large Gond clan and Russell and Hiralal give the names of four sub-clans recorded in Betul.[1] It belongs to the six-god division.

In Dindori, Pardhan members of the clan are subject to a number of taboos. The Uike Pardhan cannot eat in a mourner's house. He cannot join a funeral party, but must follow at a distance. He must never touch a dead body. When he comes back from a funeral party he must not use oil with the others, but should be given fresh and pure oil all to himself. This was because once a Uike woman was cooking in a copper-pot, when it suddenly burst and burnt her. That night the god appeared in her dream and told her the reason: the family had joined in a mourning feast. They have never done so since.

The Uike cannot share in the Barhi, a ceremony which takes place on the twelfth day of a child's birth. He cannot eat in that house on that day. His wife must not use white mud to whitewash her house. Some of the Uikes now ignore the rule, but they have always to leave a little patch on the wall undone.

The Urweti

The Urweti clan originated in a curious incident. Their ancestors sacrificed a chicken to the gods and they and their allied clansmen went away. The other clansmen forgot a knife and later came back to recover it. There they found that the offering made by the Urwetis was being eaten by a cockroach and they laughed at them saying, 'See this is the creature that these people worship'. Since that day the Urwetis have had the cockroach as their totem and do not kill it.

[1] Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 69 f.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PARDHAN AT HOME

I. The Pardhan Village

The Pardhan village is irregularly plotted. It is nothing like a Hindu village where the houses are all huddled up together with one or two main paths. The important point about the Pardhan village is that each house must have a little back garden, for in the two months before the rice or *kodon* crop is ready everyone begins to starve; all the rice and *kodon* in the house is finished and people must have something for these two months. You cannot buy anything anywhere and so these back gardens produce maize and after the maize is ready, for two months the Pardhans eat nothing but maize gruel or maize bread. They also plant peas and beans round the fence of the garden. The result is that the houses are widely scattered all over the village. In the rains, you cannot go to a house directly without having to cross several little lanes, for every part of the village is fenced to prevent cattle coming into the gardens.

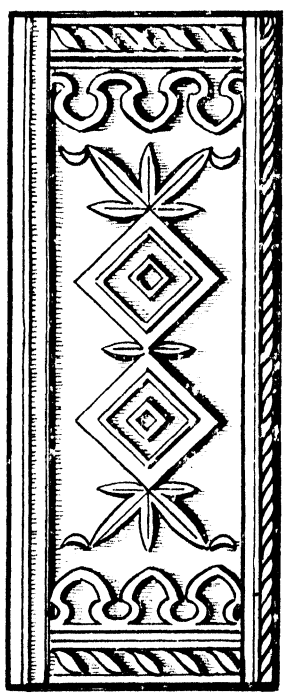


Fig. 1. Wall-pattern in a Pardhan house

A Pardhan calls his back garden 'the stomach of an elephant'. It is spacious and rich in its gifts as the stomach of an elephant might be. When you see a Pardhan house you always feel that it is a camp or temporary hut, for a Pardhan is never sure whether he will not go to the next village any moment. He loves wandering from one village to another as a gipsy does. His main desire is to have a house at some distance from his neighbours; this is due to fear of witches. A witch must not be able to look from her house into his or see the cattle-shed. Then he is also afraid that the neighbours may kill his chickens and eat them.

The Pardhans always have much smaller houses than their Gond neighbours. The reason seems to be that Pardhans are really very lazy people. They would rather dance or sit freely talking than do any work. The oldest inhabitant of Patangarh, Dayaram, has five sons, but his house where he has lived for fifty years is wretchedly small and dark and the little cattle-shed in front is always in a dilapidated condition. When I asked him why his sons would not build him a good house his reply was, 'Then who will dance with a drum, and who will sit with a bottle in front of him, and who will run after the girls? When my sons have so many other duties to do, how would they build a house for me?' Yet in fifty years a large family could have made a splendid and comfortable home with broad mud walls and beams and rafters gradually accumulated.

Usually there are three houses built; a main house stands in the middle and two small buildings are erected on each side so as to provide a little square. The main house is called Deo-garh where the gods and the Bana are kept. Here is the kitchen with two huge bins immediately before the fire-place to prevent anybody going further in. Anyone can go up to the entrance of the kitchen; after that no one of another caste is allowed. When the eldest son is married the greatest pleasure of the parents is to let the newly-married couple live in that house, while they themselves go and sleep in one of the side buildings. The third house is usually the cow-shed. Any money that the Pardhans have is usually hidden in the ground under a bin in the main house, but this is done only if the son and his wife know about it; otherwise the old woman of the house buries it under her own bed. The houses are usually kept spotlessly clean but some women are dirty and keep them shabby and dirty. The husband tries to argue with such a wife; if arguments fail, he beats her and if even that fails, he makes a complaint to the elders. 'For if the house is dirty, even the gods begin to get dirty and weary of the family and leave them and go away'. There are cases where men have turned their wives out for keeping the houses dirty.

II. The Routine of Every Day

The normal daily life of a Pardhan family is simple enough. On getting up in the morning, a religious-minded Pardhan first

touches the ground with his hand before he dares to put his feet on Mother Earth. If he is too old to do any work, he washes his mouth with a twig and comes back and sits with his Bana to say some prayers as an old-fashioned Hindu might do. The rest of the family after washing but without food scatter for work. One perhaps goes to bring wood, some go to the fields; the girl whose duty it is to cook takes an earthen pot and goes to the well. She will first wash her face there, talk to the other

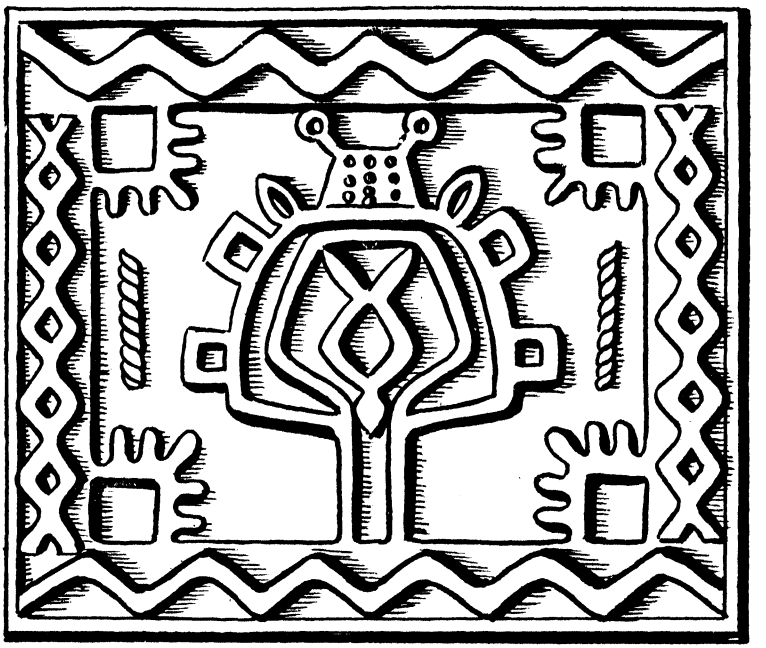


Fig. 2. Wall-decoration representing Dhuti Hill in the Upper Narbada Valley

girls for a few minutes and discuss their experiences of the previous night and then come back with the water and cook. The family, except in the rainy days, always gathers at mid-day to drink the morning *pej*, which is a gruel made of either rice, *kodon* or *kutki*. This they drink with a mouthful of some vegetable or chutney after each sip. But in the rainy days, the girl who has cooked the food takes it with leaf-cups and water down to the field where the family is working. In the summer, after drinking the *pej*, everyone lies down to rest; young children gather together and play, but are usually driven out to some other

place to keep the house quiet. After about three, every one goes out again to work, for leaves, jungle fruit and vegetable, to bring wood or little sticks for fencing in the rainy season. They come back at about sunset and drink what is left of the *pej*; this particular drink is called *maraiya pej*, that is, *pej* drunk when the sun is dying or sinking.

Summer evenings are the most enjoyable part of the year. Every member gathers at that time and even the cattle are coming. The children specially look forward to the evening eagerly, for they have been left to look after the babies—a most tedious and responsible job. They have not been able to stir out lest their doorless or lockless houses should be invaded by pie-dogs and cats. Even the cattle seem to be coming with great joy to the houses. A favourite cow immediately goes and stands in front of the door instead of going straight to the cattle-shed, for she is expecting the fond mother to come with the leaf-plates with leavings of the day's food. These the mother lovingly puts into the mouth of the cow and then the cattle go in. The mother then goes straight to cook, while the eldest sister looks after the babies. The old men sit with the children and tell them stories or if the old man is not interested in them then they sit around on the verandah telling each other riddles.

One thing is rather disheartening in a Pardhan household and that is the lack of any real care of the cattle, a fact which is true of the Gonds also. They seem to be very cruel to their animals. There is no arrangement made for their food, as is done in other parts of India like Maharashtra or the Punjab. Fodder is never kept for these poor cattle. They have to satisfy themselves on what little grass they can get in the day, but at night nothing whatever is given to them. Their sheds are also not very comfortable. I have often seen large stones jutting out and many cattle are put in a very tiny shed where they sit most uncomfortably. But the worst time is in the rains when the poor bullocks have to work almost the whole day on empty stomachs. I have seen angry ploughmen, when a bullock refused to go any further, burning grass or even chilly in front of its nose or twisting its tail till the creature out of sheer terror got up and walked a few steps. They are left with heavy yokes on them for hours: powdered chilly and salt is thrust up their private parts. Even when they are drinking their *pej* at about 11 or 12 in the morning

the men will not bother to unyoke the bullocks (which could easily get a few morsels on the boundary of the fields) or feed them with the leavings from the leaf-plates. The usual method of driving bullocks is to pierce them with a sharp nail on the side and the result is that they rarely survive more than three years.

When a bullock is to be trained it is yoked to a plough along with two old bullocks. There it learns the language of the ploughman. The first day when it is yoked the man usually says, 'When you were young you used to drink the raw milk of your mother and dance all over the place. We have not bothered you, but today you are grown up. Your mother has left you behind with me and is gone to the mountains to feed. She has offered your neck to me to carry my own burden. Now drop your playfulness and laziness behind you along with your dung. Walk bravely and drag your load behind you, O Lakshmi, and feed me. You have carried the weight of the heaviest god, Mahadeo, and so you can easily carry this little weight of a plough.'

If a bullock dies while ploughing there is no sin, but it must not die on the side of the field. When a Pardhan drives his bullocks on the field he has a regular language, which the bullocks understand. He calls the bullock on his left the 'inside' bullock and the one on the right 'outside' bullock. When he wants to turn to the left he says to the 'outside' bullock, '*Arr arr arr*' and pierces it with the sharp goad on the 'inside'. When he wants to turn to the right he says to the 'inside' bullock, '*Tatta tatta*' and pierces the bullock on the 'outside'. When he wants them to turn sharp or a right about turn, he cries, '*Ot ot ot paitar gabha*'. Then one of them stands still while the other turns sharply round it.

To encourage the hard-worked ploughmen the master of the house often sends his young daughters to cheer them up. They dress beautifully with all their ornaments when they bring the mid-day food. They very often stay by the field a long time and cheer the poor ploughmen. When these girls approach, Tabalchi told me that the tired and hungry ploughman thrusts the handle of the plough so hard that the blade goes deep and for some time the field is ploughed beautifully. The girls speak extremely nicely and sweetly, and often flirt with their labourers.

Guests are not very welcome in a Pardhan house, for the simple

reason that there is rarely any food to spare. However, when a guest is closely related, of course he is warmly received. As soon as the man sees a guest coming, he shouts to his wife or

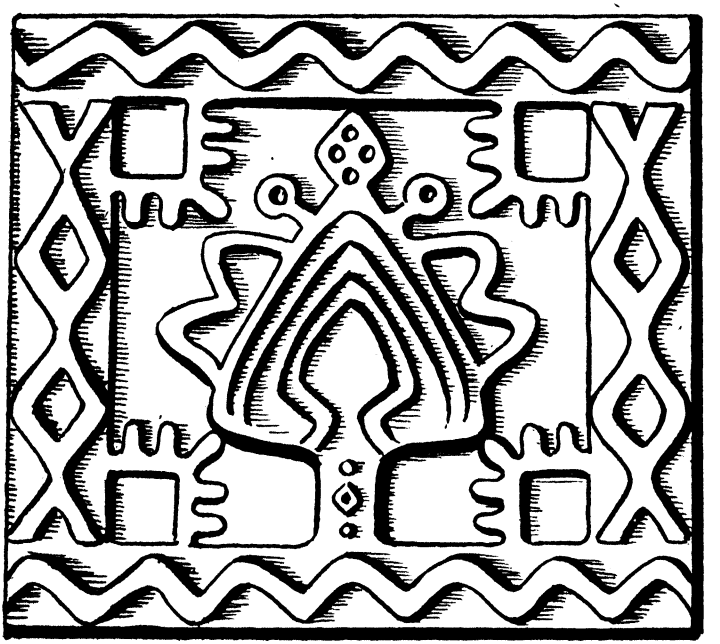
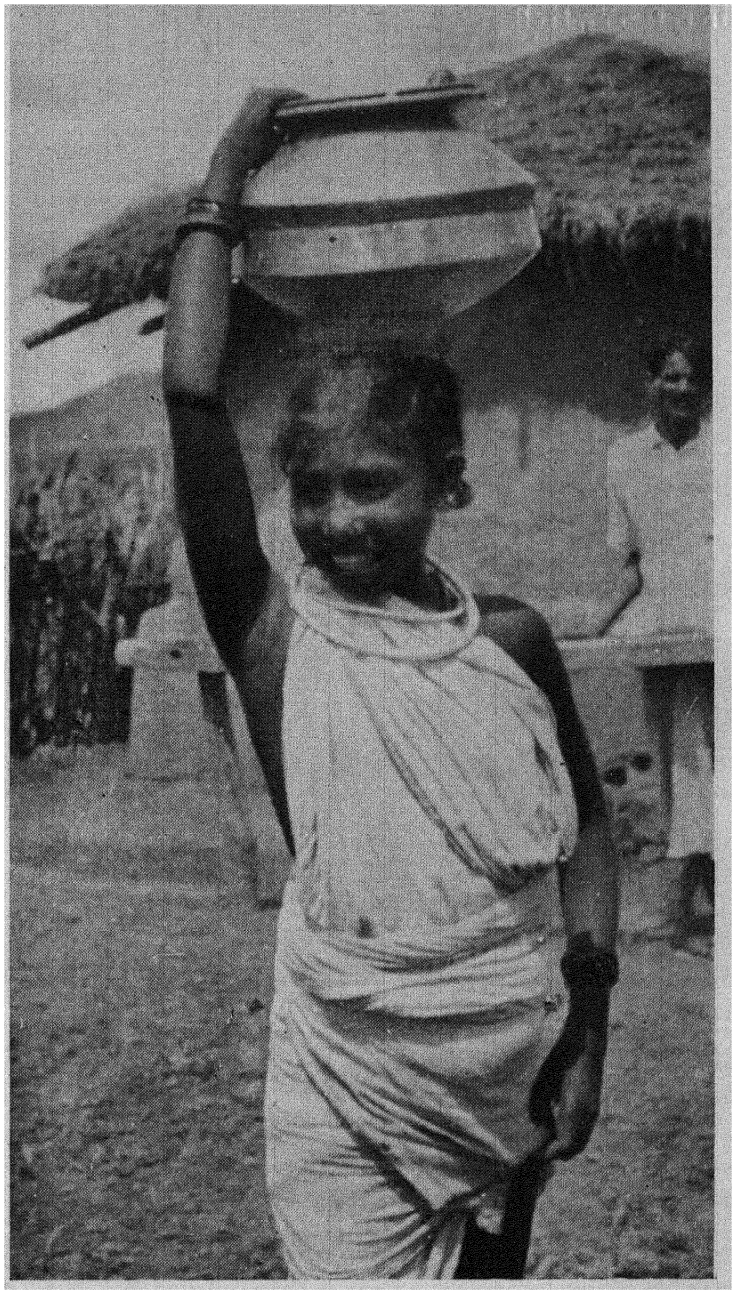


Fig. 3. Pardhan representation of Lingo Hill in Rewa State

daughter to come out with a pot of water and a plate. And they rush to meet him as soon as he comes through the little gate and wash his feet there. After the feet are washed, then they greet each other as the Gonds and Baigas do. Very intimate guests are taken in the main house and made to sit on a blanket. The greatest hospitality is to let the guest sleep in the main building while the other members of the family sleep in a side hut. After the guest is made to sit he is offered a tobacco-pipe and if they can afford it, a little liquor is brought. The host gets up and standing before the guest, offers it to him. He always gives three leaf-cups full before anyone else drinks. When anything is offered to a guest it is done most politely by putting the thing offered on the palm of the right hand with the fingers of the left hand slightly touching the elbow of the right. It is considered rude to offer anything with one hand. Some offer everything with



A Pardhan girl fetches water

Plate VI



An angry husband yokes his wife to the plough

both hands. The greatest feast that is offered after liquor is chicken curry and rice. At the time of inviting the guest for food the host stands before him and says, '*Maharaj*, we are not worthy to feed you, but come and eat vegetable and *kodon*.' The guest answers, 'Of course. Your meal has all the five articles of food and that is all that even a Raja can offer'. The five articles he means are, rice, pulse, salt, chilly and haldi. Then the woman comes with a pot of water and a plate and pours water on his hands. After he has washed, before she serves the plate, the woman lightly touches his feet with one hand. After the food is given, the guest is entertained by a Bana song. If he is a known singer, he is made to sing himself. The host always gathers one or two of his relations to meet the guest after he is fed.

On a festival day the important thing is to keep everything clean. The houses are whitewashed with white earth and everyone has to have a bath. The elder people gather in the big house and start drinking. After the drinks are offered they go and wash. Then the gods and ancestors are offered food and a member of a *nat* clan is fed and then the rest of the family eats. But in the First Fruits Festival, if one *nat* has already kept the festival he cannot invite his *nat* who has not kept it, for the latter's gods have not yet been worshipped and he may suffer from some disaster. Usually while drinking, a chicken is killed and roasted on the fire outside and they pull off bits of it and eat as they drink, without even using any salt or spices.

Fish is regarded as a necessary part of a festival meal. The Pardhans take the bones out of the fish while eating and say, 'O Bara Pen, remove the troubles and difficulties out of our lives as we remove the bones from this fish'.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARDHAN'S PROFESSION

I. A Relationship of Economic Dependence

The relation between the Gonds and Pardhans is seen most clearly in the institution of the Mangteri. This is a tour on which the Pardhan engages every third year.[1] In the Mangteri he has the right to visit Gonds of the same clan as himself and to take certain prescribed dues from them.

The Pardhan in his function as ritual beggar is known as the Dasondi and the Gond from whom he takes his dues is the Thakur, a Hindi word which means Lord or Master, or Jajman, a host. The gift bestowed by the Thakur is officially known as Dan.

It would be wrong to call the Pardhan a beggar or describe his Mangteri tour as a begging expedition. The Mangteri is rather the collection of dues, the realization of a debt or the inheritance of a rightful share of property from a near relation. This fact is emphasized in the name Birathia which is sometimes applied to the Pardhan; the word is given also to a Kotwar who has the right to collect grain or money from the village which he serves. The Pardhan must not beg from any ordinary person. If he does so he is excommunicated. He may only go to Gonds who belong to his own clan and not even to all of these.[2] His claim upon his Thakurs is not lightly established. He must be properly introduced and searching questions are asked before he is accepted. But once this is done the Gond must play his part and if he fails he himself may be excommunicated by his fellow Gonds. But the fact is that the Gond regards the Pardhan as such an important part of the general social order that if his Dasondi does not visit him at the accepted time he becomes uneasy. It is considered inauspicious if the Bana of Bara Pen is not played in a Gond's house once every third year. It gives the Gond, who is always susceptible to flattery, a great feeling of self-satisfaction to see the Pardhan sitting in his courtyard and speaking of him in the highest terms before his neighbours.

[1] This is how he puts it. It means there is a gap of two years between each expedition, which occurs at the beginning of the third year.

[2] But if, as he journeys, he grows tired and hungry, he can usually get a meal off any Gond whom he has the wit to flatter.

The Pardhan talks of the great Gond Rajas and the noble and generous tribe of which his Thakur is such a shining example. The Gond and his family enjoy a whole night of entertainment when half the village gathers in the house to listen to the Pardhan singing. The Gond also believes that his Dasondi will spread his praises in every village that he visits. Even more important is the fact that the Gond genuinely believes that the Pardhan's blessings will increase his crop—'If a Gond hides from a Pardhan, wealth hides from the Gond'—and that the Pardhan will be able to help his soul after death to cross the great river which is the most difficult part of his journey to the other world. In some cases the Gonds are so friendly to their visitors that they are encouraged to visit them every year and even forget their own relations. A Pardhan woman told me: 'When we go to the Thakur's house, we live together as if we were real relations: sometimes even our own people are not so friendly as they are. It is like a poor man going to stay with rich relations.'

At the same time it is very dangerous to offend a Pardhan. One day when Dasu of Patangarh visited his Thakur, the latter was rude to him and called him a beggar. Dasu was naturally annoyed at this and being a Gunia considered that the god in him had been insulted. He cursed the Thakur and left the house without accepting a present from him. Within six months the Thakur died and his widow hastily sent for Dasu and gave him many gifts in order to avert further bad luck from the house.

If a Thakur continuously deceives him then the Dasondi ties a string to the Bana and drags it out across the Thakur's courtyard to the road outside. 'Thus will Bara Pen leave your house', he says, and goes on his way cracking his fingers.

The office of Dasondi is hereditary and boys begin to accompany their parents when they are still young. They are thus trained in their profession and their Thakurs get to know them and are more willing to accept them when their day comes. If a Dasondi dies without a son to succeed him, his Thakur buys another Dasondi from a Gond of the same clan. 'He is afraid of his courtyard being left lonely and unblessed.'

Some Thakurs, when they hear about the death of their Dasondi, go through the whole mourning ceremony. They shave their heads and go and wash in the river.

A Pujari's younger brother and the rest of the men of the same clan are called Bhatait. When a Pardhan has no Thakur he has to beg of a Pujari of the same clan to take him as his Dasondi. At a ceremony the Gond has to tap on the Dasondi's head, while Bara Pen is on him. Then this man from that moment becomes a genuine Dasondi. For this he has to offer a silk turban or some present to his Thakur. Otherwise he has no status as a Dasondi and next morning when he sits for Dan the Thakur does not give him more than four annas. This money is called *dwar chhodani* or money paid to make the Dasondi leave the door.

This economic relationship is established in the mythology. We see the elder brothers overwhelming the youngest with gifts. We are told how Bara Pen instructed the Gonds to honour and to provide for their Pardhan. There are various stories to explain why it is that in spite of this the Pardhan is always poor. One tale says that since the first Pardhan was born out of doors in a field he was regarded as a half-brother and entitled to only half a share. Another story says that the eldest brother, seeing that the boy was receiving so many presents for his beautiful music, grew jealous and said, 'This boy must never be my servant or he will one day take my kingdom', and he prayed to Bara Pen, 'May his money be lost as dirt is lost when a man washes his hands'. Bara Pen granted the prayer and cursed the Pardhans that they should always be poor. But he told the Gonds, 'From today I have taken this boy as my Nengi. He will be separate from you. He will please me with his Bana. Look after him and when he comes to see you, come out to greet him with water and wash his feet. Every third year, give him Dan. At marriage, give him Dan. If anyone dies, give half the property to him'.[1]

Even that, however, sounded a little too luxurious to the elder brothers and so that year when the crops were ready, they took the Pardhan to the thrashing-floor, and pointing to the seven bullocks which were going round the pole, asked him from which of the seven he would take his grain. Seeing a pile of stuff by the thrashing-pole, he chose the bullock nearest to it, where-

[1] The Pardhans sometimes say, 'The first Gonds turned us into Pardhans when they were drunk, and they have never ceased paying for their mistake'.

upon he found that it was only chaff and he did not get more than a single winnowing-fan full of grain. For this reason it is said the Gonds do not give more than one winnowing-fan full of grain when the Pardhans come to visit them.

This economic relationship can only exist if the social and religious relationships of both parties are in order. For example, a Pardhan who has married a Panka, or even a Gond, woman cannot be a Dasondi. A Gond who has been excommunicated for any cause cannot be a Thakur.

The arrangement is not altogether good for the Pardhan. It tends to make him lazy and improvident. He himself attributes his poverty to his relationship with the Gond. 'The main reason for our poverty is that we always live in hope of getting something out of the Thakur, whereas the Gond knows that if he does not work he will have to starve.'

II. Different Kinds of Dan

Several different kinds of Dan are claimed by the Pardhans. The first and most common is the Suk or Tisala Dan which is given to the Dasondi on his regular Mangteri tour. Sanne Dan is given after the marriage of the Thakur's eldest daughter: it consists of a rupee and the haldi-stained clothes used by the girl during the marriage.

Gifts are not usually claimed at weddings, but if a Pardhan reaches his Thakur's house at the time of a wedding he plays on his Bana at the time of the procession round the wedding-pole. Excitedly he plays and sings about the great wedding of Hirakhan. This is considered very fortunate and is supposed to ensure a happy marriage. On such an occasion the Dasondi claims, and certainly receives, a small gift as Bihao Dan.

Bhacha Dan is again connected with the Thakur's eldest daughter. When her first son is born, she must give a rupee and a bottle of liquor to the family Pardhan. He is expected to return to her four annas for liquor. When she makes this present, the young mother repeats a conventional formula:

> After all we are your own sisters and daughters.
> Our gift is like the food you take with you on a journey and finish on the road.

Lastly, there is Budha Dan, which is the final gift in her old age of the Thakur's daughter. This varies, according to the

wealth of the family. And to end everything, there is the Muar Dan given after death.

III. The Mangteri Tour

The Mangteri tour generally begins in February, when there is no work in the fields, and the Dasondi and his wife are back in their house by the end of May when they see the clouds gathering in the sky. They return to get the buildings rainproof and their little garden ready for its crop of maize. Before starting, everyone in the house must be ceremonially pure. No woman should be in her monthly period. Everything is made spotlessly clean with white mud from the hills and the whole family takes a ritual bath. They get up early in the morning and the Dasondi burns incense before his Bana which represents the great god Bara Pen. In olden days the Pardhans used to worship Bara Pen with offerings of hibiscus flowers. Bara Pen then instructed them to go to ten houses in worship of him with these flowers round their neck: this is why they are called Dasondi. If he can afford it the Dasondi then sacrifices a red cock or hen with reversed feathers in the name of Sarseti Sarada—a goddess who is supposed to dwell in the throats of men or in any musical instrument and improve the tune. The Dasondi says:

O Bara Pen, go in front of us as we go and guide us as we travel. Save us from death, disease, from thieves and cheats, from the crooked and wicked, from snakes and tigers, and from cholera. Go ahead removing these from our path. Even if we tread on blood or touch a corpse, let us not be harmed. Save us from being poisoned by our hosts. Keep the doors of our donors open. Let them come out eagerly as soon as they see us, with water in their hands to wash our feet. Make the hard-hearted soft and the mourners laugh so that they will give the Dan cheerfully. May they themselves increase from one to ten and let us get our dues from all the ten. Be generous to them so that they may be generous to us. O Bara Pen of the Gondwana, be merciful to us.

Then falling at the feet of the Bana he puts it in a bag and does not take it out till he has to play it on the first night of the Mangteri. It is strictly taboo to play it on the road, but the Dasondi may play it in return for hospitality in a Gond's house where he happens to halt.

The Dasondi and his wife set out on their journey. The

Pardhan usually takes his wife with him, partly because he is a very affectionate person and would miss his wife unbearably if he was separated from her for so many months, and partly because her presence saves him from any possible scandal. As they start they are both eagerly on the watch for favourable omens. If they see a cow, or a full pot or a woman going from left to right, they are very pleased. If a *kurlu* bird cries *Kurlum Kurlum Kurlum* 'straight in front of their noses', they know that they will be received well and will get lots of meat to eat. But if they see an empty pot or the face of a menstruating woman or a man going from right to left or if they hear the *kurlu* bird calling not in front but to one side, then their hearts sink. They continue on their way, but feeling that they will probably not get all they want.

Another account of these omens was given me by Dani. 'If on the way a branch of a tree breaks the Dasondi is glad, for it means a Thakur is dead. If he sees a snake crossing his road he believes that he will get a cow, for the snake represents the rope with which he will tie the cow's neck. If his foot hits against a stone, the Pardhan is worried, for he will not get any money.'

When the Pardhans reach the house of the first Gond Thakur they are due to visit, their hostess comes out with water in a pot and offers it to them with both her hands. To give water with only one hand is considered disrespectful. The Pardhan allows five drops of the water to fall to the ground in the name of Bara Pen and of the ancestral dead. He allows a few drops also to fall on his Bana. There is a formal greeting between the Gond and the Pardhan just as if they were actual relations and they ask after each other's families. The visitors have something to eat and a sack made of hemp (of a kind only used by the Lamanas) is spread on the ground. The reason why a Gond gives a hemp-bag to the Pardhan to sit on is that hemp-string is supposed to be pure and virginal. Since no creature ever eats hemp, it is on such cloth that Bara Pen prefers to sit. Above the sack they put their own clothes and sit upon them. They offer a little fire and incense to Bara Pen.

Now begins the most difficult part of the Dasondi's task. He has to humour, and put in a good mood the whole family, perhaps a whole village. To excite them sometimes the Pardhan

says, 'This time I have learnt a new Bana Git from the *Mahabharata,* so please put out the lights and any fire, for it may set the house on fire'. The Dasondi watches every little movement of his host, for by this he is either discouraged or knows that he will be able to get his Dan without much trouble. If the host is excited and bustles about inviting neighbours and making preparations for a good show, the Dasondi knows that all will be well. But if the Thakur appears indifferent and pre-



Fig. 4. Pardhan wall-pattern, done in mud, of Bodrahin, a fantastic character in the Gondwani songs

occupied, his visitors are worried and have to exert themselves to please their hosts. It is said that they can also tell from the quality of the food given to them what kind of Dan they will receive. When all is ready and the neighbours have gathered, the Pardhan takes his Bana and begins to tune it. He is already dressed in his best clothes—a coat, a silk turban and sometimes bells on his wrists and ankles. His wife, covered with a fine cloth, sits beside him. The Dasondi takes a long time tuning his instrument and while he is getting ready he enlivens his audience with a conventional patter which is generally of the most obscene character. When he starts singing, his lazy, lustful and humorous nature is never seen to more advantage. The way he moves his body as he plays is very exciting; he looks as if he is floating in the air. He chooses one or other of the

famous Gondwani or Pandawani stories about the ancestors of the Gond race or the great Hindu heroes of old. The performance at its best is admirable.

The next morning the house is cleaned—it generally needs it after the large crowd of visitors of the previous night—and the Dasondi takes his seat in the court and begins to praise the generosity of the first Thakur. Presently the hostess brings out of the house a winnowing-fan full of grain with a rupee hidden in it and some haldi and two pice and a lighted lamp upon it. This she places before the Pardhan. He pretends that he is greatly disappointed at only receiving a present of two pice and the time-honoured joke never seems to fail.

The woman who is to bring the rice or *kodon* in the winnowing-fan must be ceremonially clean and must not be in her monthly period. If she is, the Dasondi cannot take his Dan and has to return after a week. When the grain is brought, the winnowing-fan must be absolutely full and a few grains must fall on the ground as it is being carried to where the Pardhan is sitting.. This means that as the grain falls from the winnowing-fan so also will it fall from the bin after it has been blessed.

Then the woman sits down with her back towards the Dasondi and awaits his blessing. He falls at the feet of his Bana and places it in the winnowing-fan. Then in the name of Bara Pen he puts a little rice, haldi and the rupee on his Bana and exclaims :

O Bara Pen, my generous host has given this in your name. Consider it to be a lamp of gold. Help the Thakur and his family in their fields and gardens, destroy the weeds and grass but let the crops grow tall. Increase their cattle and help them in stream and jungle. Help them in court and before kings. Increase the creeper of their family. May one house increase to ten and let all their enemies perish. In the cowshed let their cattle increase and let their horse ever stand tethered before the house. Let their bundles never be empty of money. May their grindstone be always smeared with flour and their oil-press never be dry. Let the barren cow be fruitful and give the barren woman a son. Let the dry-uddered cow give milk. Let the bulls return in the evening with pleasure and enter their shed. Let the cows look like lightning as they graze. Let a horse neigh in the stable. Let daughters of good families come running to the house and adorn it and may my host's yoke-fellow never leave him. May your worship never be forgotten and let the hostess run with a pot of water to wash

your feet whenever you appear on the threshold. May all the gods of cowshed and the house, gods outside and gods inside, gods of grain and gods of the jungle, help in this blessing.

Then the Dasondi puts three handfuls of grain in the outstretched cloth of the hostess in the name of Bara Pen and then three handfuls more. She in turn falls at the feet of the Bana and takes the grain into the house and puts it into the bin where the seed is kept.[1] It is believed that this blessed grain will be very fertile and will communicate its fertility to the rest of the seed. The lamp is also taken into the house and is kept burning before the household gods. From another grain-bin the woman brings five handfuls of grain back and returns it to the winnowing-fan. The lamp which is taken after the Dan ceremony into the house must not be put out and should be allowed to go out by itself.

The Pardhan must be careful not to overstay his welcome. *Pahuna* is a guest of the first day. On the second day he is a *Tohuna*. On the third day he peeps anxiously from the threshhold to see if his hostess will feed him. But on the fourth day the host and hostess just leave him in the morning and go to their work in the fields without serving him any food and perhaps saying in their hearts, 'You can busy yourself farting and digesting what you have eaten in the last three days'.

Ceremonial farewells are exchanged between the Pardhan and the Gond, and the Dasondi and his wife go on their way towards the next house at which they are to collect their dues. In this manner the Dasondi goes from village to village through a period of about three months. He visits from twenty to thirty Thakurs in one Mangteri tour. The value of the gifts he receives in each house is about two rupees and the earnings of an entire tour may be anything from fifty to eighty rupees according to his skill and luck. The grain that is given is regarded as a special perquisite of the Dasondi's wife.

Towards the end of May, when the first storms come and it is evident that the rains are approaching, the Dasondis return quickly to their homes. 'Now all that they have enjoyed is to be digested.' The daily monotonous labour of the fields is to take the place of the romance and excitement of public performances.

[1] In Korea State, it is said, a Gond woman puts coloured decorations on her elbows and knees, and a spangle on the forehead and kneels before the Dasondi to receive the blessed grain.

When the Dasondi returns to his village, he looks at his house and cries: 'My going away has ruined this house. Everything is broken down and the grass has fallen from the roof.' The neighbours reply, 'But what a lot you must have earned during your tour.' 'What have I earned? Every Thakur told me that he could not give us anything this year because there had been so much trouble in the house and asked me to come again later.'

Very often, the Dasondi on his return attempts to become a farm-labourer in the house of a Gond. Only in rare cases does he himself possess fields. The Gond laughs at him and says: 'Most of the year you hold in your hands your soft Bana. What can you do with a hard plough?'

If the Pardhan does not return from his Mangteri tour in time his relations at home grow anxious and both then and at other times during the tour they try to discover by supernatural means what has happened to him and how he is getting on. One method of doing this is to use a wooden ladle as a sort of planchette. A Gunia draws three lines on the ground with flour, declaring that the first line stands for good health, the second for sickness and the third for economic success in the Mangteri tour. Then he ties a string to the wooden ladle and jerks it across the lines of flour. According to the line at which the ladle stops he believes that he has received a message from the other world about the wanderer's condition. Another method is to make a circle of flour and to say that one side represents health, another side sickness, another side disappointment, another side success and so on. The Gunia then turns a pot of water upside down suddenly in the middle of the circle. The water flows in one direction or another, thus indicating what has happened. In yet another method the Gunia persuades a baby to catch hold of one of his fingers: if the child chooses the middle finger, it means the Dasondi is well.

After getting home there is a rule that the Dasondi must not play his Bana again until the new crop is ready and the festival of the First Eating of the new grain has been performed. Otherwise it is supposed that ghosts and demons may gather in the fields to hear the sweet music and may destroy the crop.

IV. Adventures on the Mangteri Tour

The much-travelled Pardhans are naturally full of stories of their adventures during their Mangteri tours. These tales are generally of two kinds; either about the stinginess of their Gond Thakurs or about their adventures with Gond girls. Naturally many Gonds do their best to avoid giving Dan to the Pardhan visitor and the latter has to adopt many tricks to extract what he considers to be his due. 'We often have to try to pose as though we knew exactly how much money there was in the house.' Dani describes with great humour how he has persuaded several Gond women to believe that Bara Pen had whispered in his ear the exact amount of money and grain that they possessed. Another popular story told by Dani is of an old Gond woman who wanted to avoid giving anything more than four annas as Muar Dan after the death of her husband. When he sat in her courtyard to receive the Dan, she brought out a little rice, four annas and a tiny pot of liquor. Dani told her that the liquor would not be enough even to offer ceremonially to Mother Earth. So she sat down beside him and began saying '*Kaisech karu bade, kaisech karu bade?* What shall I do? O elder brother of my husband, what shall I do?' The old woman went on saying this over and over again for a full hour till the unfortunate Dani felt he was going mad. The woman, he says, became entranced with her own words and sat there swaying to and fro and repeating them in a sort of ecstacy. So he quietly got up and went to the woman's nephew who at once gave him a calf and told him to touch its tail in token of ownership. Then Dani went back and sat before the old woman and said to her, 'Your nephew has given me the calf', whereupon she abruptly came to her senses and stopped repeating her curious chant.

Naturally the arrival of a handsome and witty Pardhan in a Gond household is apt to stir interest and excitement among the Gond girls. But on the whole the Pardhans are very careful about entering into any emotional relationship with the daughters or wives of their hosts. In the first place, as they say frankly, they find Gond girls very dull. They consider them to be dirty and 'they do not like their smell'. In the second place it is an important part of professional etiquette that they should not rouse the jealousy or antagonism of the people on whom they

depend for a living. It is generally said that the Gonds are jealous and suspicious of their Pardhan visitors, for they think that every girl loves a Pardhan because of his reputation that 'his organ is two fingers-breadth longer' than a Gond's. But although the Pardhans naturally have various adventures, these are on the whole uncommon. Tabalchi says that the girls often would 'pinch his bottom' while he was singing and describes how once he went in the morning down to a stream and was followed by several girls who quarrelled over him in his presence. Gond women generally are very nice to the Pardhans and secretly give them ghee and other delicacies to improve the rough food which the head of the household usually provides.

There was one famous entanglement between a Pardhan Dasondi and the wife of one of his Thakurs. This man went to Amaldiha and played and sang so beautifully that his Thakur's wife fell madly in love with him. The difficulty was to communicate with one another, for naturally when a Dasondi is present in a house, every movement is watched and every word is overheard. The Pardhan solved the problem by singing his instructions to the girl in the most public manner possible. He inserted into his story an episode in the life of Kamal Hiro and described how she fell in love with a man and arranged to elope with him. He told how Kamal Hiro prepared to leave the house at such and such a time, how she tied up her ornaments and clothes in a bundle, how she tricked her husband, even how she provided fish-curry in a leaf-cup. The girl sitting in the courtyard heard and understood and the following day she carried out exactly the instructions that she had heard so publicly and made a highly successful elopement with the Dasondi.

The two following stories illustrate a rather unexpected Pardhan characteristic, their conceit.

One day a Dasondi and a Brahmin went at the same time to a Thakur's house. The Brahmin did the Satya Narayan *puja* while the Dasondi after that played on his Bana and sang one of his long epics. Next morning the Dasondi was given a bullock and the Brahmin only a rupee and four annas. This upset the Brahmin very much. He said, 'I gave you wisdom and the story of the gods and this Pardhan simply did *reku-reku* on his fiddle. Yet you go and give him a bullock and all I get is one rupee and four annas'.

Ram Bakas Pardhan was very particular about his food and sleeping arrangements. He never went on foot to his Thakur but always on a horse. Then without dismounting from the horse, he would peep through the courtyard and shout for his Thakur. He would say, 'Your house is too small and too dirty. Where will I stay, where will I sleep? I cannot see big copper pots, for I require two pots of water just to wash my mouth. So you had better give me your Dan now and let me go'. He very often got his Dan then and there and would go on to the next village.

V. The Muar Dan

When the Pardhan's Thakur dies, the Dasondi and his wife are often invited to the funeral ceremony and are treated as if they were members of the family. If they are not invited they visit the house in the course of the usual tour and on their arrival the Gonds indulge in ceremonial weeping just as if one of their own relations had come. The Pardhans say that they feel very awkward when a widow weeps before them. They have to pretend to be sorry, but actually they are delighted at the thought of the gifts they will receive. I have never known a Pardhan genuinely sorry over the death of a Gond. If the Dasondi attends a funeral he receives his dues on the day after the ceremonies are completed. If he goes to the house in the course of his tour he plays his Bana on the first evening according to routine and not till the following morning does he begin discussion about the Muar Dan that he has to receive. Then the sickle, axe, dish and pots of the dead man are brought out of the house and the family weeps saying, 'Take, O Jiva, your share and do not hurt any of us'. While this is going on, the Pardhan plays on his Bana which contributes considerably to the general atmosphere. The Pardhan sometimes insists on receiving practically everything that the dead man owned and the Gonds compare him to a vulture for, they say, he waits round till death occurs and does not leave the corpse till he has got everything possible from it. Dasu has even brought home a dead man's fish-net and the little wooden seat on which he sat. It is a Gond custom to put a rupee into the mouth of a dying man. Even this is claimed by the Pardhan. If the corpse is cremated the rupee is rescued from the ashes and is given blackened and dirty to the Dasondi. If the corpse is buried, the rupee is removed before interment.

Sometimes the Gond gives the Muar Dan while he is still alive. When a Pardhan goes to his Thakur he sometimes says to him if he is very old—one whom he can call his grandfather in a joking relationship, 'Grandfather, you are now too old. You are soon going to the other world'. Then the old man laughs and says, 'Look at every ornament on my old body and the silver wristlets. Here are my golden earrings. Don't leave them behind when I die. Take them away'.

Disputes usually arise when the Pardhan claims a cow or bullock.[1] If the family refuses to give it—and they usually ought to give it unless they are very poor—the Pardhan frightens them by saying, 'Look, Jam Deo is standing with the dead one's soul and he will not take it away unless you give the cow. If you don't give, when he is reborn he will have no plough for his field.' There is a saying that, 'The gift of food is an ordinary gift, but that of a buffalo is greatest of all. The gift of a cow is the gift of milk. O River, move aside and let the soul pass to the other bank'.

A buffalo-Dan is the Dan of a Yama Dut, for it is Yama's vehicle. The buffalo may take you beyond the river or may just sit in the cool water with the life of the dead man on his back, but a cow definitely is able to take you across the river even if the river is flooded. While touching the tail of the cow or any animal given to him the Dasondi says, 'Go, O life, across the river on this animal'.

The members of the family naturally do not like to see all these possessions going out of their control. The dead man's sister indeed has the right to come forward and throw her cloth over anything she specially wants, such as a pot or dish. She says, 'Give me this in memory of my brother'. The Pardhan usually returns it to her if she offers him a bottle of liquor. Where the family is very poor they are generally permitted to give one rupee four annas which represents the gift of a calf to enable the dead man to cross the river. The tradition is that when an actual animal is given the Pardhan should touch its tail in order to indicate that he has a claim on it, an action which is said to have legal validity.

Finally the Pardhan gives his blessing to the bereaved family:

[1] The Pardhan's claim on the Thakur's cattle gives point to his curse—'May I soon get a cow from you', meaning 'May you soon die'.

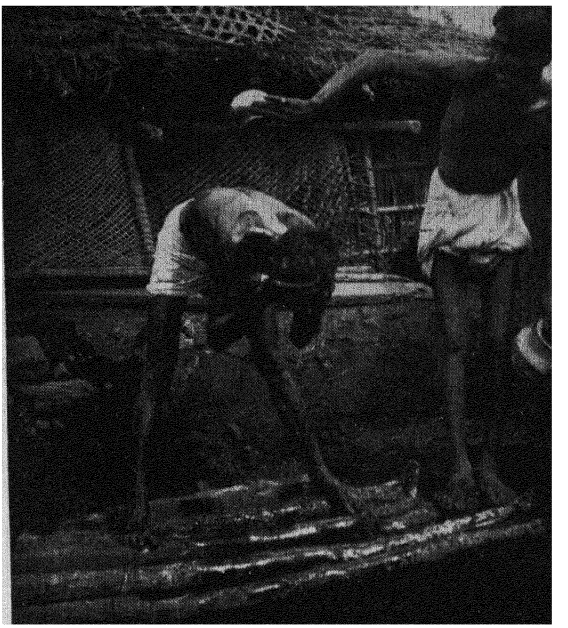
'Do not weep, do not weep. We are sitting here to save the Jiva. Bring, bring his blanket with which he covered himself, for the swan is watching you. He cannot bear its loss. There lies his axe. Push it over here. Give me his sandals, and he will wear them on his long journey. It is hot and dusty on the road; where is his umbrella? His throat is parched with thirst; find his *lota* and let me have it. The grass is thick; give me his sickle, so that he may clear a path. He is standing in the midst of Ganges with its seven streams. He has to cross it. Bring out the horse on which he used to ride. Saddle it and it will help him to cross the river. He will hold its tail and the Jiva will cross the river.'

Some time ago a Pardhan brought a case into my court which arose from a dispute about the Muar Dan. The widow of his Thakur gave him a pair of bullocks, but when he left the house the following morning her nephews came in and, since they were ultimately to be owners of her property after her death, they were very annoyed. They followed the Pardhan through the jungle, attacked and beat him and recovered the buffaloes. Before the case began an important-looking Gond asked the Pardhan a number of questions. 'How much did you give the Panch for the buffaloes?' 'Two rupees', said the complainant. 'Did you touch the tails of the buffaloes when the widow gave them to you?' 'Yes.' This seems to have convinced the Gond that the Pardhan was telling the truth and he proceeded to give a little lecture to the accused. 'Old mother, why have you made your heart small? Our forefathers have given bigger gifts than this and that is how we have become so famous in the world. We are the masters of these people and they beg from us as our own younger brothers might. You cannot have a Dasondi and not look after him. Your dead husband's soul must be suffering as a result of this.' When the case came before the court, as a result of the Gond's lecture the old woman declared her desire to compromize. The buffaloes were restored to the Pardhan and the case was dismissed.

There was another case when a Pardhan pretended to be his own brother and took away a cow as Muar Dan, a cow which should have been given to his brother. He did this because he considered that his brother had managed to supplant him as the Dasondi of this particular Thakur and he firmly believed that he

THE LARU KAJ

1. Bathing the Kamri
2. Feeding the pig before sacrifice



2

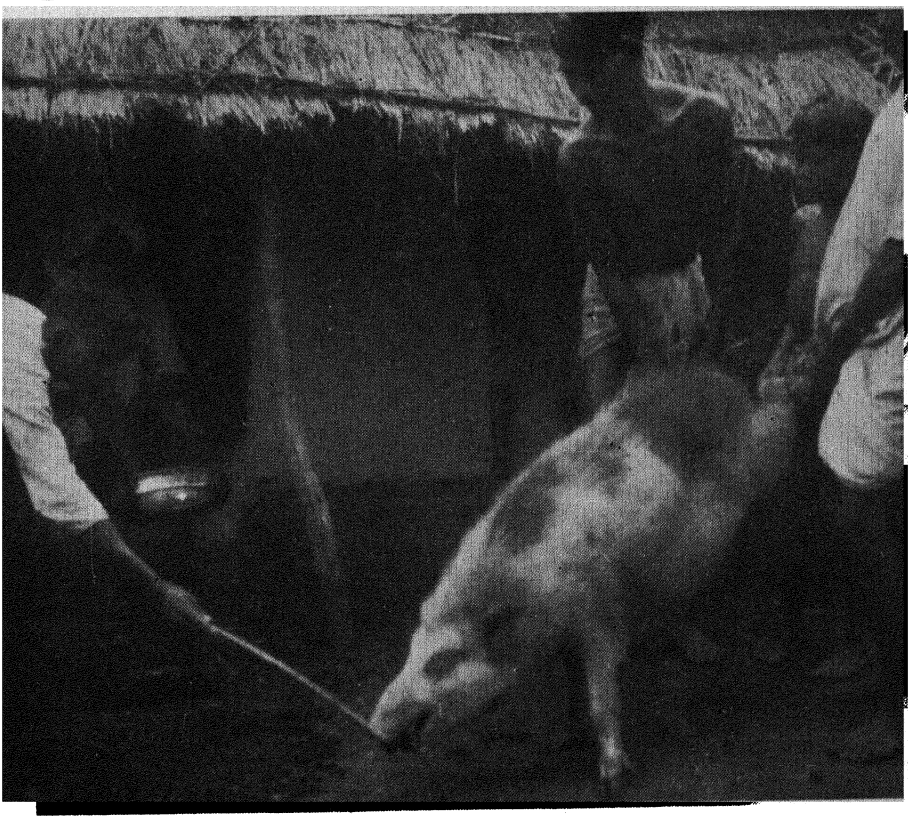


Plate VI



Pardhan couple, wearing marriage-crowns,
go round the pole

had a right to the cow. I had to make a long list of the Jajmans and Dasondis for several generations before the brother was convinced that he had done anything wrong.

On one occasion—but it is the only example I know—the widow of a very poor man was actually given to the Dasondi as his Muar Dan, for she was the only thing there was to give. The Pardhan was so touched by this that he gave her seven rupees, all the money he had on him, and promised her a sari every year.

VI. Variations in the Mangteri System

There are several stories about variations in the Mangteri system. In former days it is said that the Pardhans also had Thakurs among the Ahirs. But a Pardhan once fell in love and eloped with an Ahir girl, his Thakur's daughter. Since the Ahirs regard themselves as a very superior caste, from whom even Brahmins may take water, this caused great indignation and the practice was stopped.

If a Pardhan goes to beg from a Baiga he is excommunicated. This has actually occurred and the Pardhan was heavily penalized. On another occasion a wealthy Baiga had a great desire to employ a Pardhan as his Dasondi. He felt that this would extend his fame and establish him as a superior person like the Gond, but although he is said to have offered sixty bullocks to the Pardhan, his offer was refused.

I have heard of one case where a Dhulia acts as Dasondi to a certain Gond's family. The reason was that Bara Pen in this particular house refused to react properly when the Pardhan came with his Bana and it was only when the Dhulia brought his drum that the presence of the god was manifested.

The Pardhans, at least at one time, had Dasondis of their own. They were the Ojhas. I have not yet seen an Ojha come to sing and beg at a Pardhan's house but an elderly woman in Patangarh has told me how she used to see them coming to her father's house when she was a girl. The Ojha was treated by her mother exactly as the Pardhan is treated by the Gond women. He used to dance with a drum called *dohaki*.

The Ojhas are probably a branch of the Gonds and, according to Russell and Hiralal, they are the soothsayers and minstrels of the tribe and thirty years ago numbered about 5,000 distri-

buted over all the Districts of the Central Provinces. The word Ojha is of Sanskrit origin and Russell and Hiralal derive it from the word 'Ojh', meaning 'entrail', 'their original duty having been, like that of the Roman Augurs, to examine the entrails of the victim immediately after it had been slain as an offering to the gods.'[1] Bodding, however, considers that there is no warrant for this observation and indeed we have no evidence that any Indian diviner examined the entrails in the manner of the Latin Haruspex. Bodding himself derives the word from the Sanskrit Upadhyay,[2] a sub-teacher who instructs in a part only of the Veda, a spiritual teacher or a teacher generally. By the Santhals the Ojha is regarded as a wizard and magician. In Bastar the Ojhas are wandering minstrels and their women tattoo the Muria girls.

It is interesting to note that when a Pardhan or Gond magician falls into trance, the first word he utters is a loud exclamation that sounds like: '*Occha*' or '*Ojhha*'. When he says this the people standing by believe that the god has come upon the magician and they are ready to listen to him and accept his message. I suggest that possibly the name Ojha was derived from this cry.

In Balaghat District the Thengaha Pardhans go on their Mangteri tour without the Bana and merely hold a big stick (*thenga*) and stand in the door asking for their Dan.

The Pande Pardhans also go on their tour without a Bana. Directly they reach the door of their Thakurs they begin to sing the praises of the gods and ask for Dan.

VII. The Bana

To the Pardhans of the Narbada Valley the Bana is one of the most important things in life. 'As his sacred books to a Brahmin, as his scales to a Bania, as his plough to a Gond, so is the Bana to the Pardhan.' The Bana is his portable temple, the focus of his natural sentiment and his primary means of livelihood. However rich he may be, he will not give up the practice of Mangteri for 'wealth may increase and be exhausted any time, but what is given by god will always last'. The Bana to the Pardhan

[1] Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 296. This authority gives the name of the Ojha drum as *dhank*.

[2] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine* (Calcutta, 1925), p. 10.

is the very birthplace and seat of Bara Pen. He only appeared among men when it was made.

The Bana is a simple instrument, but when it is fully decorated with bells, peacock-feathers and balls of coloured wool, it looks very pretty. The Pardhans themselves describe it ecstatically. Its wood came from Koeli Kachhar, the magic forest where gods and fairies live. It is made in the shape of a tortoise in memory of the day when the first Gond Raja tried to cross a river on a tortoise's back. The bamboo used is part of the maiden Basmotin Kaniya, the beautiful girl who lives in the bamboo clump. The leather is from the skin of the Surhi cow who came down to earth from the sky. The hair used as string for the bow is from the tail of the great horse Hansraj.

When a Bana is to be made, there is a regular ceremony before the wood is cut. The maker of the Bana must fast and take a ceremonial bath. His wife must be in a state of ritual purity. He must observe chastity the night before he begins. On a Sunday, in the month of Baisakah he goes into the forest and finds a *Trewia nudiflora* tree which is standing by itself, away from other trees. The idea is that such a lonely tree gives sweet music, for the wind is free to play through its branches. Sometimes it is said that the tree must be barren, one that cries for its mate and for children; then the Bana made from it will cry in the same way. The tree is 'invited' by having rice thrown over it and chickens sacrificed at its foot; the following day it is cut down. The wood is brought back to the house, and here the body of the instrument is made in the names of gods and heroes—Sriyal Jango, Rat Mai, and Rai Lingo. It may be recalled that the Bastar hero Lingo was the first great musician and played on eighteen instruments at once. The use of his name, therefore, is appropriate.

The Pardhans have a number of stories to account for the origin of their sacred instrument. The following is one recorded in Patangarh:

A Naga Raja had one son whose name was Nala. He lived on air. One day he went to the city of a great Raja and saw the princess. He fell in love with her but she refused to let him possess her. He turned himself into a cobra and, in her fear, she admitted him to her room. Afterwards he returned to his jungle. In due time the girl was found pregnant and everyone tried to discover who the father was. 'Even if he is a Chamar'

said the Raja, 'I will marry you to him.' But the girl did not know where the boy came from and so she was turned out of the palace. But the villagers were sorry for her and gave her the task of grazing their goats. When her time came, she gave birth to two sons, Vijai and Bijai. These boys, even though she was unable to give them her milk as she was so busy with her goats, grew tall with the wind and strong with the sun. When they were seven years old they took their mother's task. When they grew up, these boys became great warriors and became famous throughout the world. But being Gonds and having to live in the great forests, full of ghosts and devils which bothered them and destroyed their crops and cattle, they were not satisfied with the protection that the Hindu gods gave them. They went searching for a god powerful enough to defeat evil spirits. They went to Rama but he could not help them; he took them to Mahadeo, but he could not help them either. At last it was discovered that the great Gond god lived in the *saja* tree. The brothers approached the *saja* tree and after sitting beneath it, fasting, for months, they suddenly saw the fierce form of the great god. He shouted to them abusively: 'How can creatures like you ever worship me properly?' They promised to do anything he demanded. 'You will have to endure', said the god, 'the torture of nine hundred evil spirits and twelve hundred kinds of defamations.' The boys declared that they were ready. Then said Bara Pen, 'All the gods and spirits that go about with me will have to be fed by you. We can eat and drink anything. If you give us sufficient, I will always help you in your field and garden in the birth of your children and on your thrashing-floor. I will be present at any moment when you call upon me'. The boys prepared sacrifice for Bara Pen but he refused to manifest himself. They offered chickens, goats, bullocks, everything they could find, but Bara Pen refused to come. At last one of them made a Bana with a small stick of *khirsari* wood. He made a bow with a hair from his own head[1] and began to play it. Suddenly, as he heard the music, the god came upon the younger brother. He fell into trance and thus it was known that it was the result of the making of the Bana that Bara Pen came to earth.

Another story, relating the origin of the Bana very closely to the birth of the chief deity of the Pardhans, Bara Pen, is as follows:

Of the twelve Gond brothers, the eldest was Budhan Sai[2] and the youngest was Malko Jalia. Budhan Sai was the Raja of a great kingdom, but when he fought against the Raja of Delhi the Gond army was entirely destroyed. Budhan Sai was very

[1] Compare Shakespeare's 'Bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair'.
[2] Some say the name should be Madan Sai.

frightened, but Bara Pen came to him in a dream, saying, 'I was born in an Agaria's furnace as a little child, but no one honours me; therefore on this very Friday I will be born in your field in the form of a spring of water issuing from a *saja* tree. When Malko Jalia does me honour I will come to live in your house'.

For a long time Budhan Sai sat wondering about his dream. In the morning he got ready for sacrifice goats and coconuts and told his brothers that if they worshipped Bara Pen they would be victorious.

When Friday came Budhan Sai sat on his throne beneath the *saja* tree and placed coconuts at its foot and killed many goats in sacrifice. He asked the god to come upon his second brother but nothing happened. Then Mahadeo Guru in the form of a sadhu came by and asked what was the matter. When he heard the story he said, 'You must make a Bana. When you play on that Bara Pen will reveal himself in his own shape.' So saying, Mahadeo departed.

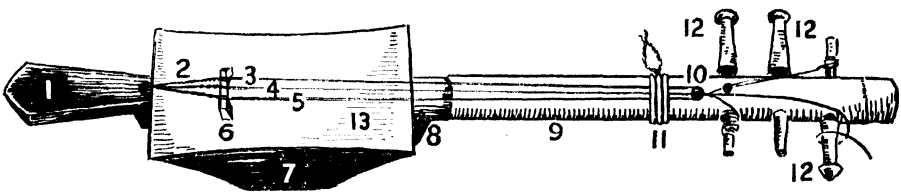


Fig. 5. *The Raj-Nengi Bana.* 1. *Khandia* (*khanda*: shoulder), the part held against the shoulder 2. *Jodhan*, the cords which attach the strings to the Bana 3. *Timme* 4. *Manjha* 5. *Dhodha*—the three strings 6. *Ghori*, the 'mare' on which the strings mount 7. *Khol*, the 'hollow' or resonator 8. *Langur* 9. *Siwa*, the neck of the Bana 10. *Bodri*, the 'navel', a peg through which the strings pass 11. *Kardhan*, the 'belt', a cord which is used to depress the strings 12. *Birra*, the tuning-pegs 13. *Chhawni*, the 'tent', the hide cover of the resonator.

Budhan Sai cut wood from the *koeli khamar* tree, put a goat's skin over it, made a string from the tail of a cow, and played it with a bow made of the wood from the *surteli* tree. He tried to play but without success. He gave the Bana to his second brother, and the second brother also failed to play it, and so gave it to the third brother, and thus each brother gave it to the next until the youngest brother got it and played it without difficulty. When he heard the music Bara Pen came upon him. Then all the brothers gave presents to the youngest brother. Budhan Sai gave him an elephant, the second brother gave him a horse, the third brother gave him a cow, the fourth a bullock, the fifth a buffalo, and the rest gave him seed and money.

The youngest brother said, 'Why are you giving me all this?' 'Because your fate is very good', they said, 'Bara Pen is pleased with you and we are all happy.'

Every part of the Bana is carefully described and named, and the use of special materials is prescribed for each part.

The body of the Bana is made of the soft white wood of *Trewia nudiflora,* Linn., a tree which is often used for drums and carved images. The Pardhans distinguish two species of this tree, the *koeli khamar* and the *aranda khamar* (this may be *Gmelina arborea,* Linn.) which is not unlike the *Trewia.* The *koeli khamar* is used because 'it is smooth and talks as sweetly as a parrot. It cries *parbate parbate*'.

The *ghori* or bridge is made of *ghotar* wood. The *birra* or peg should be of *Acacia catechu,* Willd.

The wood of the bow is of the *surteli* tree. The horse-hair strings are kept in place with the foul-smelling resin of the *mali* tree, the idea being that the smell will frighten away any ghost or evil spirit.

The three strings of the Bana are named *Dhoda, Manjha,* and *Timme* and each is attached to a separate peg. The *Timme* scale is regarded as the sweetest. The other two have 'to mix themselves with the *Timme,* for it is the intelligence of the three strings'.

The bow is the fiddle's bridegroom. 'As when a man rides his love, there is sweet music, so when the bow climbs on the Bana our ears are filled with beauty.' The *Timme* string is sometimes called *Budhu,* 'wise', for it talks gravely and gives men wisdom.

It is said that on the day that the wonderful new music was made for the first time in the house of the Gond brothers, the Pardhan was shy at the beginning. But he played so divinely that the Three Worlds were enchanted and even Narayan Deo stood watching in amazement. Then the Pardhan went mad and forgot his shyness: he danced ecstatically with his Bana and produced sounds never heard in the world before. On that day three new Pars, sounds or combinations of sounds, were created —Sarseti Par, Narayan Par and Pujwan Par. The first and third of these are not played at ordinary ceremonies but at the Laru Kaj. The Narayan Par is usually avoided, especially inside a house, for fear of attracting Narayan Deo to the place. But it is played before any other Par at the time of asking for Dan.

There are a number of other Pars. Early in the morning when the Dasondi sits for Dan he begins it by Narayan Par. Then

follow Dan Par, Muar Dan Par, Raja Karandania Par. In the evening at the time of entertaining the Gonds he starts with Sarseti Par. Then he plays Gana Par, Slok Par and as the story goes on he changes the Pars to Kalapna Par, that is, weeping or mourning Par. Then there are also Galli Rengeka Par or the Par which produces the noise of the feet of someone walking, then Dawadna Par and Ladhai Par or War Par, Milan Par or Par of meeting, Jhumri Par or Dancing Par, Gumti Par and Hardi Par, which are used when the story describes a wedding.

Every year a little ceremony called Gajdan is held in honour of the Bana and Bara Pen. A red hen is sacrificed by having the bow of the Bana pressed against its throat. Every third year a brown goat is substituted for the hen, and the Dasondi invites his sisters or daughters to the feast. They have the privilege of demanding presents in Neng during the ceremony. The Bana is hung on a bamboo erected in the yard, and 'Bara Pen lives there for a night and a day.'

The Gajdan is believed to protect the Dasondi during his tours. 'It keeps away diseases and it saves us from the Hindu gods who are always jealously trying to injure the throat of the Pardhan singer and spoil the music of the Bana. The Gajdan helps the Gond gods to triumph over the Hindu gods.'

There are a number of rules, which must be strictly kept, about the use of the Bana. The Pardhan is not allowed to take it to anybody's house or play it anywhere except for a Gond. On several occasions when I have asked even my closest Pardhan friends to come to my house and play for me, they have refused. I have had to go to their own houses and listen. The Bana actually belongs to the Gond and if he asks a Pardhan to play it, he must obey. The Bana must always be kept in a cloth bag and in the main part of the house where the household gods live. Every Dassera it is worshipped with a red cock or black chicken. Once in every four or five years it is given a brown goat.

A very old Bana is believed to have great and powerful gods living in it. It serves as a sort of divining-rod. When some Thakur of the owner dies, the tuning-peg gets loose and the instrument makes a sound—*khinn*—three times as a sign that someone connected with it has died. Similarly, if a Bana does not play well and respond properly to his touch the Pardhan

knows there is going to be no Dan in the house he is visiting.

In the old days a Pardhan would not salute even a Brahmin if a Bana was hanging from his shoulder. He would first put it down somewhere and then greet him. 'For he could not bend his head to anyone while Thakurdeo was on his shoulder.'

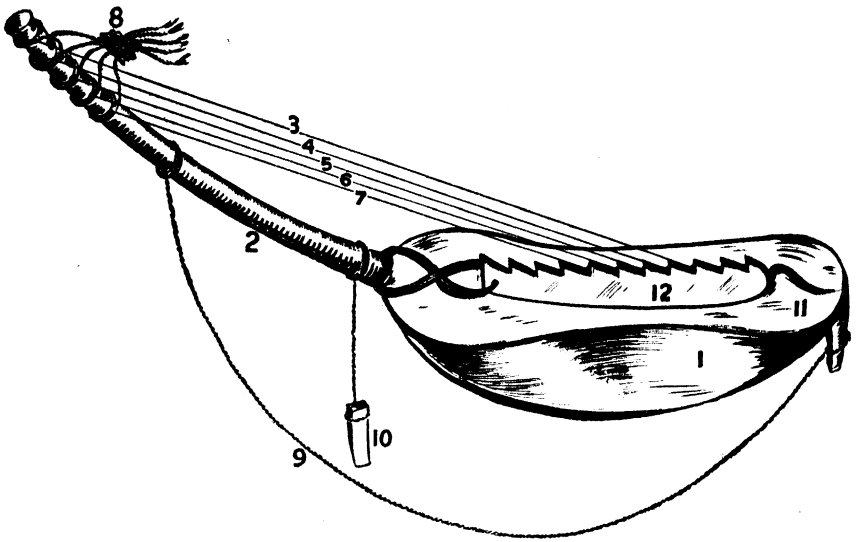


Fig. 6. *The Gogia Bana.* 1. *Kothi,* the 'bin' or resonator 2. *Danda,* the neck of the Bana 3. *Roda* 4. *Dhodha* 5. *Manjha* 6. *Timme* 7. *Chhote*—the five strings 8. *Noi,* a 'cow's tethering-cord', here used to tie the strings in place 9. *Janewa,* the sacred thread, with which the instrument is carried 10. *Khuti,* a peg of castor wood, the plectrum with which the strings are plucked 11. *Chhawni,* the hide cover of the resonator 12. *Danda,* the projection of the neck into the body

I have already described the origin of the Gogia Bana, how it is supposed to have been made originally from a half-burnt piece of wood which the ghost of a dead man threw as Dan to a Dasondi. The Gogia Bana differs in many ways from the Rajnengi Bana. It is longer and has a hollow sounding-board. Its five strings are played not with a bow but with a small plucking instrument. It is undecorated and for this reason the Gogias call it *marad baja* in distinction from the Rajnengi Bana which is called *tiriya bana.* The Gogia fiddle is a man but the Rajnengi fiddle is a woman, beautiful and decorated like a woman and specially enchanting to the female section of its audience.

But the Rajnengis get very annoyed if any one calls the Gogia fiddle a Bana. They themselves call it *kiddim baja, guggum* and

mara luwathi ke ben baja. Some of the Gogias seem to be rather ashamed of it and therefore cover themselves completely with a cloth when they play it. The others laugh at them saying that they can only produce a single note, *dhunung-dhunung.* But the other Gogias are proud of the old instrument. Thani of Jhanki, for example, has never given up his *ben baja.* Once he went to Jhingatpur on a Mangteri tour. As he was playing and singing in the evening one of the visitors said to the Thakur, 'We don't let our Pardhan play on an instrument like this. He always used the other kind'. The Thakur was annoyed with Thani and said, 'O Pathari (a form of expression which always annoys the Pardhans), if you ever bring this fiddle, which does nothing but make a wretched *dhunung-dhunung,* to my house again I will hit you five times with my shoe'. Thani was naturally hurt at this, for he considered it an insult both to his Bana and himself and he never visited this Thakur again. As a result it is said the Thakur who was formerly a rich man is now very poor. 'He often sends for me', says Thani, 'but I can never make up my mind to go.'[1]

There is a story that once a Gogia and a Rajnengi quarrelled about the merits of their respective Banas. 'Let us put them both in water', said one of them, 'and the Bana which will continue to sound sweetly even when sopping wet, will be the greater.' They put the two instruments into the well and when they took them out, the Rajnengi's Bana was dumb, but the Gogia's Bana continued to sound *kiddim-kiddim.* It was accordingly settled that the Gogias had the greater Bana, but the Rajnengis the higher social position.

So sensitive is the Rajnengi about his Bana that even if he is called 'Bajadar' he feels insulted. 'There are many such Bajadars', he says, 'who make a living by playing on musical instruments before all and sundry.' The Pardhans like to be called Banadhari, just as Krishna is called Muralidhari, the bearer of the flute.

[1] Russell and Hiralal say that 'the distinctive instrument' of the Pardhans is the *kingri,* or 'rude wooden lyre', consisting of a stick passed through a gourd. 'A string or wire is stretched over this and the instrument is played with the fingers. Another kind possesses three strings of woven horse-hair and is played with the help of the bow'. —op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 357. Trench says that the guitar used by the Pardhans in Betul is called *jantar* there. The bridge is known as *jobna,* the peg is *siwla* and the gourd resonator is *purka.* Trench, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 91, 93, 123 and 129.

VIII. Pardhan Humour

Pardhan humour is usually very coarse, and the reason given is that the Gonds are so stupid that unless a joke is very broad they can never see it. 'Unless we make him laugh how will the Thakur ever give us any Dan, or sit and listen to our songs?' But obscenity is far from being all there is in Pardhan humour.



Fig. 7. Maradlangha the Kotwar

The Pardhans are very quick and witty in their replies. Once I asked Dani, 'Why don't you eat something sweet after your meal?' 'I am afraid ants will get at my stomach.'

Another time I said, 'You know milk is extremely good for you yourself and even more for your children.' 'My father,' he replied, 'did keep buffaloes but he soon gave up the struggle. He always used to say, "It is better to go without milk than to be a slave to a buffalo." When you buy a buffalo you say to yourself, "I am buying a buffalo." But the buffalo says to herself, "I am getting a servant."'

There is often an element of fantasy in the things Pardhans consider funny. Once I said to Dani, 'Why are you so frightened of evil spirits? Look at us: we never let them bother our minds.' He said, 'O no. If you stay long enough with us you will soon get more afraid of them than we are. We at least believe in our Gunias and don't do such stupid things as the Mussalman did who served a Gond Malguzar for many years.' And he went on to tell me two absurd stories of that servant. 'One

day the Malguzar asked him to get wood from the jungle in his cart. As he was coming back from the jungle with his cart fully loaded the wheels began to creak loudly, for the oil had dried and the noise was so great in the silent jungle that the man began to be afraid. He was soon convinced that the creaking was due to some evil spirit getting into the wheel and so he hastily struck a match and set fire to the cart and ran for his life to his master and told him what had happened. On another occasion his master sent him to the nearest bazaar with sweet



Fig. 8. Dalpat Sai and Kari Rani. Pardhan wall-decoration

oil to sell. It had just been pressed and the earthen pot was hot. As the Mussalman went along he began to find that the pot was getting hotter at every step. So he put it down on the ground and peeped inside whereupon he was frightened to see his own image in the oil. He was convinced that the Malguzar's evil spirit had followed him and hastily picking up a stone smashed the pot to pieces.'

Pardhans are fond of playing practical jokes especially on strangers. Once a stranger was going hurriedly through a field when a Pardhan girl called him to her. She was alone and he looked all round and seeing nobody about, he went towards her. As he reached her she suddenly began to cry out for help. Within a minute or two some men arrived with sticks and the stranger was frightened out of his wits, thinking he would be arrested for rape. But when they came up, all she said was, 'There, there it has just gone into that hole', and declared that she had been frightened of a snake.

The Pardhans have the power to laugh at themselves. Once a Pardhan compared the tribe to vultures—'We hate work as a vulture does. It loves flying and wandering in the sky. Then it suddenly finds something dying on the earth and comes down in a second and sits near watching it die. Even after the creature is dead the vulture sits patiently waiting to see if a pie-dog will come and remove the skin and make it ready to eat. We too eagerly ask if our Thakur is ill or dead for we are always in need of a bullock or a cow.'

Richest in humour is the characterization of the Bana songs. The most humorous character in these is Mahangu. He is thin, without any teeth and perpetually drunk. He is very popular amongst his own women, but he does not care for them and falls madly in love with a low caste woman, a Ganda, the wife of the Kotwar Maradlangha, another ridiculous character. To revenge himself on Mahangu, Maradlangha seduces Mahangu's wife but Mahangu does not mind this. So at last Maradlangha hides in the pit where they weave their cloth. He has heard that it is here that lovers make love to each other. He has a knife in his hand and when Mahangu comes in he castrates him and thus punishes husband and wife together.

There are many absurd incidents in Mahangu's life. One day he goes on a journey. His wife instructs him that he should stop at the first house he reaches immediately after the sun goes down and go inside without notice. He will, she says, be received with open arms. The first evening the sun sets as he is approaching his mother-in-law's house and he goes in only to find his mother-in-law picking out her pubic hairs one by one with the help of ashes. She does not notice him and after watching the operation for a few seconds he goes out for a time and

then makes a noise to indicate his arrival. This is very tactful, but when the woman asks him when he came he says, 'Just when you had pulled out the first.'

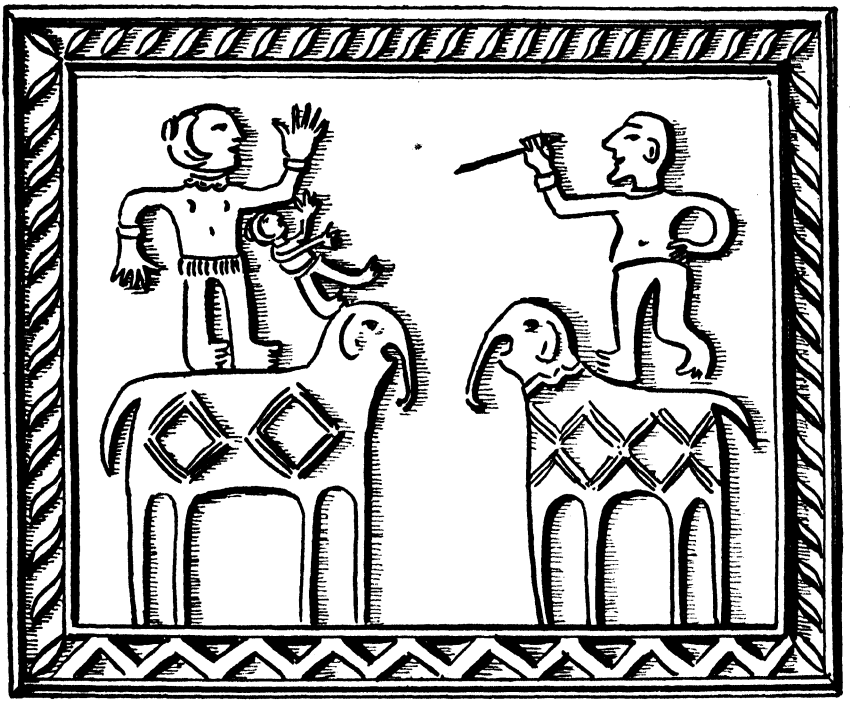


Fig. 9. Hirakhan Kshattri, Shriyal Jango and Dhiro. Pardhan wall-decoration

When the Raja orders his people to get ready to go to battle every one is ready on their horses but Mahangu comes on a hyena which he gets by some *mantra* from its lair.

At the marriage of Kamal Hiro all the young men go to the jungle to fetch wood for the marriage-booth and the Mangrohi. Young girls of the village usually give specially-made bread called Sohari to their lovers to eat after they have cut the wood and have come back tired. Mahangu takes charge of all the food and sends the young men off to cut the wood. While they are doing this, Mahangu eats everything and then drives a herd of buffaloes over the baskets and begins to shout for help. When the men come back he shows how the buffaloes have eaten everything and so no one is angry. But Mahangu develops acute

indigestion and cannot move an inch. He tells the party that he is attacked by some demon and will have to be carried home on a litter. The men pick him up but the constant movement of the litter makes him relieve himself over the carriers and they drop him on the ground, at last realizing what is the matter with him.

There is another humorous character called Lal Bijagar. If there was anything the villagers could not understand or account for they would at once ask him and he would always have an explanation for it. They did not know what an elephant was. Once one passed a village at night and next day the villagers saw its foot-marks and were intrigued. 'A deer had tied four grindstones to its feet and passed this way last night.'

Once a villager found a fish-hook. No one had seen it before but Lal Bijagar at once said, 'It is a sickle's baby.'

There is nothing very subtle in all this, but it is good clowning, and the knockabout humour of the Dasondi well suits the occasions and themes of the Mangteri tours.

IX. The Bana Songs

The epic songs recited by the Pardhans fall into two classes —Gondwani and Pandawani. The first describes the adventures and the glory of the great Gond Rajas and particularly those of the splendid family to which Marakhan and Hirakhan belong. To every Pardhan the members of this family, whose genealogy is printed on the following page, are as familiar as their own relations. A number of stories about them have been translated in prose in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* and one version of the Hirakhan epic in verse in *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills.* I give here two examples of the Gondwani songs and one Pandawani : the latter is an astonishing variant of the usual stories from the *Ramayana.*

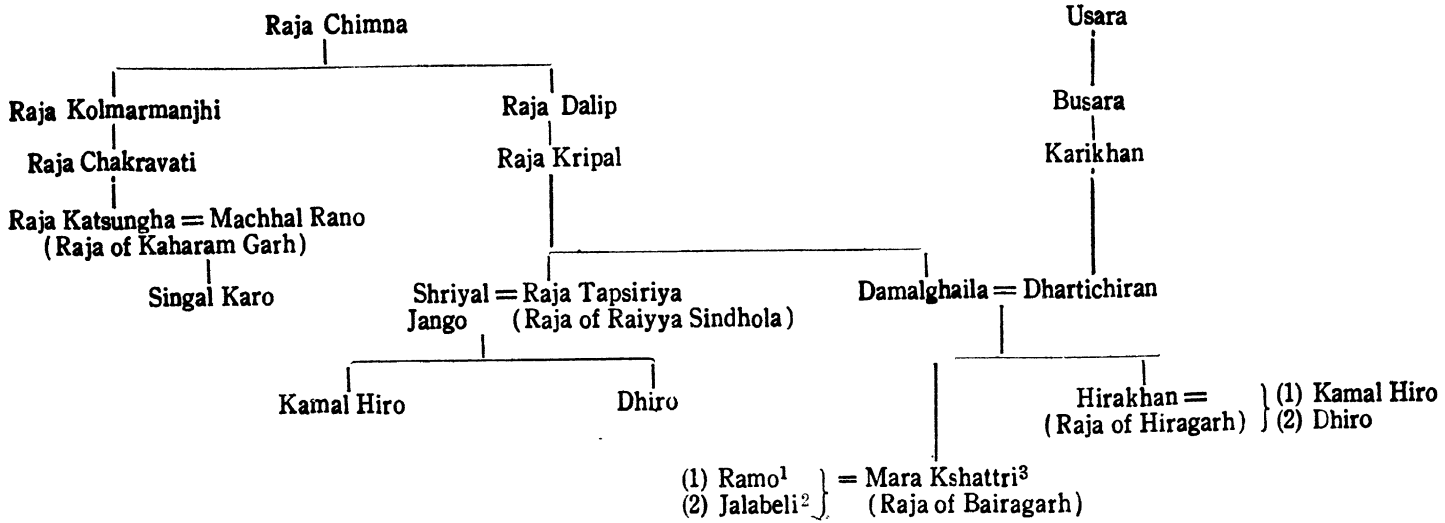
X. The History of Dalpat Sai

Dalpat Sai had seven sons, Budhan Sai, Prem Sai, Pupul Sai, Semnarayan, Birnarayan, Malko and Jhellia.

He had one daughter too, Kulwantin.

Budhan Sai's son was Nijan Sai and Prem Sai's son was Hirde Sai ;

GENEALOGY OF THE LEGENDARY GOND RAJAS



[1] Ramo: daughter of Kuhamanchha, Raja of Chandagarh, and Machhal Rano.

[2] Jalabeli: daughter of Raja Todemancha.

[3] Mara Kshattri is not to be confused with Chechan Siri Mara Kshattri, son of Raja Chechaniya, Raja of Cheopara, Bhagatola and Batukatola.

Pupul Sai's son was Durg Sai, Semnarayan's son was Sabal Sai.
Birnarayan had a daughter; her name was Kagalmoti.
These ruled in Garha-Mandla; these were great warriors.

The god of their ancestors, Bara Pen, they forgot;
Bara Pen was angry; he left their kingdom.
His shrine collapsed; he went to Chandagarh.
When he went away there died a hundred lakhs of cows,
A dozen lakhs of buffaloes;
Of dead elephants and horses there was no account;
The royal food and wealth turned into mud.
In the old palace the grass grew tall,
Owls nested in the walls, there were scorpions under stones.
The family of Dalpat Sai had not even *pej* to eat.

The family of Dalpat Sai went to beg from their own subjects.
At first their people fed them with pleasure;
They were glad to feed the children of their Raja.
But there were too many; they could not feed them always.
They gave them five ploughs and five pairs of bullocks.
But these too died, and soon anyone who fed the family of Dalpat Sai
Themselves began to suffer, for Bara Pen was angry.
So now when they came to beg, the people shut their doors.

One day Dalpat Sai said to his sons, 'My sons,
Here we are very hungry; go and borrow from your sister.
She has married the Raja of Bichhaigarh; she will give us something.'
But when Semnarayan and Birnarayan, the boys with old silk turbans,
With tufts of cock-feathers in their hair and belts of many cowries,
Handsome as young deer on a lonely hill, proud as untamed tigers,
Reached Bichhaigarh, their sister saw them and shut the palace doors.
The boys were very angry and went and told their father.

'What can we do, my sons?' he said. 'I am too old now to work.
You must go and make a living.' The boys went to their mother.
They were handsome as young deer and proud as untamed tigers.
They went to Kari Rani, their black and bent old mother.
'Mother, what are we to do? Every day we go hungry.
We lie awake for hunger; we forget our ancient kingdom.'
Kari Rani got up; her breasts were like broken shoes,
Her eyes were full of dirt and pus; she mumbled through her teeth.
But she saw her young deer and her heart was full of pride.
'My children, poor people live on the roots in the forest.
They find fruit and seeds. Let us go to our own forest.'

They went, the royal family of the great Dalpat Sai,
The Raja went ahead and the Rani went behind.
In between were the drummers and the men with decorated staffs.
They came to the sweet forest, the forest full of honey,
Kajliban Kachhar, where the gods and spirits live.
They made their camp by the sweetly-flowing stream Tilonja.
They were very weary, they lay down on their backs.
When they looked into the sky they saw the trees above them.
There was *sihar* seed and the fruit of the *katinar*.
The boys were very hungry, they soon climbed the trees;
They threw down the seed and fruit, their mother broke the nuts.
Prem Sai said, 'Perhaps this is what the gods wish us to eat.
It is tasty to the tongue; let us take it back home.'

They collected what they could, they tied the seed in bundles;
They took it all home and filled their bins with seed.
They shook the bins and pressed them, they filled them to the brim.
Every day they ate three handfuls of *sihar* seed,
Two handfuls of *katinar* fruit; they mixed it up with *mahua*.
Eating eating the wild fruit, the children grew fat.
The subjects of Dalpat Sai looked on in wonder.
They were eating pulse and rice, ghee and curds and buttermilk,
Yet they were not so fat and rosy as the children of the palace.

But Dalpat Sai had nothing to send to Aurangzeb.
The Emperor grew anxious. 'What has come to Garha-Mandla?'
He sent his Subha there and his Abhilamudh, his Durkhan,
His Abibahadur, his Tej Bahadur, his Pankul Multan.
When they came to the palace, they pushed their way through grass,
The owls hooted from the walls, the scorpions came out from the stones,
Snakes ran across the path, a jackal howled near by.
Thorns stuck in their rich garments and the spear-grass caught their beards.
When they reached the palace doors their beards were full of spear-grass.
They sat down and removed it as a mother takes lice from her son's hair.

Budhan Sai saw them coming, he saw the tall Mussalmans;
He saw them push their way through the ever-growing grass;
He heard the owls hoot and saw the snakes across the path;
He told his children to run to fetch cots and wooden seats.
He must do the Mussalmans honour, he sent for cots and seats.
They searched through the palace, but all they found was one old cot,
On which Kari Rani lay long ago when she had a monthly period
And must sleep outside the palace. Now the stream was dry.
The Mussalmans sat down and their bottoms touched the floor.
The wooden seats were broken, Tej Bahadur fell through the cot.
When they stood up the seats stuck to their fleshy bottoms.

Dalpat Sai told the Sirdars about his great poverty,
How his sons ate *sihar* seeds, how his subjects shut their doors.
The Sirdars felt very sorry but they said, 'At least give us something.
We too are very hungry. We have not eaten since we left Delhi'.
Kari Rani hobbled out with a leaf-cup of *mahua* paste:
The Sirdars ate it and were pleased. Dalpat Sai sent for rice.
A man came with a sack; the Sirdars thought it gold.
They were all very pleased until they saw the rice.
But when Kari Rani cooked it they felt happy again.

The Sirdars were very sorry; they made good report,
They went back to Delhi, they told Aurangzeb.
He too was very sorry. 'I had heard that Garha-Mandla was wealthy.
I thought we would get gold and silver.'
Aurangzeb sent Dalpat Sai many bullocks; he charged one rupee a bullock,
He sent cows at eight annas and buffaloes at two rupees.
He sent twenty-five measures of rice, twenty measures of *kodon*,
Fifteen measures of *kutki*, ten measures of sesamum,
And some bags, that no one counted, of *urid* pulse.
Tej Bahadur took some of it, Khan Bahadur took some,
The rest came to Mandla in the Emperor's own carts.
The cartmen asked for money, but Dalpat Sai rebuked them.
'I will have your Pathan mothers, but you get no money here.'

When the grain came to the palace, Kari Rani said, 'We must worship.
Do not put it in the bins at once. There are strange gods here'.
They sent for Nanga Baiga and he sacrificed a cock.
Then they put the grain into the bins, the rats ran for their lives.
There was a long argument: 'Shall we eat the grain or sow it?'
Kari Rani sent her sons to a field where two cranes lived.
The cranes loved one another; they were never seen apart.
The sons sowed the grain; they soon were rich again.

Now the subjects were afraid; they saw the Emperor's favour.
They sent their sons to plough and harrow; they sent their girls to weed.
One day when Dalpat Sai's daughter-in-law took food to the fields
And the hungry farmers clamoured for it, she served them on leaf-platters.
There was a stone in the field; her brass anklet touched it.
It turned into gold. Dalpat Sai saw it.
'This girl has been unfaithful; she has been to a youth.
Her organ is five fingers broad; a buffalo could roll in it.'
He told his son to take her and kill her in the jungle.
But she swore she was chaste. 'I have never been unfaithful.

On my child's head I swear it; I will drink his blood and yours.'
Her husband said, 'Will you draw from the well a heavy bucket
With a single thread of cotton?' The girl said, 'I will do so'.
She was taken to a well; she drew up the heavy bucket.
The single thread stayed firm, for the girl was pure as gold.

They went home through the field; her other anklet touched the stone.
It turned into gold. Dalpat Sai saw it and was ashamed.
He fell at the girl's feet; he begged her to forgive him.
They picked up the stone and with care they took it home.
That very night Bara Pen, the old god of his family,
Came to Dalpat Sai as he lay on his bed of withered leaves.
Dalpat Sai promised that on the morrow he would do the god honour.
The next day they had a great sacrifice and Bara Pen was pleased.

Dalpat Sai grew very rich. He gave Kari Rani a gold sari;
He clothed her breasts in golden shoes; her pubic cloth was silk.
Then one day Aurangzeb got suspicious and anxious.
He sent Nangarao from Delhi disguised as a sadhu.
Prem Sai told the guards to kill him, but Hirde Sai said no.
He took him to the house and received him with all honour.
Kari Rani saw the sadhu. She boasted of her wealth.
She asked him for a child. The withered tree desired fruit.
But she boasted of their wealth and the man told Aurangzeb.
When Nangarao was going he put on a coat of mail.
Kari Rani brought the stone and turned it into gold.
When the Emperor saw it he desired the magic stone.

He called Hirde Sai to Delhi and trapped the young boy.
He put him in a deep trench and told him
That without the magic stone he would never see Mandla again.
Hirde Sai had to sleep on spears, the trench was full of rats.
He was dragged through Delhi tied to the foot of an elephant.
He removed his famous armour, the armour of a Gond Kshattri.
But Bara Pen was with him; the boy suffered but survived.
Bara Pen called the rats from the Kajliban forest.
They made a hole from the trench into the Emperor's palace.

They made a hole into the room of the Emperor's darling daughter ;
They made a passage all the way from Delhi to Garha-Mandla.

Bara Pen said to Hirde Sai, 'Come, let us go home'.
'Without Chimnadai, the daughter of the Emperor,
I will not go home.' The rats had made a passage.
Hirde Sai went into the chamber, he stood by her bed.
He saw the sleeping mangoes, he dived into the well of gold.
She became a Gond to please him ; they ate pork together.
He made her drunk on *mahua* spirit ; they laughed and talked together.
The guards heard it, but they fled together down the passage.
Long miles they went to Mandla. But the Gonds did not like Chimnadai.

Aurangzeb's son was in a rage ; he said he would destroy Mandla
Unless the Raja sent his daughter to be married in exchange.
When Dalpat Sai heard it he laughed and said in anger,
'I will have their Pathan mothers' and he and Kari made a plot.
They found a pretty sow ; they put *dhar* in its ears ;
They tied its hair with *phundara*, they put a *sutia* round its neck ;
They dressed it up in silk and gold ; they put it in a decorated palanquin ;
With a score of Dhimars they sent it, they sent it to Delhi.

Aurangzeb's son was pleased. 'These Gonds know their duty.
They have taken my sister, but they have sent a girl in exchange.'
The Dhimar porters told him how beautiful she was,
'She must not be seen by daylight or she would dazzle his eyes'.
They kept him waiting anxiously and they all ran away.
The son of Aurangzeb called his mother and the sisters of his mother.
They opened the palanquin and there was the pig.[1]

[1] This incident may be a distorted echo of an actual event. During the reign of Surja Ballal Singh, the Gond Raja of Chanda, war broke out between the Emperor of Delhi and the Rajput chief of Kaibur who refused to send his daughter, who was of great beauty, to the Imperial Court. Surja was sent to subdue the fort at Kaibur and when he had done so and killed the chief, the princess and her daughter begged him to save them. Surja took them to Delhi, but dressed the girl as a boy and declared her to be his own son. The Emperor received them with honour and, seeing the pretended prince, said, 'Come in, dear child' and seated her on his knee ;

Aurangzeb could not forget it, everyone was laughing.
He sent his army, five lakhs of elephants, and of horses there was no account.
The army conquered Garha-Mandla. There was no one left.
Kari Rani's tree was dead, there was not a son left.

XI. The History of Hirakhan Kshattri

Hirakhan Kshattri lived by the strength of his sword and the help of his Mokasi.
He did not pay taxes like other men, but he gave five cowries for five ploughs.
Of a thousand Rajas he cut off the heads and destroyed a hundred witches.
He outraged many a great Gond landlord and took away his wife.



Fig. 10. Kamal Hiro the maiden

It was written, the whole story, in the head-dress of his horse.

Riding riding Hirakhan went to Lahi Lankar
Where the bazaar was great as fifty-two bazaars.
To that bazaar came the daughter of Sirape Sariha and Banbari,
The sister of Padam Siri, Kamal Hiro the maiden.
She was still a child and went with breasts uncovered;
She had not yet washed her head.

---

then turning to Surja he asked, 'Where is the fruit of your victory?' Surja replied, 'Your Majesty holds her in your lap, and as you have called her your dear child, she can be nothing else to you'. The Emperor was chagrined at the strategem but did not withdraw his favour from the Gond Raja. See L. F. Begbie, *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 41.

After she had lived many years with Hirakhan, she said to him one day,
'I have had no harm from my mother-in-law, nor yet from your younger sister;
It is only your *bhauji* who is always tormenting me;
Her foot is always on my bottom, she pounds me with her hands;
With a long rice-husker she tries to break me up.
So take me to my mother's house and let me live there'.

Said Hirakhan, 'Listen to me, my Rani.
If I had brought you after marriage I would take you to your house.
But there was no *chitta* broken nor was bride-price paid.
For your father is our enemy and his house is a foeman's camp.
It is full of dangerous weapons, his fort is like a mountain.
With guns and swords are his houses roofed, bayonets support the beams;
The pillars are of silver, the main pillar is of gold.
To hide its cruelty everything is covered with soft peacock feathers.
The day we stole you, the rope of our friendship broke.
Your father's Naitam army chased us on their horses.
The Sonwanis spread the news, there came Gonds from all the kingdom.
Marabis came and Sonwanis, Naitams, Markams, Chhadaiha Sonwanis,
Partetis smoothing their moustaches with blood:
They came from every place, but your father did not find his daughter.
Instead your father, that great Raja of Sindhola,
Went to fight in Bara Bathi Bengala, yet in all these years
He has not yet even broken into the Chamar quarter of the fort.'

But Hiro took no notice. 'Today we fast before the feast;
Tomorrow we eat the new grain and on the third day we will go.'
'Very well,' said Hirakhan. 'Prepare food for your brothers and your brothers' sons.'
Hiro the maiden got ready. She put on sumptuous clothes,
Tying them in old Gond fashion, her cloth of gold and silver.

She brought out the *jhapi* basket where she kept her ornaments.
There were the silver bangles that went round her wrists as tightly
As a jacket hugs the breasts. For her arms were *baju-bandh.*
For her back there was a *gajara.* For each toe were toe-rings,
For her fingers rings of diamond, there were shining bangles.
Her cloth shone like fire; her *phundara* was like the waves of a lake.
Her *phundara* was many-coloured as a rainbow.
She stood clothed and decorated like lightning before the mirror,
To make the parting of her hair and put the mark on her forehead.
When she had finished dressing she peeped out of her door
To see if her Raja was watching, then she paced up and down,
Smiling, laughing, happy, the girl paced up and down.
'He is taking me to my mother's house. After thirteen years I go.
O mother, don't be angry because he took me from you.
Now he is my lord and master; you must love him as your son.'

Hirakhan came to her. 'O Gondin, make bread ready.
Make Lankar Sai *laddu* and *bhajia* of five seer each.
Make *tethari* large as the yoke of a plough, *khurimi* like a pestle,
Chila large as cart-wheels, *barra* like a lotus leaf, *muthia* big as the Teli's oil-press,
Barri like a husking-machine. You must take your people presents;
You have not met for thirteen years, you must take your people presents.'

Now the Kshattri too gets ready. His cloth is a tiger's skin.
His hat is of elephant-hide, his scarf of crocodile,
His carpet is of fish-scales, hide of an antelope is round his shoulders.
For fire to warm him on the journey he takes a load of bones,
Deer bones and pig's bones, to warm him on the way.
His face shines like the sun and its light shines on his weapons;

With his goad he can impale a fly going through the air.
His axe is curved like the new moon, he has another axe to kill tigers,
His sword which can kill elephants at a single blow, his spear;
Every weapon had taken blood, there was nothing that had not killed.
When he put them on the elephant it could scarcely walk beneath its weight.
At his waist he had a knife so sharp that even friends were afraid;
If a fly settled on the blade it was cut in two.
When he took it out he never went home without giving it human blood to drink.
In his arrows were charms. There were great rings in his ears.
A magic stone hung from his shoulder. He had diamonds in his teeth.
Harder than iron was his body, not a tooth had ever broken;
Not a hair had been cut since childhood, he had a moustache when twelve years old.
Before he started he worshipped every god of every caste;
There was not one whom he despised and all came to his aid.
Even the gods of the Dhobis he remembered and the gods of the Chamars.
They dwelt in his great arrow; he took it in his hand.

Raja of Hiragarh, the Raja Hirakhan, mounted his horse.
On the horse's neck was a great bell, too heavy a load for twelve bullocks;
There were small bells hanging, enough for sixteen bullocks.
Every hair on its neck was woven through a separate pearl.
Its stable was large enough to cover the roofs of fifty houses.
Across its forehead stretched a golden *bindia*;
Its bridle was of silver, the saddle was a sambhar skin.
Twelve bottles of sweet palm-wine they gave it and sixteen bottles of brandy,
So it came dancing from the stable and took its master on its back.
Thus Raja Hirakhan started on his long journey and his wife walked behind.

When they left Hiragarh they came to the wood red with the Flame of the Forest,
But soon they were lost among dark heavy trees.
From time to time they caught a glimpse of the blue mountains
That they would have to climb. Beyond them lay
The mountain of enchantment Mohangiri, the ever-burning Ramdaki,
The stormy Suragiri, Katakarpi thick with thorns.

For a time the Rani walked with pleasure, though she often had to run.
But soon her loins began to ache and her calves grew stiff as wood.
Alas, my mother! Alas, my father! Save me for I die.
Fie on this maggot-eaten Gond! Woe is me that I ever fell into his clutches.
His heart is empty of mercy as a new hearth is free of ashes.
Beautiful feet like mine should be clad in shoes,
But this Gond full of every vice wears shoes to ride his horse.
Why should I not ride behind him; am I not his wife?
In our own palace, even though we are kings and queens,
You take stale food from me and do not feel ashamed.
O my master, let me ride behind you.'

'No, no, you Gondin, you may die, you daughter of Marabi!
You with curly tousled head, who will always give what others ask.
A woman's wit is in her nose. A woman promises and then betrays the man.
I will not take you on my horse with me.
O Gondin, know you not that when we go to hunt the barking-deer,
We tie *parsa* leaves to our feet to keep them cool?
If you wish to see your mother after thirteen years,
Tie leaves round your feet to guard them from the stones.
Soft to the feet are they as the soft leather of a deer.'

The Gondin left the path and picked a bunch of leaves;
She tied them round her feet and hid behind a tree.
Peeping round at her husband, she called him saying,

'Now, my lord, take me as far as you will today.
I will not now go back to Hiragarh'.

But when they started again the burning heat above
And the smart of the angry earth below her feet tormented her.
The soft leaves lasted but a hundred steps.
And again her tender feet were on the hard ground.
No longer could she bear it and she fell on her knees below the trees.
She was like a pig that a cruel man has beaten;
It falls low against the ground and drags its body
Trying to escape the blows, it drags itself along;
Or as a buffalo released from a cart which it has dragged under the sun
Runs to a little pond and wallows there to escape the heat:
So this girl dragged herself below the trees.

Now even Bara Pen could not endure the sight of Hiro's sorrow.
'Are you not ashamed, O Hirakhan, to cover your body with her soft cloth
At night and find your joy in her soft limbs?
All night you find them soft and take your pleasure,
But now before the world you must be a mighty warrior.
Take the girl up behind you. You ought to be ashamed.'
'Come, Rani, come and mount the horse and sit behind me.
No, I will myself dismount and hoist you up, for you are tired.'
The Rani stood behind the horse; it was like a hill before her.
'I will see the blue clear water of the clouds when I am on its back.'
The Raja put her on the horse and they rode on together.

Now the Kshattri let the horse go as it pleased
And soon they were in the forest of the demon Sur Dani.
His daughter Suri Danti lived on thirteen men a day.
When Hirakhan saw him they began to fight.
The Raja pierced the demon with every weapon that he had,
But not a drop of blood fell to the ground.
The Raja leapt upon his head and hit him with his spear,
But it had no effect. Long and hard was the fight.

Now Pilibai, the lovely daughter of the demon's enemy,
Dudi Dantarin, was watching. The Raja's movements as he fought,
Graceful and strong, roused passion in her heart.
But when she came near to save him she saw his lovely Rani
Sitting behind him on the horse and she was filled with rage.
She threw black and yellow rice at her and turned her into a marigold.
The flower fell to the ground and Pilibai put it in her hair.
Then by her magic she stopped the movements of the horse
And softly whispered to the Raja, 'Hit the Dano on his soft and tender buttocks.
Then he will bleed and lie flat on the ground.
But for this you must make love to me, for I have saved you'.

The Raja struck the demon on his soft and tender buttocks
And the blood poured out as if a little stream was flooded.
On the ground he lay unconscious. His daughter ran to him;
She brought sixteen cartloads of branches and tried to staunch the blood
But even then it would not stop.
Now Pilibai said to the Raja, 'You must make love to me'.
'I will come back and love you. But first let me take my wife
To her parents' house and leave her there.
If I love you in her presence she will hang herself and die.'

Pilibai loved him so much that she gave him back his marigold,
She let his horse go on for she believed he would return.
On and on through the great jungle and over the great mountains
Went the Kshattri and his Rani, across the stormy mountain,
The mountain of enchantment, the ever-burning rocks,
And at last they reached Sindhola.

There were women playing *kabbadi* and *khokho* in the streets at night;
They were fat and drunken-seeming, they were drunk with food and freedom.
For there was no man anywhere, for all had gone with the Raja,
All young and old had gone to fight in Bara Bathi Bengala.
The Rani held her daughter in her arms and took her to the Raja's quarters,

She sent her son-in-law where the palace women were.
He was given *mahua* bread and *koelar* vegetable to eat.
To the girl the best of rice was given and ten times distilled liquor.
'No mother, unless you love your son-in-law, then only will I eat here.
Else I will run away back to Hiragarh. You must feed him properly.'
The mother was overcome by her daughter's love for her husband.
She called her son-in-law and greeted him with open arms.
She gave him the finest food and liquor and they remained happily together.

Now that night when Hirakhan was alone with his Rani,
He said, 'Is this the Striya Raj ? I have not seen even one old man.'
'My Raja, they have all gone to hunt the barking-deer.
They will all return tomorrow.' So said Hiro falsely.
But the Raja knew the men had gone to war and his hands itched to fight.
He desired to please his father-in-law and so remove their enmity.
He said to Hiro, 'Bring me water in a pot.
I must go to relieve myself'. But the Rani read his mind.
She gave him the water but she followed him closely.

When he saw her following, the Raja called to Bara Pen,
Begging him to take his form and please his wife while he was away.
Bara Pen took the form of Raja Hirakhan and the Raja went away.
Bara Pen began to run ; sometimes he jumped like a monkey,
Sometimes he sprang through the air like a tiger,
And Hiro watched him wondering. But suddenly he disappeared
And in fright Hiro ran back to the palace.

Raja Hirakhan made a bow of castor wood and an arrow of a reed.
He saw a great cock feeding, it was a witch's cock.
He drew his bow and killed it, the cock leapt into the air,
It mounted the old woman ; she abused it with pleasure.
'Fie on you, dirty wanton. I have given you six wives,
They all make love to you, yet you would mount your mistress.'

She took it fondly in her hands, then saw there was no head.
'My poor poor cock,' the old witch cried. 'Who has killed my cock ?
May his ashes soon fly in the air, for when my master comes
In triumph home from Bara Bathi Bengala, he will surely kill me.'

Then from the fence the Kshattri came and the old witch abused him.
'If you are so great a warrior why not go to the war ?
Go to Bara Bathi Bengala and show your valour there.
Why do you hide among the women and kill my wretched cock ?'
'It was for that one reason that I shot your cock, old mother.
Tell me the way and I will go to fight and bring your husband home.'

The old witch was angry and did not want to tell him,
But she thought in her mind, 'If he is not killed in Bengala
He will certainly be destroyed on the way by Ghoghnath Baba.'
With trembling hand she showed the road and the Kshattri rode away.
Ghoghnath's hair was twelve *kos* long, it spread twelve *kos* around.
Hirakhan rode across it, his horse broke one of the hairs.
In rage the Baba turned them into stones, and Bara Pen was angry.
He rebuked Hirakhan, 'Did I not tell you to honour sages ?
Did I not bid you seek their blessings ? Now I must call all the gods.
I must bring them in their thousands to restore the broken hair.'

Bara Pen called the gods, they came crowding in their thousands.
They restored the broken hair and Ghoghnath was pleased.
He turned the stones to living creatures, Hirakhan rode on his way.

Riding riding, the Kshattri reached the camp of the Raja of Sindhola.
Hirakhan stood boldly before the Raja of Sindhola.
'You have not yet even conquered the quarter of the Chamars.
In one day I will destroy the fort, but first you must promise me,
In front of all your soldiers, that the command is in my hands.'
The Raja was astonished, he whispered to his Pardhan,

'Who is this youth?' and the Pardhan quietly answered,
'Maharaj, he is your father.' The Raja was filled with rage.
Mounting mounting, the red blood rose from his feet to his brow.
'I will cut out your tongue. How can he be my father?'

'No, Maharaj, do not be angry. This is your son-in-law,
This is Hirakhan who captured your virgin daughter long ago.'

When the Raja heard this, there was no boundary to his anger.
'Get my army ready, I will first fight with this robber.
He stole my virgin daughter, today I will destroy him.'
But the old wise Pardhan answered, 'This is your son-in-law.
If you kill him, you will make your young daughter a widow.
Let us arrest him first and then consider what to do.'

They took Hirakhan away, persuading him with words,
And the Pardhan sat with the Raja and considered what to do.
'Let him fight against Bengala, for who knows—he may defeat them.
If he loses he will die, but the sin will not be yours.
We can marry your widowed daughter to some great prince or Raja,
And your son Padum Siri can take his mighty horse.'

The cunning Raja pondered, he saw what they wanted.
He made his drummers beat the drums, the Gonds danced the Saila;
He called for Hirakhan and received him with all honour.
He gave him *pan* and *betel* and bade him go and fight.
Hirakhan was full of pride, he left the Raja's tent;
He sprang onto his mighty horse and rode towards the enemy.

On the way Bithal the Chamar and his Chamarin woman
Were going to the bazaar with a roll of hides to sell.
When they saw the Kshattri coming they thought it was Padum Siri.
'This impotent creature, this Padum Siri, never rode alone before.
But today he has come into our power, so let us kill him.
Then we two can ride to the bazaar on his noble horse.'

The Chamar and his wife picked up great logs of wood
And chased the gallant Kshattri. But when he saw them coming,
He said in his mind, 'If I use my hands to kill them,
I will be defiled, I must not use my hands.'
So he called on his own gods. 'Go Juretin and sit on one log of wood,
Go Jugti Mohini and sit on the other.' Thus he sent them.
The gods sat on the logs of wood and the Chamar began to quarrel;
He quarrelled with his wife and each beat the other,
Beating beating, they fought until both were dead.

Hirakhan rode on and found the Ahir with his cattle.
The Ahir picked up the cow-bones and threw them at the Kshattri.
But Hirakhan sent his Jugti Mohini and they filled the bones with anger.
The bones fought against each other, then began to beat the Ahir.
The Ahir ran away in terror to his house.

Hirakhan rode through the village, the oilmen attacked him;
The washerman came out and the liquor-vendor fought.
Hirakhan sent his Jugti Mohini and their minds were disturbed;
They fought in madness and ran away to save their lives.

At last Hirakhan reached the great Raja Raimunda.
But now the Jugti Mohini were afraid, they begged to be excused;
They could not fight the Raja, they asked for ten days' leave.
Hirakhan brought out his strength, it was the strength of twelve mountains;
He hurled his mighty weapons, but they rebounded uselessly.
If a drop of Raimunda's blood fell to the ground,
Another Raja was created and began to fight the Kshattri.
Then Raimunda turned into a cobra and came hissing towards him;
But Hirakhan became a mongoose and fought against the cobra.
Raimunda turned into a fish and hid beneath the water;
Hirakhan became an otter and chased him down the stream;
He caught the fish and brought it out of the deep water,
He brought it to the Dhobi's stone and beat it up and down.
The blood poured out, but Bara Pen caught it and received it.
Bara Pen protected him, the blood did not grow again.

Bara Pen let it fall into the river and cursed it,
'Go, you will live for ever as the *bichhulawa* fish.'

But the wife of Raja Raimunda was pregnant and gave birth to a son;
The child was furious to see his father turned into a fish.
With his placenta dangling from his navel, he rushed at Hirakhan;
He threw himself upon his chest and stuck there with his placenta.
The Kshattri tried to throw him off, but the child stuck to his body.
Hirakhan was afraid, he called on Bara Pen.
'You cannot kill the child like that. Take him to the potters' lane.
Throw the soft potters' earth on him and he will drop at your feet;
Then you can destroy him.' Thus spoke Bara Pen.

Hirakhan took the child clinging to his chest,
The placenta dragged behind them, the Kshattri was afraid.
They reached the potters' lane, Hirakhan took earth in handfuls;
He smothered Rai Hillo and the child was dead for ever.
He took the corpse to the stream and threw it in the water.

'Go and be a *khokhsi* fish.' As a fish Rai Hillo joined his father.
Thus Hirakhan destroyed the fort of Bara Bathi Bengala.
He conquered the Chamar quarter, the quarter of the oilmen,
He defeated the washermen and the vendors of strong liquor,
But when he conquered Raja Raimunda, the fort was wholly won.
Now he went back proud and happy to greet his father-in-law.

The Raja broke his tents and went into the fortress.
He marched around in triumph, the drums thundered in joy.
But Hirakhan was drenched in blood, he went down to the stream;
He washed his body of the blood, he began to clean his weapons.

Then came a cunning Behalia and whispered to the Raja.
'Now the world is singing, singing the praises of Hirakhan.
Your name is forgotten. Why not kill the Kshattri?'
The Raja thought, 'This man speaks truth; even my daughter will laugh at me.
If he dies I can marry her to some great prince or Raja.

Then she will respect me'. Then he spoke to the Bahelia,
'If you will kill him secretly, I will give a piece of gold.'

That wicked Bahelia hid behind a wild fig tree.
As Hirakhan was washing the blood from his weapons,
He shot at him and killed him. Bara Pen received his life.
In the stream the body lay motionless; Bara Pen received the life.
The great horse was mad with grief, it ran round and round in sorrow:
It did not let an ant go near, it was its master's guard.

Then the Raja led his army back to Sindhola.
As they went they sang Karma and Dadaria songs of victory;
When they reached Sindhola, goats and fowls were killed in every house.
It was a great festival, it was an offering to the gods.
But an old Malin's grandson said to his grandmother,
'Old mother, how can we eat meat when one of our clan has perished in the war?'
At that very time Kamal Hiro was going round and round,
Round and round to find her lord; she thought in her mind,
'He must be somewhere drinking. Or one of the Bengala girls
Has caught him with her love-charms and so he is coming slowly.'

'Daughter, do not be troubled. Your Kshattri is lord of the world.
Any Raja in the land will be your slave; you will be our Rani.'
But Hiro hated Padum Siri, Padum always drunk and lustful.
She took no notice of him and called all the magicians.
To the chief of the magicians Bara Pen revealed a name,
The name of the Malin's grandson; they called him and inquired.
He told them of the Kshattri's death and Hiro ran to the place.

She took a lamp round and round and the Ban Vidya came.
They settled on the lifeless corpse, it soon began to stir;
The Kshattri sat up and took his Hiro in his arms.

'My Raja, I will not go there, I will not enter the palace
Until I wash my hair in the blood of my drunken brother,
Padum Siri, the drunken, the lecherous, defiler of his kin.'

Hirakhan the Kshattri, Raja of the great Gondwana,
Lord of the buffalo herd who wielded mighty weapons,
Killed the lustful Padum Siri, satisfied his Rani,
Washed her hair in her brother's blood, and took her to the palace.
There he married Dhiro, Hiro's little sister.
They went back together and thus they lived and ate.

XII. The History of Lakshman and Machhandar Kaina

In a lonely temple lived the darling *dewar* Lakshman.
He never stood below a withered tree nor drank the water of a broken tank;
Into the koel-lovely face of woman he had never looked;
He never saw their bee-black hair or looked into their eyes.
Sleeping he lay on one side only and turned once in six months.
When he awoke he played on his *manmohan kindra*.

For twelve years he lived like this and then he longed to see his brother
And his fair *bhauji* Sita. He put on the sixteen decorations;
He gave food to his protectors—the monkey and the bear,
The tiger, snake and scorpion who watched him while he slept.
But when he offered sweets to his parrot in the golden cage,
Sweets of ghee and sugar made with spoonfuls of ghee,
The parrot said, 'Do not go brother, this is not an auspicious day'.
'O parrot, do not be jealous; I have not been for twelve years
To see my brother Rama and my fair *bhauji* Sita.'

Lakshman went one *kos*, he went two *kos*, he reached Jaidhapur;
Rama was in his palace and all the gods were present.
Lakshman sat with him and presently he said to his brother,
'I will go and see my *bhauji*'. 'Go, she is sitting with her friends.'
Sita was on her swing and a hundred thousand friends
Were with her and underneath the golden swing
Were twelve measures of powdered haldi, the swing was of pure gold.
When she saw her *dewar* coming Sita jumped down from her swing;

She took a golden pitcher and washed his lotus feet.
She brought him in and on a seat of sandal set him down.
'*Bhauji*, I have travelled far and my shrine is dark without me;
Cook food for me quickly and let me go again.

But I can only eat if you will make ready for me
A one-legged partridge and a goat without a head,
Milk from the udders of a fly, and rice and pulse
Cooked in a single pot, separating as you serve it.
Without clouds there must be shade; bring the food on a blind horse.'

Sita wandered up and down, her mind was full of sorrow.
How could she please her *dewar*? She could not solve his riddle.
But an old Malin came and told her the answer.
'Is not a brinjal a legless partridge? Is not fly's milk honey?
Is not a gourd a headless goat? Put a partition in the pot.
Come wearing shoes to serve him: then you ride on a blind horse.'
Sita laughed and made the dinner, she took it to her *dewar*.
As he ate she fanned him with the end of her cloth.
She told him of her dream. 'I saw you fighting with a Raja,
The lord of Kalsapur, and you won Machhandar Kaina.'

When Lakshman heard this, the peacock spread its tail,
The parrot lifted its red beak, the maina opened its wings.
'I must see if this dream is true.' He went back to his temple.
He fed his dear protectors, he set out for Kalsapur.

Between the golden pillars swung the maiden to and fro;
A shaft of fire impaled her. 'I have sent him to his death.'
Love filled her heart of gold, it possessed her limbs of silver.
'I must save him if I can.' Secretly she left the palace.
She ran ahead to stop him; she came to a cross-roads.
She became a vixen with a little cub.
When Lakshman approached, she left the blind cub on the ground.
His was a god's pity; he picked it up and chased her.
She let him catch her; he took the vixen's udders
And put it to the blind cub's lips, then she turned into a girl.
Her mango-breasts were in his hands. She laughed at him and said,

'So you are my pure *dewar*! Why have you clutched my breasts?
Do not go to fight the Raja; there is no virtue in you.'

Sita disappeared and her *dewar* went his way
But the girl went on ahead and turned into a fig tree.
Walking walking Lakshman wearied. He saw a tree before him.
The branches hung with rich ripe figs; with both hands he took them.
Now Sita stood before him; her fig-breasts were in his hands.
'So you are my pure *dewar*. Why have you clutched my breasts?
Do not go to fight the Raja; there is no virtue in you.'

Sita disappeared again and her *dewar* went his way.
The girl went on ahead and turned into a spring.
Walking walking Lakshman thirsted. He saw a spring before him:
The water came up clear and fresh, he laid his lips upon it.
Now Sita stood before him; her clear breasts were on his lips.
'So you are my pure *dewar*! Why have you kissed my breasts?
Do not go to fight the Raja; there is no virtue in you.'

But Lakshman took no notice, and the girl returned home disappointed.
Her *dewar* went ahead and at last reached Kalsapur.
There was a monkey's marriage. A dried and withered monkey
Had brought a fresh young virgin for a hundred *sihar* seeds.
He had six wives already, their paps were country blankets.
The old man desired mushrooms, he had got a lovely bride.
Jhito Koko came and Dhuti and a hundred score of monkeys;
There was a feast of nuts and roots, the company was feeding.
Lakshman sent his Singhi Tumi; they joined the marriage party.
They withered the branches of the fresh marriage-booth.
The monkeys were afraid that the bride would quickly wither.
They sent for the Gunia; he saw what was the matter.
He threatened the Singhi Tumi. 'I will soon devour you all.'
The Singhi ran away and the marriage was concluded.

Machhandar Kaina came to bathe, her friends went to the water.
She went into Lakshman's tent; when she saw the prince she loved him.
She sat by his sleeping head, she did her best to rouse him.

She turned into a fly and buzzed about his ears.
She buzzed and bit and buzzed, but Lakshman did not wake.

Machhandar Kaina's friends thought that Lakshman must have taken her,
Taken her by force, and they ran to tell the Raja.
When Lakshman awoke he found an army round his tent.
He drew his great arrow and smote the monkey army,
But every time a monkey died, two more came into being.
Killing killing Lakshman wearied, he fell down and was captured.
His Singhi Tumi ran quickly to Jaidhapur and told the Raja.
In a dream poor Sita saw the fate of her darling *dewar*.
She told her husband Rama and he took his army to the war.

Rama found his brother dead but he brought him back to life.
He destroyed the monkey army, he found the princess Machhandar.
He spared her life and sent her home to remain a virgin always,
To live as a virgin on the banks of the lake.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PARDHAN AS PRIEST AND PROPHET

I. The Religion of the Pardhans

The common description of the Pardhans is that they are the priests of the Gonds. This is not altogether accurate, for the Gonds employ many kinds of priests. Sometimes they call in a Baiga, especially if protection has to be afforded to the village against tigers or disease. In Bastar I remember seeing Gonds served by Halba or Mahara priests. Sometimes a Gond himself, such a man as the famous Panda Baba, acts as priest to his own tribe. Often enough, however, a Pardhan serves the village where he lives, at least as a Gunia, if not as a regular Pujari or Panda.

The religion of the Pardhans is now and, if we are to judge by Hislop's researches, has been for a hundred years, very Hindu in character. Many of the gods and heroes now have Hindu names, though not all are of a typically Hindu nature. Side by side with the characteristic Gond traditions contained in the Gondwani songs there is another cycle of songs known as Pandawani (also called Dantara Katha[1]) which record the adventures not only of the five Pandava brothers but embody, sometimes in a startlingly new version, episodes from the *Ramayana*.

Today, however, Pardhan religion has very little in it. It has neither the beauty and excitement of the old orgiastic animist religion nor has it attained the dignity and spirituality of the higher Hinduism. It is half and half, dull and spiritless, and there is thus not very much to record. I will, however, briefly describe the cult of the chief god of the tribe, Bara Pen. I will give some account of the Pardhan's religious year. I will show how the real basis of his religion is a struggle against danger, particularly against the danger of witchcraft, and I will finally describe in detail a sacrifice or festival, the Laru Kaj, that epitomizes in a peculiarly vivid form the old and new elements of tribal religion.

II. The Pardhan Gods

The nature of the Pardhan gods and their dangerous and hostile character is clearly displayed in the attitude both of the aborigi-

[1] This probably means 'tales passed from mouth to mouth', oral—or 'dental'—tales.

nals and of the Hindus towards them. Although Bhagavan generally appears as a kindly, or at least a neutral, figure, the other gods are nearly all supposed to be vindictive and extraordinarily touchy. Stories of the origin of the gods, which have been recorded in many other publications, show that they nearly always manifest their existence by causing disaster to human beings. In certain cases the first evidence of a god's presence comes in a dream, but if the dreamer does not obey implicitly the instructions he receives, sorrow and misery quickly follow.

There is little difference between the gods of the Pardhans and those of the Gonds and other aboriginals. The names vary, of course, from place to place but their general character is the same. I describe in some detail later in this chapter the Pardhan cult of Narayan Deo, which culminates in the rite of the Laru Kaj. Here I will only give a few details about the worship of the chief god of the tribe, Bara Pen.

Today Bara Pen appears to be associated mainly with the ancestors of the tribe and his worship is performed every five years or so at the time of the New Eating Festival, when the first rice-crop is reaped and eaten. This is the time when the dead are taken to some place which probably represents an ancient *Penrawar* or headquarters of a clan, and are there mingled with the ancestors.

Although Pardhan religion must undoubtedly be classified as a religion of the Hindu family, the deep-seated antagonism between the true autocthone and the Hindu invader of his country is seen in the general Pardhan belief that their gods do everything they can to help their own dead and to bother and annoy the dead of the Hindus. They give vivid descriptions of the Hindu spirits making their way to Vaikunth. They have to go in a great convoy, for fear that the gods of the Gondwana will pounce out upon them and defile them. A Pandit is represented as warning a dead Hindu: 'Go very carefully, for the gods of the Gondwana are in ambush by the road. These gods are great and dangerous; do not let them touch you. They have the bones of cows and pigs in their hands and they want to defile you and stop you reaching Vaikunth.'

Bara Pen, who is also called Bara Deo, Budha Pen or Burha Deo, is on the whole a good and useful god. His traditional abode is in the forest in the *saja* tree. But for the Pardhans

he has a nearer and more familiar home, his special portable temple, the sacred Bana fiddle. The presence of Bara Pen in this fiddle protects the Pardhan wherever he goes. 'Owing to Bara Pen we can eat food from the hands of a thousand Gondins, but not one of them can injure us, although it is well known that the Gondins are the greatest of witches. Once we put our Bana on our shoulder we can go anywhere without fear. There is no danger from cholera and the Bana warns us of any danger to come. If there is a tiger or a thief along the road in front, the Bana becomes heavier and under its weight we are unable to walk and then we know that something is going to happen.'

Bara Pen intervenes in human affairs: he is a rather communally-minded god and is generally to be found emphatically on the Gond side. In the Pardhan and Gond epics he is seen fighting for the Gond Rajas: in one he turns himself into a swarm of white ants and undermines the walls of a fort; in another he leads a great company of rats to make an escape tunnel for an imprisoned Gond prince; in a third he and the other gods become culm-borers and eat away the inside of a bamboo bow.

There is fear, but little reverence, in the Pardhan's attitude to his gods. One of the most remarkable elements in his religious psychology is his readiness to abuse, not only the minor troublesome deities, but even Bhagavan himself, the supreme arbiter of life and death. I have recorded the following revealing sentences, heard from time to time during a period of many years.

Bhagavan ke rakh udawai!
May Bhagavan's ashes fly in the air!

Ka bighadau Bhagavan ke to more pichhe lage hai?
How have I wronged Bhagavan that he is after me?

Khab nahi hai. Dai ke muh ma luwathi deb hai.
This is not food. It is shoving a stick into god's mouth.
(This is said when the mourners are being fed by the *nats* with food brought from their houses.)

Bhagavan ke dai ke gand ma khuta gada dehu.
I will drive a peg into the privates of Bhagavan's mother.

Jindagi bhar Bhagavan mola bhunj daris.
Bhagavan has roasted me all my life.

Bhagavan bhar leis apan gand ma.
Bhagavan has stuffed them up his fundament. (This was said to me by a woman whose two children had recently died.)

The indecency of two of these sayings must be reproduced in order that the real attitude of the people can be revealed.

III. The Pardhan Magician

The magicians of the Pardhans are known in the Upper Narbada Valley as Gunias and Pandas. In the lowlands they are also called Siyana, in the Rewa State, Baiga or Dewar. Gunia means in Hindi one whose merits can be seen or experienced. There are several kinds of Gunias. The first is called Baje Gunia; one who is very successful and can use all the different methods of divining. The second is Khuta Gunia, into whose hands the gods and goddesses do not come; all he can do is to help the Baje Gunia. The third is called Thathur-Muthur. He can achieve some sort of cure, but it may not be permanent. The fourth is Jharaiya-Phukaiya. He can only 'sweep' the patient's body with a broom, a scythe or a bunch of castor-leaves. A fifth type of prophet-priest is the Panda. He is a man with devotion to a particular god or goddess who lives in his house. The sixth type of Gunia is the Barua, a person in whom, on certain occasions, the gods manifest themselves. Any one of these may also be a Pujari who on certain religious festivals sacrifices animals to the gods.

There is no such a thing as inheritance in the Pardhan priesthood. A Gunia need not be born in a Gunia's house. The Pardhan idea of a Gunia is that he must be dark, for if he is fair, there is danger that he may be a flirt and then he will not be able to get a very good practice, for often there are young girls suffering from the troubles of adolescence among his patients. He must look like a thief, for after all he has to deceive the gods and get them to accept a more or less worthless offering in return for something quite expensive and important. He must be talkative and tricky to convince the gods as well as his patients; obviously the clevérer a Gunia the more successful he is. A cross-eyed Gunia is often the most successful of all.

There are different methods of divination. The simplest is to take two little sticks of reed and measure them to one size. The Gunia takes these sticks in his hand and begins to tap them on the ground. While he repeats the names of all the gods and goddesses, when the name of the god or goddess which is bothering the patient is uttered, the stick suddenly begins to tap at greater speed. Then he takes the sticks in both hands and measures them with his fingers and finds that one of the sticks has grown a little. This method is called Kadikola.

The other method is to measure the left hand with one's own right palm from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. As he does this the Gunia repeatedly utters the names of gods and goddesses. When he utters the name of the particular god that is causing the trouble he suddenly falls into a trance on the ground and thus knows the cause of the disease. Immediately this god is given a sacrifice of a chicken or whatever he demands.

The third method, called the method of Nanga Baiga, is the oldest method and is called '*amar*, eternal and always successful, sixteen annas in a rupee'. In this method the Gunia takes a folded *mohlain* leaf and sticks it into a reed. Then he waves it in his hand slowly as he repeats the names of the gods. Suddenly when the name of the god in question arrives, the stick automatically slips from his hand and falls at a long distance. Then the Gunia knows what is the cause of the disease.

In the fourth method, a winnowing-fan and a bitter gourd is used. The Gunia sits with his winnowing-fan on the ground with a little *kodon*, and with his palm he rubs it making a rhythmic noise. Another man, called the Supaliha, younger brother of the winnowing-fan, sits in front of him holding a gourd with some seeds inside. He makes a sound *Hu-hu-hu* continually in between the names he takes and asks, 'Are you from the stream or the hill, or are you the witch from such and such a village?' As the Gunia repeats the names of the gods and goddesses, suddenly the gourd in the hands of the opposite man begins to shake vigorously. The name that is said at that very minute is the cause of the disease.

The use of eggs in magic and worship is widespread throughout India. This is not surprizing in view of the mysterious character of the egg, which is recognized in the Pardhan description of it as *garbhadan*, a thing which is pregnant. The hidden potency

of life, the association with the womb, the curious way it addles, combine to make the egg a suitable object for use in all religious and magical practice.

The Pardhans employ the eggs of the ordinary domestic fowl, the sparrow, the crow, and the iguana. The eggs are used in several different ways. The first and most obvious use is in ordinary worship, where the egg is offered to a god as one of the normal materials of sacrifice, like a chicken or a goat. Then the eggs are used in what is known as a Thua, a word applied to any ceremony which aims at removing danger or evil from a place by concentrating that evil in some material object and then taking it beyond the boundary of the area. The exact opposite of this method is what is known as Dan, where good luck or some kind of spiritual force is concentrated in an object, which is buried in a prescribed place in order to keep the luck or spiritual force always present.

The natural association of the egg with the womb accounts for the fact that eggs are often used in the treatment of women who suffer from barrenness or menstrual disorders. For example, to treat a barren woman or one who has had only one child, a rotten egg is taken, four lines are drawn across it with coal-black and three lines with red dust. The egg is waved seven times clockwise round the girl's head and at midnight is taken to a stream. The Gunia lights a lamp and puts the egg and the lamp together in a large leaf-cup and lets it flow down the stream. If he sees the light drifting down until it is out of sight he believes that he has succeeded in removing the barrenness from the woman and that she will in the near future have a child.

A rotten egg is also used in cases of menstrual disorder. On a Wednesday or a Sunday the Gunia draws the four black and three red lines across the egg and taking it out of the village to the nearest cross-road, he buries it in the name of Chhutahi Markhi, the ghost of a woman who has died during her menstrual period. Having thus taken the danger that was affecting the woman out of the village, he returns home without looking back. It is said that this spot should be avoided, for if a man crosses over the egg he may become impotent and a woman might catch the infection of amennorrhea.

An egg may be buried as *garbhadan* in a field in order to protect the wheat from rust. It should be placed by the Gunia in

a small hole along with a copper ring. Sometimes the heads of chickens or goats are buried with a similar purpose.

Eggs are also used for divination. If a Pardhan wishes to build a house in a new place, it is necessary for him to discover whether the site is auspicious or not. He does this with the help of crow's eggs. One evening, after cow-dunging a patch of ground, the Gunia makes seven concentric circles with flour and puts the crow's eggs in the middle with an offering of fire and incense. He places a basket over the eggs and lays a stone upon it to keep it in place. Next morning he comes and examines the eggs. If they have changed their position and have crossed either the first line or the third it is considered lucky and the house may be built. If however, an egg has crossed the second line the house should be built somewhere else.

It is considered unlucky if a setting of eggs is addled. The Gunia throws away all but one of them and to this he sacrifices a black chicken. Then he carries the egg beyond the village boundary and buries it there; the hen responsible is killed and thrown away.

If a cock crows at midnight it shows that some demon or witch is trying to attack the house. It is essential that the householder should immediately catch the cock and discover by offering it rice what the trouble is. When this is revealed, the householder should take the cock out of the house and wake up a neighbour. He should throw the cock direct into his neighbour's hands. This neighbour should kill it by twisting its neck and then roast and eat it without delay. The original owner, however, must not touch the flesh.

A very valuable and potentially dangerous egg is that of the bird known as *jivchirai* which usually makes its nest near the burial ground outside a village. It is said to lay only one egg at a time and that in Jeth (June, immediately before the rains). If a Gunia can find it he worships it in the name of his Guru and burns it. Out of the ashes he makes a sort of *kajal* (lamp-black) and preserves it carefully. The Pardhans believe that with this a Gunia can cure any disease and no witch can trouble him. If on the other hand a witch can get one of these eggs and make a magic salve with it, she herself becomes almost invincible.

Two other methods of the Gunia may be mentioned. Divination by the lamp has a story attached to it. When Lakshman killed

Lohgundi Raja the latter's mother Mata Kankalin, not knowing who had killed her son, made a lamp out of the jawbone of a dog. She used the tail of a cat for a wick and marking-nut oil. Her divination revealed that it was Lakshman who had killed the Raja. In great rage she took broken earthen pots full of fire in both her hands and on her head (to protect her hands and head from fire she had ashes spread under the pots) and went along sowing fire. As she approached Lakshman he had to run before her and seek protection from many Rajas and gods and goddesses. But so great was the fear of the Mata that no one helped him, except Hanuman who hid him. When the Mata came Hanuman caught her with his tail and struck it hard on the ground. The fire was put out and the Mata's bangles were broken. This made her a widow and Hanuman to console her remarried her. Today whenever Mata Kankalin appears to the Gunia or a Barua, Hanuman is also present.

Whenever nowadays the Gunia is not successful by the other methods of divination, he tries this Bawan-Bati or lamp method. It is attempted either in the bed of a stream or in the house. A lamp with seven wicks burning is hung on seven strings and a man sits in front of the Gunia with it in his hand. The Gunia repeats the names of the gods and when he utters the name of the one who has caused the trouble the lamp begins to move in the air.

The Gunia must always roast and eat the head of the chicken sacrified. It does not matter who eats the rest of it. When the Gunias are jealous of each other they ask each other, 'How many chicken's heads have you eaten ? I have eaten more than you '.

When the Gunia goes to a patient's home, the family feels as if a god has arrived in the house and there is a great feeling of consolation.

When a family believes that there is some really destructive god or goddess in the house which is killing member after member, they call for a Gunia and he usually finds that the trouble is due to Bansboran Marra Deo (the god that destroys the whole of a family) and performs the ceremony called Kalsa or Korao-Nikaleke (capturing the god in an earthen pot). The Gunia promises that he will take the god out of the house in a *kalsa*-pot. First the god is asked 'In what will you leave the house ? ' and invariably the reply is, 'In a *kalsa* '. An earthen

pot is brought and seven holes are made in it. Seven different kinds of grain and a rupee are put into it. A burning lamp is not put outside on the mouth as usual but inside the pot. Then the pot is shut with an earthen plate. Around it at a distance three little flag-staffs are erected and the Gunia sits on one side of the *kalsa* and his assistant sits on the other. Seven chickens, a goat and a sow are brought and are made to eat some grain. When they eat the grain the Gunia knows that the gods have accepted the gift and Marra Deo has entered the pot. Marra Deo eats the goat, his wife the sow and the chickens are for 'all the gods that hang round these two big gods'. Now the members of the family are asked to leave the house and to remove all their possessions except the earthen pots. When they have gone other villagers go into the building and relieve themselves there.

This ceremony takes place at midnight. After the gods have accepted the sacrifice one man holds the *kalsa*, three men the flags and the rest of the people take the animals and they go down in the dark to the nearest stream. While the procession is on its way the Gunia and the assistant keep on chanting their *mantras*. There is always a bottle of liquor with the procession, and this is usually given to the assistant who gets very tired. When they reach the water the animals are sacrificed. Round the *kalsa* seven nails of iron are driven with the following *mantra*:

> May the cow-dung cakes sink; may the stones float in the stream; may ass or horse have horns; may a woman grow moustaches. But may my Guru's promise never fail from age to age and may this god captured in the pot never come out of it.

After this everyone runs away with the meat—even the Gunia has to run—and they go across the water and cook and eat. A little meat and uncooked rice is left to be cooked after everyone has fed. Then this is put on the hearth and the Gunia tries to send away the members of the family on some pretext so that the gods may be pacified and not follow them. Someone says, 'I must go to such and such a place'. Another says his wife has called him and at last only the Gunia remains behind. He goes around the pot once and as he comes back to his original position he suddenly finds that the water is boiling and making a bubbling noise. This, he says, means that the god is trying

to come out. He taps the pot with a sharp axe and without looking behind runs away, and returns back to the house. He sits down there and the members of the family who have left the house with their possessions come back and the Gunia says, 'Who are you ?' Someone says, 'We are strangers in this part'. Then the Gunia says, 'But there is no room for you here'. They begin to beg him to give them somewhere to live and the headman and the elders abuse them. But at last someone says, 'O I have heard of a house which is empty. Let them go and occupy it'. But they say many people have relieved in that house, which is actually a fact, and so after paying five rupees as the rent to the Gunia and after begging the Kotwar to write their names down in his record-book, the Gunia gives them permission to go and occupy the house. The poor people then have to go and clean the whole mess and reoccupy their house firmly believing that the evil spirits have been cleared out and they can now live there peacefully.

IV. A Pardhan Priest

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate the realities of the strange mystical life of the Pardhan priests and magicians will be to give some account of the autobiography of Dani Tekam, much of it in his own words.

Dani lives in Patangarh. He is a leading priest and a very important Gunia. He was born about 45 years ago ; he has married twice and has had altogether seven 'wives', not at once but in succession. He has had nine children.

Dani is such a typical Pardhan that he is almost a parody of the Pardhan Gunias, witty, charming, sensitive, affectionate, quick and intelligent. He is very popular and his company is sought both for the charm of his personality and the interest of his conversation. His life story is somewhat confused, as is perhaps only proper in the history of a great magician. His whole life is dominated by the supernatural. As a child he grew up in the company of a lucky cow. The cow warned him, by dropping tears at his feet, of the tragedy that robbed the family of its wealth. The story of his experience as a Gunia is dramatic and exciting. Since then he has had a life-time of contacts with the unseen world. His house is as much a temple as a dwelling-place. A tall pillar, surmounted by a trident, decorated with peacock

feathers, with an iron scourge and a seat of spikes stands in the middle of his courtyard. Here when the fit is on him, Dani dances in ecstacy. He beats himself with the iron scourge. He thrusts a pointed iron rod through his tongue or cheeks. He sits uninjured on his seat of spikes. The goddess comes upon him and reveals the secrets of the other world and of this, the cause of this disease or that death, where a wandering bullock has strayed and how an errant wife may be restored. The house is poor enough but it is spotlessly clean and it has a sense of dignity and good reputation.

But unlike many priests and wizards Dani is a very nice person. He is not in the least pompous. He does not exploit his great reputation and charge excessive fees. He is a good family man, kind and unselfish. He keeps in his house an old crippled woman, his elder brother's wife, and is very good to her. He is an excellent husband, devoted to his wife. Perhaps he is a little jealous and suspicious but, in relation to his fellow villagers, there is every cause for that.

In the preparation of this book I owe a great deal to Dani. At every stage he has set right my mistakes and inspired me with fresh understanding. It has been as though the embodied spirit of the tribe has been with me to ensure that a full and correct record should be made. I am proud to call him a friend and happy to have won his affection.

We were three brothers and one sister. One brother died when there was a great famine and cholera. He died in Manjhoti. My birthplace was Langhawa Tola. When I was a child my parents were poor. At that time there lived a Brahmin whose name was Aduku Maharaj. His son is still living and is cock-eyed. Aduku Maharaj said to my father Saimukh, 'Come and stay in my village Rahangi. I will show you the way to riches and happiness'. I was then about a year-and-a-half and my mother, I am told, carried me on her hip in a piece of cloth. I was born with matted hair and when the Brahmin saw me, he said to my father, 'This boy will be a great Panda one day'. When we went there, a Gond named Khokana gave my father a calf a year-and-a-half old for curing someone by his magic in his house. My father named this calf Patan. We grew up together as brother and sister, for my mother used to feed us both together on a little gruel and vegetable. She was a lucky cow and a real Lakshmi, for after she came to our house many more cattle began to come in (god knows from where) and we always looked upon her as the giver of these cattle. I was also growing wiser with her.

After seven years we were able to have three ploughs in the house. Then Aduku Maharaj one day said to my father, 'I must get you some land', and he did get us land worth sixteen rupees. I was the youngest and I still remember how my elder brother used to work hard in the fields. Our first crop in the field brought us eleven score rupees.

But somehow or other my father and the Maharaj quarrelled and they would not talk to each other. So my father said, 'Sons, let us not stay here. We shall never get on. Let us go and stay in Premsingh Malguzar's village, Rusa'. So my father went and said to the Malguzar, 'I wish to stay in your village. Will you let me come and stay?' 'Come,' said the Malguzar, 'and I will let you have as much land as you need.' So my father built two houses, one in Rahangi and one in Rusa, and we began to till land in both places. The field that the Malguzar gave us was as flat as a plate and we sowed twelve *khandis* the first year. The rent of the land was only three rupees. The first time we ploughed the land, my father and brothers killed 160 snakes in that field. We got 60 *khandis* of grain the first year. We hoarded this and wanted to give it out on *adhiya*. We gave a little more money to the Malguzar and got more land and our land spread from the village to the Narbada River which is about two miles. But we had no *barra*, the land in which *kodon* grows.

But bad days were now approaching. We were cheated by the Malguzar's nephew. He said to my father, who was a simpleton, 'Saimukh, let me earn with you on *adhiya*. You have land and ploughs and bullocks and all I have is seed.' My father agreed and he started working on *adhiya* terms. This was the beginning of our days of poverty. One day in February, Patan and her daughter Bijul came home in the evening and my mother as usual gave her vegetable and gruel and salt. But she was very disturbed to see tears coming out of the cow's eyes. My brother patted her back tenderly and asked her 'Why do you weep, Patan?' We took no notice of this incident but at midnight there was a terrific clap of thunder and suddenly my *bhauji* shouted to my brother, 'What is that light?' I was dragged out of the house, for it had caught fire. The lightning had also fallen on the two cows and their foeti had shot out of their wombs and gone to the other side of the shed. In that fire we lost everything and since then we have never been the same. Poverty has surrounded us since then. The old man said, 'Sons, we won't stay here any longer', and we went to Pakari and built a house there.

There lived in this village a Teli. In his field there was a *tado* tree in which a god lived. This Teli had promised to this god a Jawara ceremony, and seven young boys who would sing at the Jawara, if he would make his field fertile. The Teli promised that he would put these seven children in an earthen pot and offer them to the god and in fact there was a fine rice crop that

year as a result. We arrived there that very day when the Jawara was taking place. I knew the Teli's family and I was madly in love with the daughter and so naturally I went to sing. At midnight a god came and with water in his hands sprinkled us all with force. It fell on the faces of seven young men, myself, Halku Teli, Thunwa Phatari, Khumara Pardhan, Dhanwa Pardhan, Dayali Teli the host's son and Hemu Kol. When the goat was being offered, it refused to eat the rice. Suddenly I found myself thrown on the ground and my neck twisted. Halku was terribly bent in the chest and immediately a Gunia was made to sit to see the cause of it. Khumana died within a few days. Dayali Teli began to bark like a dog. My father's Gunia Devi answered, 'I will only answer a Brahmin Pandit'. But we could not get a Brahmin and so another Gond Pardhan said to my father, 'Your son will live, but take your trident to the Narbada at midnight and see the Gunia and that god will come and tell you the true story'. Dhundhi Panda also said the same thing. My father went to Sasthu Panda and he also said the same. I was still lying senseless. So my father went to the Narbada with his trident and Narbada told him the true reason. Then my father promised to sacrifice to the god, but the Teli's own son was very ill and he kept Hemu Kol to look after him and he went to see a Gunia. At midnight a god came with a trident and was about to kill the boy when Hemu Kol cried, 'Who are you ?' and the god ran and he was attacked on the road and was ill for days. When the mother of the Teli came she said to the god, 'Take away Saimukh, for his father is your enemy'. My father had killed a black chicken in the door and so when it came at midnight saying, '*Dan Dan*', my father said, 'Come into the house'. But it could not get by the chicken, for the Earth Mother helped us, and our goddess the 64 Jogini. She has always helped us and no enemy god can attack us. That is why our family is famous for Pandas. My father has often stopped cholera by her help. He only had to say, 'Stop it, Mata, stop'. This goddess has given barren women children and dead bodies have risen from the grave.

In this way all the seven boys suffered but only one died. The 64 Jogini saved us. Sometimes when she wants to show her presence she appears for a second exactly like a lightning flash and then I know she has some message for me. When I have stopped breathing and my tongue loses control, I know it is possessed by the goddess and whatever she wants to say, she says through my tongue. As long as she is there I am not responsible for what I say. Sometimes she wants to dance and I may suddenly find that even in my bed I hear her music and I am dragged to her place and begin to dance. But her great dances are in the Marhai and Jawara Festivals. Sometimes the Mother desires physical love and then she comes as a most beautiful girl and sleeps with you and when you have awakened, she disappears but

all the same you have had intercourse with her, successful and complete. You are perspiring and breathing hard and there is a discharge. Phuliya of Shikari was the gift of this goddess. Her parents had no daughter and every daughter in the family died and so it was with the elder brother. Supari's daughter was also born as a gift of this goddess. She looks as beautiful as the goddess herself. Sometimes she comes out entirely clad in iron and then is as hard as iron. Her voice also changes. Then the Panda has to wear everything that is made of iron. He sits on the spiked seat and gives her promises.

My father was a great Panda. Not only he but, for four generations we, have been Pandas. We have worshipped the same goddess. My brother had no children. I was not married and my father said to the goddess, 'I will give up worshipping you, for you show no kindness to my family'. She immediately promised two sons and I did get two sons immediately after my marriage. That is why my father called them Sevak and Bhakti. At the time of my father's death he said to me, 'I leave the worship of our goddess in your charge. Worship her and you will always be prosperous'.

After the lightning incident my father would not stay in British territory. He said, 'We won't get any land here and we will remain poor. I want to die in Rewa State', and there my parents did die. They died of poverty but they also had other kinds of distress. Syphilis was added, and left the disease with me too, and I nearly lost two of my daughters from it. But my wife suffered more than any one and died of it, leaving four children behind. My wife's brothers asked me to go and stay with them in Patangarh for they were anxious about the children. My wife's youngest sister was outcasted by marrying a Gond, and when she left this Gond, my relations suggested that I should marry her, as she was very affectionate and would look after my orphan children. She was much younger than me and very beautiful and I was afraid she would not stay with me, for I felt I was only an ugly old man. But by the help of my goddess she has been faithful to me and we have been happy. Even in my old age we behave like young children. She is young but I feel younger than her. She has looked after my youngest child most lovingly. When her mother died this child was very small. She just used to walk a step or two and then fall again and walk another two steps.

Only once did this wife make me unhappy. I had one little affair in the village and she saw me with the girl. She could not forgive me. She left me and went and stayed with a young man. I was almost mad with agony. My house looked completely ruined. I could not sleep, I used to wander in the village at midnight. I was completely withered, like a dead leaf. People used to say, 'Don't pine away Dani like this. We will get you

a younger and more beautiful wife'. I was never hungry and I could hardly eat anything. Many young girls were suggested but I could not bear the thought of them. Sometimes I would go and sit for a few minutes in the company of the young boys and girls who were gaily dancing, but that would make me still more unhappy. Some people laughed at me but some were very sympathetic. But my wife was not happy either. She stayed two months with that fellow, but she came every other day back to our village and to my great happiness made inquiries about my health from others. However, I could not bear it any longer, and at last I brought an elderly woman to stay with me. I knew that my wife would come to me at once if I brought another woman to my house, and so she did. But to get this old woman to my house I had to make a promise before the elders that if I left her she could hit me with her shoe five times. That old woman knew my love for my wife and was afraid she would come back. As soon as I got this woman in the house, my wife arrived back in Patangarh and stayed at her parents' house. I was told she had left her new husband for good. But now this old woman began to make my life a misery. If I went out to relieve at night, she would come and stand in front of me and cry, 'I know you are trying to see your wife'. At midnight, if I did not make love to her, she would walk out of the building. She would say, 'Dani, marry a new wife. I will work for her day and night. Even marry a twelve year old girl, but don't bring that woman back'. However, all these problems were solved when my wife just arrived. The old wife could not stand it. She gathered the elders together and hit me five times with her shoe and then left me for ever. The elders of Patangarh still chuckle over this and tease me.

One of the most important of the Pandas I remember is Parbata Bhoi of Ataria. He used actually to see the Mata and talk to her. Once there was a great cholera epidemic and the Mata knew that this Panda was very powerful and told him that she had come to the country to camp for a few months. But she gave him permission to turn her out of twelve villages, but not more. He used to go from village to village turning her out, by performing the necessary sacrifices and rites. After the sacrifice, the Mata would tell him to get into the cart with her and ask him to travel a part of the journey in her company. As they both sat in the cart together, the people who were standing nearby could hear the tinkle of her bangles. Parbata did this in twelve villages and freed them of cholera. But seeing his success people from other villages fell at his feet and wept for his assistance, and being a kindly man he started turning the Mata out of other villages too. In the thirteenth village he had to use very strong language to get her to move. 'Come you excreter, come you farter, I

order you to come with me. I will also go a part of the journey with you.'

This went on till the twentieth village. By now he had, it is believed, made over three thousand rupees from the villages. In the twentieth village, the Mata finally said to him, 'I will go out of this village, but not alone. You will have to accompany me for good'. The Panda was worried and promised her that he would not pursue her any longer. But the Mata was firm and so at last the Panda requested her to let him go for a few days to his own village and take leave of his family.

He had a large family; he had three wives and was greatly in love with the third one. The first two had children, but the third was a young girl whom he had recently married. He went home and called his family together and told his eldest son: 'Do not remove any of the ornaments from your youngest stepmother. Let her have them and let her take with her all the clothes and any other things that she is attached to. She is young and after my death I know she will leave you and perhaps marry someone else. But do not bother her. There is plenty I have earned for you, and you can all share.' Then he said to his eldest wife, 'I am going to die, for the Mata is annoyed with me and she will take me with her. Prepare a great feast and invite our relations and friends'. That night they had a great feast. Parbata told the villagers that they should leave the village before he was dead and go into the mountains, for 'after my death the Mata will trouble you. But leave the cowherd; I assure him that nothing will happen to him. He should stay and look after the cattle'. That night the whole village left and the Panda died.

V. The Religious Year

There is little colour or romance about Pardhan festivals. With the advance of civilization, the life has gone out of them. Most of them are now little more than an excuse for a bottle, and they are continued rather from a fear of offending the gods by neglect than from any real desire to have a religious celebration.

Unlike the Hindus, the Pardhans do not have fixed dates for their festivals. The same festival may be kept on a different date over a period of two to three weeks in different villages. Even in the same village you may find one group of houses keeping a festival, say on a Monday, while another group keeps it on the Tuesday or Wednesday. The reason is that no household can keep a festival unless every member is present and every woman is free of her menstrual period. I once wanted to take some fifteen

men with me on a four days' journey. Officially the festival fell during that period, but the people put it off without hesitation.

I will now proceed to give a brief account of each of the festivals in turn.

The Ekti Festival. This festival is kept officially on the third day of the new moon of Baisakh (April). In villages where there has been considerable Hindu influence, little Pardhan girls make dolls out of cloth, smear them with haldi and marry them to each other, singing, 'Ekti Raja is getting married'. But for the majority of the Pardhans, the main point of the festival is to discover whether the rains will be good or not and what kind of crop there will be. On the morning of the Ekti day, at cock-crow, the village Gunia gets up from his bed, which should have been strictly chaste, and with his hair untied, without relieving himself, goes to the nearest stream and draws water in a new pot, taking the water in the opposite direction to the usual. He cuts two branches of a *parsa* (Flame of the Forest) tree and takes this and the water to a field. Here he is joined by the other villagers who collect five large clods of earth and put them in a square with one clod in the centre. Each of these clods represents one of the rainy months, that in the centre representing the month of Kartik (October-November). Then a little hole is made in the bottom of the pot and it is closed with a bit of cloth in a way that will allow the water to ooze out slowly. The pot is covered with another smaller vessel with a lamp burning in it. The Gunia offers fire and incense and ties a string smeared with haldi. Then the headman of the village goes round the pot with his harrow five times and the rest of the villagers drive their bullocks with the harrow round three times. The pot is placed on the clods of earth and left all night. The following morning, the people go to see what has happened. If no part of the earth is damp they expect a famine. If one or two of the clods are specially wet they expect heavy rain in those months and so on.

The Hareli Festival. The Pardhans consider this the first festival of their year. They observe it in the second half of July. They derive the name Hareli either from *harra,* green—for the whole countryside now is green with the rain—or from *har,* plough and *chili,* unyoking, for from now onwards there is no more ploughing till the rains have stopped and the winter crops will be prepared.

Early in the morning of the Hareli day, every householder gives

his cattle a little salt and lets them go out to graze. Then he sends someone to bring branches of five different kinds of trees or shrubs: *baliospermum axillare, asparagus racemosus, hymenodictym excelsum, semecarpus anacardium,* and bamboo.

When these are brought back they are stuck in the door of the cattle-shed, in the main door of the house and in every field. When the Pardhans put them in the field, they walk round and round three times, crying, 'O Mother Kodon, grow fat and strong as these branches'. They fall at the feet of the grain and go home.

In the evening the people gather on the path by which the cattle usually return. If a cow comes leading the herd, they believe there is going to be a good crop of *kodon,* but if it is a bull they expect a good crop of rice. Once again salt is given to the cattle and friends visit their neighbours' sheds and feed each other's cows. Any salt left over is given to the Ahir. The rest of the day is spent in drinking-parties and feasting. Nobody does any work on this day and everyone should wear clean clothes and should be happy. Boys make stilts and begin to walk about in them, a custom which is possibly intended to make the crop grow tall or which may have a purely practical purpose of enabling people to get along the muddy lanes without soiling their feet.

The Nang Panchmi. This, an imitation of the universal Hindu festival, is observed by some of the Pardhans a few days after Hareli. For them, its main object is to ensure safety from snake-bite. The Pardhan pours a little milk into an ant-hill and says, 'O Nang Deo, take this milk and be satisfied. Bless our cows that they may give more milk and do not take the milk yourself'.

After this a few of the villagers gather in some big central house and make a little image of a snake with rice-flour on a wooden seat. In every village there is generally someone who is particularly sensitive to possession by the snake-god and on whom the god comes if anyone is bitten by a snake. He now becomes possessed and in this condition warns the village of any impending calamity by snake-bite or other cause.

On 28 July 1944 I spent an evening with the Pardhans and Gonds of Patangarh when they were celebrating the Nang Panchmi ceremony. They called it 'playing and making the Nang Deo dance'. The ceremony was held at the house of the priest who

teaches *Nang-mantras* to cure snake-bite. The most important thing about the ceremony was that it was a test for the pupils who had been taught *mantras* by the priest during the past year. When the Barua is possessed by the Nang god, he undergoes all the pains and faintings of a case of snake-bite and behaves exactly like a cobra, wriggling his body and moving his head about as if the Nang was dancing. Then all of a sudden he falls back in a swoon and begins to suffer as if he was going to die of poison. At this time the pupils have to repeat the *mantras*; each pupil has to repeat five different ones. When the *mantras* are repeated it must be done at one breath. The poor pupils are terrified and look as if they are really undergoing an examination. If they make a mistake the priest rebukes them, for unless the whole *mantra* is repeated correctly the Barua cannot come to life.

When I went to the house the whole thing looked extremely casual. First the Barua would not come; for nearly two hours he kept everyone waiting till they got very annoyed. But ultimately he came and sat down in a huff, for he considered that at the beginning of the ceremony Thakur Deo should have been summoned to possess him, for this is the normal procedure. A very beautiful song was sung by the priest; when he sang one stanza a party of young men repeated his words to the rhythm of a drum. While the drum was played, the hand of the drummer beat on one side with exactly the same movement as those of a cobra with raised hood. After listening to this for a long time, one really begins to feel as if in a trance. Hands and legs began to jerk of their own accord; I actually had a similar feeling myself. But as I said, this Barua was not in a good mood and so, though the song of the birth of Thakur Deo was sung from beginning to end twice, yet the god would not arrive. Everyone was getting very impatient and long stories of similar happenings were recalled.

However, after the third repetition of the song, the god suddenly arrived and everyone looked relieved. The singing stopped and now Thakur Deo began to speak and there was an atmosphere of genuine fear and an absolute quiet. But presently the old priest said, 'O Thakur Deo, why do you trouble us thus? I am an old man and I have been singing your praises thrice'. Then a young man who was annoyed said, 'I have got such an

itch on my bottom because you kept us waiting that I have been scratching it all the time'. This seemed to annoy Thakur Deo and he said, 'I never asked you to come here; you can go', and I saw the young boy's face fall and he was a little frightened. However, the priest immediately made peace and spoke very nicely to Thakur Deo. Then the god began to explain why he did not come in time. Firstly, it was due to the fact that a few months ago, the villagers had brought a Baiga to do some ceremony for him and this particular village should not employ Baigas. 'They are not clean,' said Thakur Deo, but the priest then said, 'O Thakur Deo, they are our oldest priests'. But the god said, 'Can that Baiga create *kutki* now?' 'But those old days are gone', said the priest. 'Now no one can make *kutki* and there is no truth in the world. Today I am the only old man in the village, for you have taken all my old friends down to the burning-ground.' Then Thakur Deo gave another reason for his displeasure. He said to the priest, 'Why did you teach *mantras* to your pupils without asking my permission?' The third reason was that last time Thakur Deo and Nang Deo came and danced and gave their messages the people went away without giving the tired Barua any liquor. However, the old priest tried to make peace and one of the young men said, 'O Thakur Deo, we have only one Barua. Can we have another? It is a very heavy task for one Barua'. But the god refused under any circumstances to give them a new Barua. After Thakur Deo's message, he left and the tired Barua was given a pipe to smoke. Then the song to bring Nang Deo was sung; he appeared and every pupil repeated the *mantras*. While each *mantra* was being recited knots were tied on a new thread so that the people would know exactly how many *mantras* were repeated that evening and then this thread, along with rice and milk, was taken to an ant-hill and thrown into a hole with a prayer to Nang Deo that he should look after the cows and buffaloes.

Whilst this ceremony was taking place, a young boy standing at the door, the son of Dani, the priest, suddenly got the god on him and I was afraid that he would fall in a swoon. So I said to Dani, 'Look, your son is getting the god'. But Dani seemed to be unconcerned and only shouted from inside, 'Go

away, boy'. But the boy took no notice and began to get worse. I again asked Dani to go out and see to his son. Dani went and held the boy's head in his hands and repeated some *mantras* and the god seemed to come down. Then Dani told the boy to go home.

An old Dhulia was sitting with me and while the Barua's performance was proceeding he said to me, 'How strange are the ways of the gods. This Barua is really an ordinary boy. We hardly talk to him and take no notice of him and now there he is the centre of attraction and every word he says we believe'.

The Pola Festival. This is held officially in the latter half of Bhadon. In Dindori the Pardhans do not appear now to make little bullocks out of mud as they do elsewhere. Here there is little but heavy drinking, some feasting and the ceremony of the breaking of the stilts. The stilts are broken and taken down to the bank of a river and burnt in the name of Narbod. The boys dance through the village shouting, 'O Narbod, take away coughs and itch, bugs and mosquitoes and leave us in peace'. The idea is that the carrying of the stilts out of the village will enable Narbod to answer this prayer. Grass from the place where the stilts are burnt is taken and a little of it is put in the fields and in the grain-bins. In some villages bullocks are fed as they were at Hareli.

The Nawa Festival. The Nawa, or New Eating of Rice, is the most important of the Pardhan festivals. It is held towards the end of August when a little of the new rice has been cut and reaped. Whatever old woman is head of the house says to the son, 'Come, little son, and invite the gods and ancestors, for tomorrow we eat Nawa'. The boy stands on a *saja* leaf and scatters a little *urid* pulse and rice around him saying, 'O gods and ancestors, this is an invitation to you to join our festival tomorrow'. Early next morning a few ears of rice are brought from the field and a branch of the *saja* tree and a bundle of *saja* leaves are brought from the jungle. Sometimes *mohlain* leaves are also brought. The poorer Pardhans say, 'We never feel our poverty so much as on this day, when we have to beg even the few grains of new rice needed for the festival'.

Then the *saja* branch is erected in the *bari* in the name of Baharwasi Deo. The new rice is cooked and a little of it is put

on plates made of the *saja* or *mohlain* leaves. The householder offers a little liquor also before a *saja* tree and then in his courtyard he makes further offerings of food and liquor to the household gods. In the cattle-shed he puts five plates of food for Raiyya Rachhar Deo, Dharma Sawar, Parsu Paichal, Khora Bagwar and Deo Guraihya.

Then on the threshold of the main building the householder offers food to Narayan Deo. Last of all he feeds Bara Pen, Rat Mai, Dulha Deo and Mudkheri in the main building. There is no end actually to the number of gods who must be fed and each of them has a special leaf. This is a day of eating 'leavings'. After the gods have been served, a little of their food is left on a plate and distributed. Finally the people go round the village and eat more morsels of new food in each houses. This is the festival at which the heaviest drinking usually occurs and the celebrations continue for two or three days.

On this occasion, every married girl seeking refuge in 'the mother's house' and even a betrothed girl must go to her husband's house, for she has become a member of his clan and worshipper of his gods.

Before this festival, no one may eat the new rice or *chench-bhaji*, a popular vegetable; after it, begins the dancing of the Saila and Rina. Between the taking out of the seed in May and the Nawa in August, it is taboo to cut the wood or pick the leaves of the *saja* tree, for Bara Pen would be insulted.

The Marhai Festival. This is a commercial festival which resembles a European Fair. It has been suggested that it represents the old Pen Karsita, the great festivals of the Gond clan-gods in ancient times. These have disappeared and the merchants have instituted the Marhai to take their place. The Marhai is always held in a bazaar and is mainly the monopoly of the Ahirs who process round the shops with great poles decorated with feathers, cowries and strings of sweets. For the Pardhan, the Marhai is an ordeal rather than a celebration, for it is on this occasion that his wife demands all the presents that he has failed to give her during the past year. The Marhai is the Pardhan's nightmare. As soon as notice of it is received in a village, his wife begins to make herself unpleasant; she weeps, she wants to leave him and find a more satisfactory lover, she refuses to eat her food, she must have new clothes, new beads, for a week

she goes twice daily to the river to bathe and neglects the work of the house. She continually nags her husband: 'The neighbour has already given his wife her clothes; you do nothing but sit about'. It is at this time that the Pardhan gets into debt. But once he brings her money, or clothes, she is never more charming. She brings him hot water to wash his hands and feet. She gets his clothes ready and even makes his pipes. Then before the Marhai she devotes herself to her own toilet. 'Women live on the banks of rivers before a Marhai. Every night they smear their bodies with *kodon* chaff mixed in hot water. They rub themselves with stones to get off all the dirt.'

If anyone wishes to see Pardhan men and women at their best they should visit a Marhai bazaar. The women, free and happy, full of laughter and gossip, go to and fro. Men look very charming but the Marhai is a strain upon them. They have to keep a quantity of small change, for any of their former lovers may come to them and demand a present. If a man refuses it the girl may publicly pull off his *dhoti* or may say in front of everyone, 'You were very clever at making love, but you do not know how to give a present'.

VI. The Laru Kaj

The Pig in Pardhan Culture

One of the greatest of modern humorists has revealed to an amused world the attraction of the English aristocracy towards the pig. The humble Pardhans are no less devoted to their animals than Lord Emsworth himself. Perhaps after liquor there is nothing they love more than the pig. They sacrifice it to many of their gods. It is the cheapest animal they can keep. Government has not yet put a tax on it. It does not have to be fed like the cow and goat. It needs hardly any room to live. It suffers from few diseases. It is the most efficient sweeper the poor man can afford to keep. So it is naturally the most popular animal in a Pardhan's household. Unfortunately, his Hindu or Mussalman neighbour looks down upon him[1] for keeping pigs,

[1] But not always. Hiralal refers to the custom whereby Srimate Brahmins kill a symbolic buffalo, Kalanki Brahmins a cow and other Brahmins a pig in sacrifice and he suggests that these were relics of the human sacrifice. See ***Man in India,*** Vol. III (1928), p. 91.

and this influence has been successful in banishing these useful animals from many villages. The Hindu banishes the pig and introduces the sweeper, replacing one untouchable by another.

But no 'reformer' will ever be able to banish this creature completely from the Indian countryside. The forefathers of the modern Gond and Pardhan always ate pork and sacrificed pigs to their cruel, hungry gods. There are tribes like the Dewar who keep pigs as cowherds keep cattle. Many of them go up and down the country with these herds, selling them to the aboriginals. It is a strange sight to see the herds at night when the Dewars tie the pigs together with a long rope, just as the Lamana gypsies tie their pack-bullocks, round their little tents and sacks of grain. The pigs, like the bullocks, make a wall of protection against thieves and wild animals.

In the Upper Narbada Valley pigs are sacrificed to a number of gods. Deswari, Marhi and Dhartimata need a black boar; Khermai is satisfied with a sucking-pig. Marra Deo must have a large full-grown animal. Dulkha Deo and his wife Dulkhoria are also offered pigs. These gods are not very particular how the sacrifice is made. As long as the pigs are killed in their name they do not bother their worshippers. But, on the other hand, they never help them. There are very few gods, only two or three, who actually help people in their trouble if they get their pigs. Rat Mai Mudkhori (the Night Goddess) accepts a pig at night when only the family is in the house. No one should know about the sacrifice and if the dinner is late and the children have gone to bed, they must not be woken to partake of the food, lest they cry, and the neighbours know about it. The pork must not see daylight, and if any is left, it should be buried under the earth lest the day gods take a fancy to it. Then this goddess will keep the householders company in their night journeys. Many Pardhans go fearlessly through the jungle at dead of night with this faith in their hearts.

During Diwali the Ahir cowherds sacrifice a pig to Bhainsasur. This god is supposed to stop the milk of the buffaloes and bring disease on the bullocks and cows. The pig is actually killed on the head of a buffalo. The Ahir swings it in the air and strikes it hard between the two horns. The blow is not supposed to hurt the buffalo, which is possessed by the god. This is why,

when a buffalo sees a pig, it immediately lowers its horns as if it were possessed by Bhainsasur.[1]

The Origin of the Laru Kaj

But of all these sacrifices, the most important is that known as the Laru Kaj. This is an elaborate arrangement whereby a sick man, believing his disease to have been brought upon him by Narayan Deo, dedicates a pig to this deity, preserves it with care and honour for three years and then sacrifices it. By the local Hindus Narayan Deo is specially identified with the sun, and travelling Brahmins and sadhus visit Pardhan houses to recite what is called the Satya Narayan Katha in honour of the Sun God. It is notable that the Pardhans arrange for this Katha to be recited at times of emergency, when someone is ill, when a woman is barren or fears a difficult delivery or when evil spirits are believed to be attacking the family. Here Narayan is associated with the Sun God who, pleased with the devotion, comes to help. Hinduized aboriginals have the Katha performed simply as an act of merit.

The worship of the Sun is, of course, very ancient in India. In the *Rigveda* there is a reference to its sin-cleansing power. The Gayatri Mantra is of high antiquity. Khadira, says Bhandarkar, prescribes the adoration of the sun for the enjoyment of riches and for the attainment of fame. The hymn addressed by Yudhishthira to the sun after he entered his forest-residence, and the vessel he thus obtained for the production of all the food wanted by him, his family and followers, is well-known. In the seventh century Mayura composed a hundred stanzas to the sun in order to obtain relief from the white leprosy from which he suffered. About the beginning of the eighth century Bhavabhuti makes the Sutradhara, or the manager of the Malatimadhava, offer prayers to the rising sun to remove all his sins and bestow holy blessings on him. Thus the sun has been adored since Vedic

[1] On 17 January 1895, a question was asked by Surendranath Banerji in the Bengal Legislative Council about the action of a Sub-Divisional Officer who stopped some Santali cowherds from casting a pig among a herd of cattle, by whom it was gored to death in a brutal manner, on occasion of the Kali Puja and thus ' hurt the religious feelings of the local public and caused great dissatisfaction among the orthodox Hindus of the locality.' Government considered that interference was justified in view of the law for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

times for the removal of sins, and the bestowal of riches, food, fame, health, and other blessings.[1]

Nanimadhab Chaudhuri has recently collected a number of references illustrating the survival of this ancient cult in modern Village India.[2] Gujarati women worship the sun in hope of offspring. The Mal Paharias offer him a goat; the Bhuiyas identify him with the Creator, the Bhumiyas with Sing Bonga. The Chamars beg for children from the sun under the name of Surai Narayana. Dalton says that the 'Kandhs' worshipped Bura Penu as the god of light or Bela Penu the Sun God, but his wife Tari is the source of all the ills that befall mankind.[3]

But in not one of the many examples given by Chaudhuri do we read of pigs being offered to Narayan or the Sun God. He is given goats, flowers (as by the Dhanuks) and white cocks (as by the Bhuiyas and Mundas). This suggests that the Narayan Deo to whom the Gonds and Baigas offer pigs was not originally the Sun God, but a disease-demon with a somewhat similar Gondi name. Under Hindu influence, the ancient demon was assimilated into the Hindu system and identified with the Sun God, but the old form of worship continued.[4]

This is one possibility. On the other hand, the sacrifice of the unclean pig to the purest of the Hindu gods may be a gesture of defiance by the tribesmen; the Laru Kaj may be a sort of parody of the orthodox Sun-worship. There is at least a hint of this in the dramatic parody of asceticism and vegetarianism at the end of the ceremony.

Pardhan and Gond mythology is always in a muddle, and there are a number of different legends about the origin of the Laru Kaj. Every story, however, goes back to the Pandavas. There are also references to the demon Hiranyaksha and Vishnu's Varaha (*baraha* is the common Chhattisgarhi word for the pig or boar) incarnation in which he raised the earth from the deep. This is one legend from Mandla: 'When God killed Haranaka Chhatar in his Boar-form, he devoured all the refuse on the

[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* (1913), p. 152.

[2] N. Chaudhuri, 'The Sun as a Folk-God,' *Man in India*, Vol. XXI (1941), pp. 1 ff., where all references are given.

[3] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 297.

[4] See Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), pp. 403ff. Under the influence of 'reformers', however, some Gonds are now dedicating goats for the Laru Kaj.

earth and in the underworld. After this men were made and they were divided into those who ate rice and pulse—the Hindus, and those who ate meat and fish—the Gonds and Pardhans. God wanted to see what would happen to man if he was given "Sankar Dada's *rasa*", liquor. So he invited all these people to his house. When the liquor was served, the Hindus refused it, but the Gonds drank heavily. When the time for departure came, the Gonds said, "What has this god given us to eat? Nothing. Unless he feeds us on pork we will never be satisfied." Hearing this, the god stopped them and killed a pig for them, and they ate pork and drank liquor with it. To the Hindus he gave rice and pulse and sweets. Before the people left his abode he said to them, "When you forget me in the Kali Yug, I shall remind you of my presence as Narayan Deo by bringing disease and trouble into your houses. Then you will sacrifice a Laru in my name and the Hindus will perform my Katha, Satya Narayan Katha."'

The first Laru Kaj that was ever performed was by the Pandavas. This is the legend:

There lived five brothers, the Pandavas, and twenty-one brothers, the Kauravas. They were the sons of two sisters, Kunti and Gandhari, of whom Kunti was the elder and Gandhari the younger. One day in Gandhari's house there was to be some religious rite and she invited her elder sister and her children. The messenger who brought the invitation described to Kunti how the twenty-one sons of Gandhari had made a great elephant of mud for her to ride on. Now Kunti was very worried that she would be insulted if she (being the elder sister) did not also ride on an elephant. But how could her five sons make such a big elephant, and how could they drag it to the place of the ceremony? When Bhimsen saw his mother in trouble, he asked her why she was weeping and she told him the cause. Bhimsen said, 'O mother, cook some *khichri* for me and I will get an elephant from Kajliban Pahar'. In the Hathiban he saw lakhs of elephants, but he chose Meghanandh, their leader, and picking it up on his shoulder carried it home. He hid it behind the house and went to his mother and the mother asked him, 'Have you brought me an elephant?' He said, 'No mother, I could not get one. But give me *pej*, for I am hungry and tired'. After serving the *pej* the mother went out, and to her great alarm she saw the huge trunk of an elephant on the roof of her house.

Gandhari set out on her mud elephant and Kunti rode on her Meghanandh. The two sisters met by a river. Both wanted to show off and so they entered the river and began to bathe. The

mud elephant gradually melted away, and at last it suddenly disappeared and Gandhari was nearly drowned. But Bhimsen caught her by her hair and saved her life. This, however, enraged the twenty-one Kauravas and they decided to kill the five brothers. They put poison in their food and shut them up in a house and set fire to it. Bhimsen broke the earth with his digging-stick and made a way to Patal. There these people lived in Jalalpur on dupi grass. Everyone believed that they were dead and burnt, and their kingdom was looted. Near Jalalpur there lived a Dano called Tadimal. He had a garden of roots and had kept four pigs, Laru, Jhadu, Singo and Surja, for his gods. Bhimsen began to steal his roots. He used to eat the bitter ends of the roots himself and took the sweet parts to his brothers and mother. Now when the Dano went round his garden, he found his roots missing and thought that the pigs were responsible. So he said, 'Surely the time for Laru Kaj is come. I will go and invite my relations from Kalkalpur'. That day as Bhimsen was stealing the roots, he came near the house of the Dano and found the four pigs there. He was inspired with a desire to worship Narayan Deo and began the Kaj.

While Bhimsen was performing the Kaj, his mother was having a bath in the river and one of her golden hairs fell into the water. She picked it up and said, 'I will tie this in a leaf and let it float on the water. Some poor person may find it and make it into an ornament'. So saying she dropped it in the river. The hair was carried down to Kalkalpur where a Dano Princess was bathing. She opened the leaf and when she saw the golden hair she said to herself, 'The person who has this hair must be made of gold itself,' and so she went up the stream till she found the four brothers and the mother. She turned them into goats and took them to her palace.

The story is full of long and humorous details of how Bhimsen gets a message from his brothers and of their own troubles. The moral of the legend is that Narayan was so pleased with Bhimsen for performing the sacrifice that he helped him to overcome his difficulties and rewarded him with the very beautiful Princess Hamesar. Bhimsen was so madly in love with her that he begged Narayan Deo to make the first night fourteen days long. After that with the help of Narayan Deo he got his family out of Patal and they returned to the earth safely and won their kingdom back.

As a reward for his first Laru Kaj, Narayan Deo had to give Draupadi in marriage to Bhimsen alone. But Draupadi had a curse upon her. One day when she was a little girl she was play-

ing in the street in front of her house, making mud houses, when suddenly a cow (Lakshmi) came along chased by five bulls and tumbled over the child's mud houses and destroyed them. Draupadi cursed her saying, 'O Lakshmi, you will always be chased by five bulls,' and this made Lakshmi angry and she also cursed in return. 'You will marry five husbands at one time.' So when Bhimsen came back with Draupadi and knocked at the door saying, 'Mother, look what I have brought,' his mother answered from within saying, 'I hope you will share it with all your brothers,' and so he had to.[1]

A Laru is dedicated to Narayan Deo only when he brings some kind of trouble on a family. If a person is bitten by a snake, the Gunia or magician is immediately called to diagnose the cause. If he traces the disaster to Narayan Deo, the family immediately promises to dedicate a Laru. There are some other troubles ascribed to Narayan Deo—sore eyes, sore throat, rheumatic pains and especially diseases connected with the throat. A Laru is always dedicated if any woman in the house is barren, whereupon she is supposed to have children.

In Mandla, therefore, Narayan Deo is a disease-demon, rather vaguely connected with the sun, who from time to time attacks a family, takes up his residence on the threshold of a house and must be appeased by the dedication and ultimate sacrifice of a pig.

[1] There are many other versions of the legend. A Gond described how Kunti was worried about the marriage of her sons and so Narayan appeared in her dream and told her to do the Laru Kaj. A Baiga, however, told me that Narayan was born in a Chamar's house. Twenty times he was killed in the womb of the Chamarin by Shankhasur. But the twenty-first time Shankhasur was away and the child was born. The Chamar performed Laru Kaj in his honour but when he offered the *prasad* to the Gonds and Baigas, they refused to accept it from his hands. As a result Narayan left the Chamars and went over to the Baigas and Gonds. Ever since the Baigas and Gonds have to do the Kaj instead. That is why the Chamars are considered, from the religious point of view, to be as superior as the Brahmins by many of the aboriginals.

Another Baiga tradition has it that Narayan Deo, Shankhasur and Surja are three brothers. They were the sons of Bhuch Raja and Bhuch Rani (the imbecile Raja and Rani). After the Kaj and Katha they were on their way home. Narayan Deo had eaten two-and-a-half pieces of pork at the Chamar's house. On the way he said, 'Let us all vomit,' and both Narayan Deo and Surja vomited pork while Shankhasur vomited milk. Narayan Deo was very annoyed and said to Shankhasur, 'You want to be greater than us'. So saying he twisted his neck and nearly killed him, but Shankhasur promised him that he would be his servant and would always play at his Katha or Kaj. That is why ever since a *shankh* shell is blown at the Katha or Kaj, and there is a twist in its neck.

The Dedication Ceremony

The dedication ceremony is very simple and takes place on any Tuesday or Saturday. A pig is brought and the Gunia takes it to the threshold, where Narayan Deo is supposed to live, and it is made to eat a little rice. If it eats it, it indicates that the god has accepted the creature. After this some people cut its tail, perhaps to distinguish it from other ordinary pigs. But castration is everywhere regarded as necessary. The people cut open the sac and remove the testicles and fill the sac with ashes. The parts which are removed are buried under the threshold. Then this pig is looked after with great care and affection for three years.

During these three years the pig is a constant source of worry to the household. There are many rules to be observed. It has become the vehicle of the god Narayan. At the end of three years it is to be married to him. It thus has a double relationship to the god. For that reason it is greatly respected. It is given good food just as if it was a member of the family. As far as possible it is prevented from eating the leavings of the household. But the most important rule of all is to protect it from any injury, for if it is wounded by a dog or anybody hits it, then Narayan Deo will not accept it. It must be a 'virgin', and if Narayan Deo sees blood on his body, he may think that some other god has taken it.

Gond and Pardhan women are very good to the Laru pig. They pet it and treat it like a member of the family. The creature soon gets very tame; it lies down beside the mistress of the house and she plays with it as people play with dogs. The girls talk to it, and it follows them to the well or to the forest when they go to bring leaves. The girls playfully tie bundles of leaves on its back and promise it hot gruel or *pej* if it can carry the load to the house without letting it fall down. In the rains the women are specially worried for fear the Laru may get into somebody's garden to eat maize and be injured by a wrathful householder. So they say to it, 'Either stay at home or go along with the cows and look after them.' From the very next day it starts going with the village cattle, and it is believed to help the cowherd in collecting the cows that go astray. If there are goats in the house, it goes

with them and looks after them.[1] It never destroys crops or allows the cows to do so. It sometimes goes and sleeps with the family in the fields when they are guarding the crops.

The Laru must be given some companions—Jhadu, Singo and Surja. These are either pigs or cocks. If a man is well-to-do and can afford it, he invites over a hundred people when he dedicates these. Poor people, however, only dedicate Laru and Surja. Surja, Jhadu and Singo are the Laru's guard of honour and are kept to maintain its prestige. Only a few families have all the four, but Surja at least is always dedicated. This is either a white cock or another pig, according to the economic condition and the traditions of the family.

If a Laru is kept for more than three years, it begins to be a nuisance. 'It grows eager for its wedding and to be with its lord.'

The Sacrifice

The first Laru Kaj at which I assisted was in January 1933 at a Gond's house in Karanjia. The pig then was crushed to death by eight men who danced on a great log laid across the creature's chest. Even now I cannot forget its death cries. Since then I have often during the past ten years attended ceremonies in the villages near Sanhrwachhapar and Patangarh. In this area Gonds, Agarias, Baigas, Pardhans, Ahirs, Dhimars and others celebrate the rites in similar fashion, with occasional minor differences.

The chief actors in the ceremony are usually as follows:

The Kajwar and Kajwarin, who may be called the host and hostesses, the people who dedicate the pig, and who supply the feast. The Kajwarin has had the chief care of the animal for the past three years.

The Karmi, the priest who makes the *phulera* swing in which the sacred objects are placed, and who attends to the religious side of the ceremony.

[1] An interesting parallel is recorded by A. E. Nelson, in the *Raipur District Gazetteer* (Bombay, 1909), pp. 28f. When Mr Lowrie was encamped at Raitum in a very wild part of the Raipur District, he saw a boar which acted as grazier to the village. 'Up he came, driving eight goats in front of him; we followed him right on to the village, and in went the goats into a hut. . . . He himself entered last of all.' The owner had had the boar for three years and had brought it up on goat's milk—it sounds very like a Laru. It looked after the goats all day; no thief dared approach nor was a single animal carried off by a panther. 'This marvellous boar, I am sure, could well hold his own at any competition of sheep-dogs in penning his goats.'

The Bhandari is usually the brother of the Kajwarin. He is ceremonially given full charge of the food-stuff, liquor and tobacco for the duration of the Laru Kaj.

The Barua are five young men who have the burden of the manual work; they have to bring wood and water, dig the pit and last of all kill the Laru and cut it up.

The Baruins are five young girls whose duty is to help the Baruas. They make leaf-cups and plates for the guest, serve in the kitchen and add generally to the gaiety of the occasion.

I will now describe in detail the last ceremony I witnessed. It was held in a Pardhan's house at Patangarh on 6-7 July 1943, and the Kamri or priest was a blind old man. He could not do anything himself, but the whole ceremony was done under his guidance and instructions.

The ceremony of the Laru Kaj takes place either on a Tuesday or Saturday. Two or three days before it begins, invitations are sent to relatives in different villages. Early in the morning the house is cleaned as for a big festival. The Kajwar says to his wife, 'Listen. Get *barra* (a delicious preparation made of lentil) for the Laru and for the offering at the *phulera*'. The guests and relations gather together and catch the Surja and the other dedicated animals—Jhadu and Singo.

In the present festival the people had dedicated only a Surja (this was a white cock) and did not have Jhadu and Singo. Since Surja was only a cock, it was simply taken a few yards away from the house to be sacrificed after the usual offerings of fire and incense.

It is often difficult to persuade the cock to eat the rice. Today it refused to do so and soon there was fear and anger in the priest's tone and behaviour. He tickled its neck and pressed its beak to the ground. The crowd nearby asked it, 'Are you waiting for another priest or is it any other goddess that has stopped you? Give us the happiness of seeing you accept our offerings. O Lover,[1] if you don't arrive and decorate the place, what good is our dancing?' Then there were comments—'It is easy to be a magician, but it is altogether a different thing to make a cock eat.' Others accused the host of not keeping the cock in the shade before bringing it to the god, for the people

[1] *Saiyya*. lover or husband. This remarkable expression is addressed to Narayan Deo, the terrible lover of the Surja whom he will destroy.

believe that if it is left in the shade it eats immediately. But this cock would not eat the rice for a long time and very bad language was used for both the cock and the god. Other people tried to make the cock eat, and at last it was persuaded and there was a general sense of relief and joy. After the priest had removed a few feathers from its head and offered it to the deity, he killed it and it was cooked and eaten with rice. This feast is known as Pusai.

After this preliminary meal the people began to get ready for the Laru Kaj proper. While the young folk were preparing the food, the older people wove the *phulera* of reeds. The *phulera* is a swing consisting of a small mat suspended by threads which is to hang above the head of the sacrificed Laru. When it was ready it was very carefully wrapped in a leaf-plate with its thread by which it was to hang and decorated with bel leaves. The next important business was to dig the *narda,* a big pit where all the leavings of the festival are buried. This was done by the five Baruas, and the five Baruins helped them in clearing the earth and piling it round the mouth of the pit. Now hereafter the ceremony began to recall the marriage ritual and the Holi festival. It is the marriage of Narayan and in Narayan's marriage 'you must be as happy as you are at Holi'. The first song the people sang was of how Narayan had climbed the roof of the house to see if the guests or his marriage party were coming. He was anxious and worried. He could not see them from there and so came down from the roof and climbed a tree instead. All the five Baruas held a crowbar and sang as they dug the pit. There was considerable comment on the stinginess of the host who had only given them half a bottle of liquor. 'That will be only enough for Narayan Deo. What about our throats that tire singing his praise?' As they sang, they said, 'Who calls me and what work have they with me?' The other party replied, 'Kajwar, the Raja of the house calls you, for he is preparing for your wedding'.

When the pit was finished the crowbar was driven deep in the centre and the Baruins were made to remove it. To make it more difficult, the men smeared it with sticky matter. But the girls soon cleaned it with mud and got it out. If they had failed, they would have had to give one bottle of liquor as a fine. This reminds one of the removing of the marriage-pole from the hands of the men at a wedding.

After the pit was dug, it was carefully covered with poles and a bamboo frame to ensure that nothing fell into it by mistake. If anything is dropped into it, it cannot be removed, for it is a *tirth* (a holy place) and nothing can be removed from a holy place. It is infected with the taboo. A woman who is in her monthly period cannot eat the Laru pork, but if she bathes in the water of the *narda* pit she is purified and she can take part in the ceremony as other women can. Women who are barren come to the house; they take a little water from the *narda* and bathe in it. They are supposed to get children as a result.

After this the five Baruas covered themselves with blankets and went to visit the other villagers. This is known as 'going out to invite the city'. They sang as they went

Tari nari nana O, tari nari nana.
The five daughters are of Parameshwar,
The five sons of Parameshwar.
O saheb, they are going to invite the city.

The Baruas are usually received with a good deal of ribaldry and on this occasion too dirty water and ashes were thrown over them wherever they went. But a few pice or a little grain must be given as well to help towards the expenses of the ceremony.

While the Baruas were away, the hostess got hot water and *siksa*—the perfumed *haldi* and oil which is usually smeared on a bride and bridegroom—ready for the bath of the Baruas. When they came back, she gave each a token mark on his back, and then they bathed above the *narda*. As they were rubbed with the *siksa*, they sang

Arjuna the god is marrying!
Bal Bhima is going to kill the pig!
Ha ha ri ha ha ri, Bal Bhima will kill it.

Then they sang about the miracles of the first Laru

Before your Kaj you went away
And brought anxiety to the house;
You sat below a withered mango tree,
But as soon as you looked up
It was green and full of fruit.
You went into a dried-up lake
And at once it was filled with water.

While they were singing this, their feet were smeared with water, oil and then milk with dupi grass. This was rather monotonous as all the five Baruas and the Kajwar had to go through the ceremony, the last being the Kajwar, who after his bath and anointing of his feet, was presented with the *phulera*. The newly consecrated celebrants were then taken into the house where the *phulera* was to be hung. They had to walk over plates of leaves, since they should not touch the ground till they entered the holy place. There were three seats made ready, one for Narayan Deo, the second for the Kajwar and the third for the Bhandari. The usual pattern on the floor was made of flour and the *phulera* was hung above it. When it was ready the people sang—



Fig. 11. The *phulera*

What god is getting married,
what god is going to kill the pig ?
O saheb, what god is killing the pig ?
Arjun god is getting married,
Bal Bhima is killing.
O saheb, Nakul is killing, Sahedeo, Dudesun—O saheb, who is killing the pig ?
Listen, all you visitors, listen you supporters, listen Satidhar (carrier of the stick).
Today is the invitation of Sango's Baba.
I prepare the chowk with marks of pearls.
O Narayan Baba, sit on the seat.
Saheb, sit on the seat.

When the Kajwar was taken to his seat they sang and then suddenly made him sit down with a bump. Then the Bhandari was given

his seat and there was a ceremonial presentation of all the ritual objects into his hands. Every article was named by an unfamiliar word or synonym. For example, they called chilli, *charpar* (as it burns the mouth) ; haldi, *ragbag* (red) ; salt, 'the bones of a Bania' ; oil, 'the urine of a Telin (oil woman) '. Tobacco was called *surti,* a word common in Bastar, but rare in Mandla ; bel leaves were described as *balwanti.* The idea seems to have been taken from the Satya Narayan Katha where Sanskrit is used. As the Kamri made the presentation he repeated every time 'Whoever objects to this thing and doesn't eat it will be cut up and eaten by Narayan Deo,' to which they all replied in chorus, '*O Sada Sarkatti Hakkane* '.

Just before the killing of the pig, the people said, 'Let us once dance round the *phulera* '. They went round and round it dancing ; the vibrations shook the *phulera* and it moved about. This movement was believed to be its dancing, which it is supposed to do of its own accord. They sang, 'O Narayan, where were you born and where have you arrived ? He was born in the house of the gods and he has come to Bharua Kachhar. You have left behind one hundred and twenty miles of flowers in your garden. Who will look after them ? '

Now the moment for the sacrifice had come. The Kamri exclaimed, 'Let us dress the Laru's neck with the garland of the pit.' Immediately before the threshold a hole was dug. Hot water was kept near at hand, and the Laru, which had been in confinement since the previous night, was brought squealing to the place. It was a healthy and strong creature, and the children and women were afraid of being injured by it. But today it looked very pathetic and one of the women said, 'It gazes at you sadly so as to create mercy in your heart '. It was given *barra* to eat and then the five Baruas, holding it firmly, pushed its head into the hole and the women quickly pushed water and earth from the sides around it. Then the Baruas began to heave the pig up and down. Mercifully it was quickly choked and no more heart-breaking squeals were heard. There was now a lot of obscenity and ribaldry, probably to relieve the tension. The five Baruas sang songs—'I will sleep with your mother ; I will sleep with your sister '—and the women immediately brought dirty water. mud and cow-dung and threw it at them. Amongst the Dewars, the hostess is supposed to come wearing a new sari and receive

the last excreta of the pig, which is believed to be a token of Narayan Deo. When the Laru was dead the five Baruas went away and washed, and were now ready to bathe the pig and singe its hair. The head was cut off and taken to the *phulera,* where it was placed on the floor and left there till the following day.

Now began what was to the people the most exciting part of the ceremony. When the pig was cut open the rich fat and flesh was visible and everyone standing round it watched with absorbed and hungry eyes. For everyone was semi-starved (perhaps most of them had not seen meat for months) and here was the best food of one's life. For the last Laru was killed some six years ago and the next might be after another six years. Every bit of the pig was cooked. No one dared to steal or try to keep the flesh for another day. It was all theirs. They would eat nothing but pork that whole day and the next morning. 'The joy we get from this sight is much more than the joy a poor Brahmin would get out of seeing a pot of ghee,' said one of them. This was blessed meat, and so even if a hundred people were to arrive suddenly it would suffice to feed them all.

It took a long time to cut and get the meat ready for cooking. First they cut its head and covered it with the diaphragm and then it was placed under the *phulera.* It was surrounded with what is called *sil badari,* the long strip of pork from the neck to the tail (which becomes the property of the Bhandari). There were other long pieces called *pil badari.* These were all put under the *phulera* to be given to the people who had come from long distances.

A large ball was made by blowing air into the bladder and this was used to beat the girls. It did not, of course, hurt them, but it made a very great noise. The men also used the *pil badari* to beat the girls and this hurts quite a lot, indeed there was a regular fight between the girls and boys, brothers who were trying to revenge themselves on the sisters of other boys. The feast was finished after midnight. While food was being prepared the story of Girgitawa was sung near the *phulera.* Girgitawa was the first Gond disciple of Narayan Deo who did the first Laru Kaj.

The Katha or life-story of Girgitawa starts from the day he began earning his livelihood in his fields and the original Laru Kaj he performed on his first earnings. Every sentence began with the words *abto,* 'And now', and ended with *bhai samtul,*

'Having finished he is ready'. The first thing Girgitawa did was to get his axe and take it to a blacksmith to sharpen. Having done so he got ready to go to the jungle to fetch wood for his plough. Every little step was described in this manner until at last Girgitawa came home with bags of *kutki* and invited his guests for the Laru Kaj.

Then the people imitated the 'Soha' ceremony of the Hindu Katha and blew the *shankh*. While this was being done, a little rice with the liver and entrails was cooked for the Kajwarin. The Kajwar said to the Kajwarin, 'Listen, go and get *bhadi*' (*bhadi* is grain given to the Ahirs in reward for their services in caring for the village cattle). She went with an empty basket on her head saying, 'Give me *bhadi*'. The Bhandari asked, 'What did you graze ?' She replied, 'I fed Narayan Deo's Laru'. There was a vulgar pun on the word Laru which made everyone laugh, and he gave her some ashes and bones instead of food. When she got the real food, she went and fed herself in the courtyard as a reward for having looked after the Laru for three years.

The Last Morning

Early the next morning there was the '*bacha*' or the promise ceremony. Everyone who was in trouble came to the Kamri who gave them rice. The people believe that if the number of grains thus received from the hands of the Kamri is even, it is unlucky; but if it is odd it is lucky and your wishes will be fulfilled.

After this the *phulera* was made to dance again and then *prasad* was given. The Kamri said that they all should eat the *prasad* under the *phulera* lest Narayan Deo kill and eat them. *Kutki* like *kodon* is the staple food of the Gonds. The *prasad* here was made of its *bhat* and the curry was of the Laru pork. While they were eating, the people sang

Kutki Rani looks ugly,
But your *bhat* is lovely as a lotus flower,
Urid and *mung*, *khichri* and pulse of butterflies,
Yes, yes, eat Gosaiya eat, Narayan Baba eat.

Then they performed the *tikawani*. In a marriage this is the ceremony when the people give presents to the bride and bridegroom. Everyone assembled there, took a little haldi and smeared it on the head of Laru and fell at his feet asking for his favours.

Some people gave a pice or two. In return the Kamri gave each of them a few grains of rice. This they called 'taking promise,' and here is a song they sang

I have come stumbling, dying,
To save myself;
Promise to save me, O Narayan Baba.

Now began the last feast of the Kaj. It was known as *mudbhoj* or the 'feast of the head'. Before cutting the head the Kajwar kicked it thrice and recited prayers in which he asked Narayan to leave the family in peace. They cut the head to pieces with an axe and then cooked it with rice. Several people, including the Pujari and Baruas, sat round it and began to eat. After eating a little, they went round and round the *phulera* singing, 'Take your last morsel, O Narayan Dada, and leave us in peace and go to your people'. This time they danced very vigorously and the whole building resounded with the noise of their feet. When the hostess saw that there was nothing left in the kitchen and the people were still asking for more, she brought some rice cooked badly with too much salt. At this the men began to spit at the girls who were hiding behind the bins. They now were very rough, and the idea seemed to be to frighten Narayan Deo out of the house. They broke the walls so that he could escape. Then suddenly they snapped the string of the *phulera* and rushed out of the house, and afterwards buried it in the pit.

While these people were away the pit was being filled in with earth. Now the Pujari had to take a promise from the host as to when he would dedicate another Laru. There was a hot discussion in the family—some saying 'After my son's marriage,' and everyone trying to put it off as far as possible.

All of a sudden there was a great noise as of horses neighing. The Baruas had come on their hobby-horses. These were sticks with sharp thorns. They came into the courtyard and the elders of the house asked them, 'Where do you come from?' They replied, 'We are from the other land. We heard about the great feast and have come to join it. Our horses are tired, for they ran with the wind and defeated it. Can we get food for them?' The old man of the house told the girls (the Baruins) to come out and feed the horses. The girls giggled, but they did not come out. Then the Baruas pushed their thorn-sticks inside as if the

horses were trying to enter the house backwards. One of the girls was hurt, and she came out with a stick to beat the men. The rest followed her and for some time there was real fighting going on between the Baruas and the girls. At last the old people had to intervene and they made peace. Then the boys and girls tied threads round each other's wrists.

They ended this ceremony with a short dramatic entertainment. A Pardhan disguised as a sadhu smeared with ashes all over his body and followed by two disciples came to beg. These were people who had taken the part of Baruas. When they asked for alms, the old man of the house offered them Narayan Deo's pork. The sadhu was shocked and repeated the name of *Ram* several times and showed intense disgust.

There followed a long discussion about the sin of eating any kind of meat. It was very amusing to hear the aboriginals start talking excitedly in idiomatic Hindi about the evils of meat and liquor. Ultimately the old man picked up a little earth and said, 'If you are true sadhus, turn this into rice and eat it'.

The Laru Kaj is almost as complicated and full of rites as the marriage ceremony. As in marriage, it ends with a feast for the guests; and as everywhere in India when people are invited to partake of food, they are very slow and hesitant in arriving. The whole thing looks casual enough in the beginning, but once every one arrives there is a great sense of enjoyment. The blind old man often repeated the two sentences '*Khaye ke ad*' and '*Mandi ke ad*,' meaning all this is only a pretext to be able to feed together and to assemble together in friendship. Another thing he said when the Kajwar made any mistake in the rites was, 'We cannot keep pace with the gods'.[1]

[1] Anyone who has attended both these ceremonies—the Laru Kaj and Satya Narayan Katha—will notice the following similarities between them;

1. The name of the god in each case is Narayan.
2. Both are performed to earn some favour like recovery from illness, or to get a child.
3. There is the rite of Raksha Bandhan in both.
4. Rice is scattered.
5. Bel-leaves and dupi grass, haldi, supari, cocoanut, milk, rice and dal are used in both.
6. There are five goddesses and Panch-lok in one, there are five Baruas and Baruins in the other.
7. *Prasad* or *sithi* is given at both ceremonies.
8. There is an attempt to use unfamiliar language.
9. In both, offerings of money are given.

VII. The Fight Against Witchcraft

Pardhan witches do not differ from witches in other parts of India. They are equally feared and are believed to practise their horrid art in much the same way. Some, it is said, can turn themselves into wild beasts; others can make a bride barren at her wedding; yet others can make a disdainful lover impotent, give amenorrhoea to a rival, or destroy the health and beauty of a child.

The following stories will illustrate more vividly than any comment the important part that a witch plays in the life of a Pardhan village. The following is an account given to me by a now elderly Pardhan of Kanchanpur. It was evident that he believed implicitly everything that he told me and that the strange scene he described actually took place.

My little son was attacked by a witch and died. We buried him in the dry bed of a stream and covered his body with a thorn-bush to protect it. I was afraid that the witch would try to rouse the dead body and remove the liver, so I went to the grave at night with a stick of the castor plant and some water which I got from a Chamar's house. We waited and waited and then at last I saw the woman approaching. We attacked her and the people with me beat her with their sticks, but they had no effect on her. So I ran after her and caught her and put my little finger through the hole in the lobe of her ear. This immediately stopped her. I then beat her with the castor plant and cut her forehead. I put some of the Chamar's water in her mouth. This defiled the Bir which always lives in the little tail that a witch has inside her and which enables her to turn into a tigress. Then we dragged her back to the village and we spat on some *mandia* flour and put a little human excreta on it and forced her to eat it. The lobe of her right ear was split open and we cut a little hair from her head. The result of these things was to cure her of her wickedness. She is still living at Kanchanpur. She is quite harmless now.

The cure for witchcraft outlined in this story follows the conventional lines. The castor plant is everywhere regarded as powerful in magic and in Bastar is placed on the roofs of menstruation huts. The shaving of the head, the cutting of the forehead and the tearing of the ear are means of breaking the woman's power by defiling her, as each of these things is in itself sufficient to excommunicate her. Apparently to be a successful witch, one's social position must be unassailable. There is a very interesting

reference to the little tail that witches are supposed to have. The belief that there is an actual physical basis to witchcraft has been found also in Africa. The Azande, for example, believe that it exists somewhere in the abdomen and that as a result of this witchcraft substance, which may be a round hairy ball with teeth or like a mouth with large sharp teeth, the witch can work her will.[1]

Another account of a witch comes from Patangarh. The woman is described as having been 'fat and round'.

During the 'bitter sleep', the sleep before dawn which makes you very bitter if you are roused from it, this witch once went naked as a cow into the house of a neighbour in order to drink his blood through a straw. But although the neighbour was sleeping deeply he awoke and jumped up and tried to catch the woman, but she was very slippery as though her whole body had been smeared with oil and she escaped. He shouted and the neighbours started searching but she turned herself into a black cow and so escaped.

This power of turning into animals is, of course, commonly attributed to witches and magicians. In Patangarh the grandfather of a Pardhan now living is said to have had the power of turning himself into a tiger. He was a very famous Panda. One day he was going with his wife on his Mangteri tour.

As they were going through the forest they saw a deer grazing some distance away. The Panda told his wife that he would catch it but he added, 'Do not be afraid when I come back to you in another form'. Before her eyes he turned himself into a tiger, chased and killed the deer and brought it back and laid it at her feet. She had a little magic powder and threw it at him saying, 'Go away', whereupon he resumed his usual form and the two enjoyed a feast of venison.

I cannot understand how much of this the people really believe, yet when I was living in Karanjia a number of Gonds actually went to the Police Station with the report that a man had begun to turn himself into a tiger in front of their very eyes. The Sub-Inspector came to ask me under what section of the Indian Penal Code it was possible to prosecute a man for this offence.

A witch can give a man leprosy. Daulat the Pardhan leper is supposed to have contracted his terrible disease because he offended a woman.

[1] E. E. Evans-*Pritchard, Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1933), pp. 21ff.

His wife was always leaving him and going to stay with her brother at Kukarramath. Daulat was naturally displeased and one day he brought another woman to his house as co-wife. He got tired of her after fifteen days and married her to his younger brother. She was very annoyed at this and said to him, 'Go, you have insulted me. So will god do to you'. Soon after this Daulat began to talk *bhan-bhan* like a bumble-bee and his mouth and ears swelled up and became numb. We thought at first that he was suffering from the Ahiraj sickness,[1] but he got worse and worse and it was soon clear that he had leprosy.

When the Gunia was consulted, the name of the woman he had refused to marry came every time, and the people have no doubt that Daulat's disease was caused by her.

Black magic can also make a person blind. One day a Gond of Sakua village died and his Pardhan Dasondi went to the funeral as usual. The body was wrapped in a new cloth, but some of it remained over and was hung up in the house. The Dasondi's wife stole the cloth and the dead man's son who was a magician said in anger, 'The thief has closed the eyes of the dead and her own eyes will be closed'. Within a week there was an accident and the woman actually did lose her eyesight.

[1] The Ahiraj sickness is caused by a snake of the same name. This snake gets very hot in the warm weather and plunges into water to cool itself. Should some of the water, splashed out, fall on a human being, he gets scales all over his body. It is said that thousands of these snakes, driven by the burning heat of their bodies, move towards the Himalayas to cool themselves and their poison flows down the rivers to infect mankind.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PARDHAN AS LOVER AND POET

I. The Pardhan Woman

The Pardhan attitude to women is summarized in a remarkable statement once made to me by Dani. 'In the course of a single day, a woman appears in many different forms. When she comes out of the house early in the morning with an empty pot on her head, she is a sight of ill-omen. Anyone starting on a journey, going for a betrothal and especially any Pardhan setting out on a Mangteri tour, decides not to travel on that day if he sees her, for in this form her name is Khaparadhari, an evil spirit carrying a broken bit of earthenware.

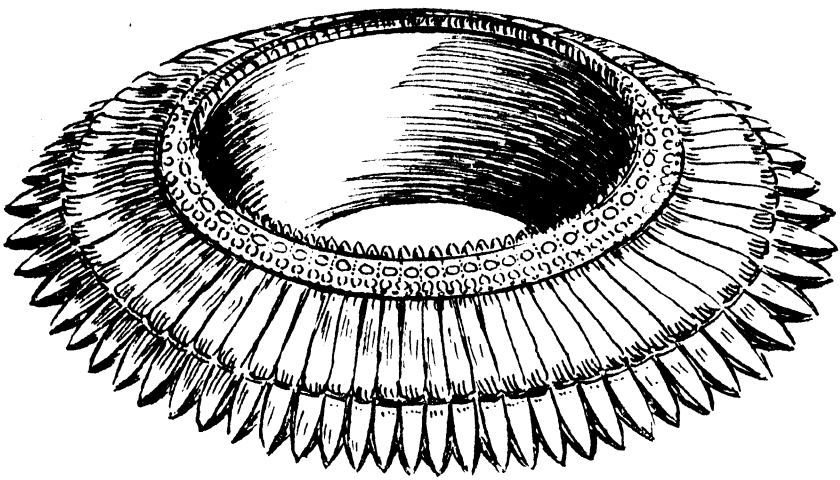


Fig. 12. A silver bracelet sometimes worn by Pardhans

'But within a few minutes the woman returns with a pot full of water and now she is Mata Kalsahin, the best and most auspicious of goddesses. The Pardhan who sees her then is ready to worship her. He throws a pice into the pot and goes on his tour full of hope and with a singing heart.

'The woman reaches the house and begins to sweep the kitchen. Now she is the goddess Bahiri-Batoran, who removes cholera from the village. But when she comes out to sweep the courtyard and the lane in front of her house, she sinks into a common sweeper-woman. In a moment, however, she changes again, for she goes into the cow-shed and becomes Mata Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune.

'Now it is time to serve the family with food and again her nature changes and she becomes Mata Anna-Kuari, the goddess of grain.

'In the evening she has to light the lamps in the house and now she is Mata Dia-Motin, the goddess who shines like a pearl. This done, she feeds her child and gently fans him to sleep and as she does this she becomes Mata Chawar-Motin.

'And then last of all she appears at night as the insatiate lover who must be satisfied. Now she is the goddess who swallows her man just as Lanka-Dahin swallowed Lanka in the flames.'

The Pardhan in fact regards woman at once with reverence, admiration, cynicism and amusement. The virtue in her that he admires most is that which is most conspicuously absent in his own character, the virtue of chastity and fidelity. In Patangarh stories are still told of a Gond woman who lived many years ago in the village. She never married and never looked on the face of man. She lived for sixty years as a *kanch-kuari*. 'She was Bhagavan though she was a human being and had breasts and parts and monthly course; yet her *ras* dwelt in her body and never left it. Her sweat and her *ras* dried of its own accord inside her body; so she was called Gad-Dokari. Every day she used to bathe and she lived as a saint.'

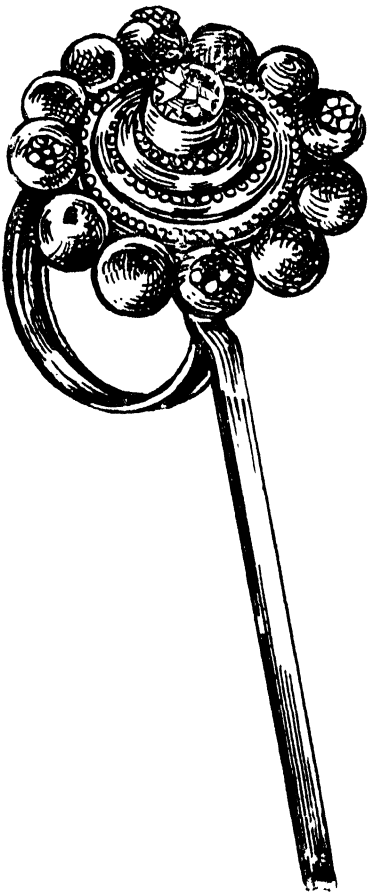


Fig. 13. A finger-ring

A Pardhan woman, Pusia by name, determined to imitate her when she saw the great reverence in which people held her. But life was too strong for her and soon after she had begun her saintly life she ran away with a lover. She became pregnant and returned repentant to the village. It is said that she was very beautiful and sang and danced like a *phitkari* bird. Many tried to win her, but she never looked on the face of man again.

Both these women are frequently mentioned and always with the greatest admiration. Few, however, reach this standard and I think the ordinary Pardhan does not consider it desirable that they should.

We may consider the Pardhan woman under various headings, as a member of society, as a wife and lover, as a mother and as a grandmother. As a member of society, she holds a position of dignity and freedom. It is true that she cannot normally hold or inherit property, but there are many exceptions to this rule. It is all a matter of personality. A vigorous and determined widow, with an ample store of picturesque abuse, may succeed in retaining her husband's possessions. Indeed, it is said that so long as she does not re-marry, she has a very good chance of resisting her male relations-in-law. But once she re-marries, she is generally forced to hand over to them even such small and valueless objects as axes or sickles.

In the ordinary affairs of daily life the functions of man and woman are somewhat strictly demarcated. A woman must not make a plough or use one. She must not make a bed or weave the strings across it. It is safer for her not to tie up bundles. Except on ceremonial occasions she must not wear a turban or the special loin-cloth of men. She must not speak at a meeting of the village elders. She must not thatch the roof of a house or even climb upon it during the month of Sawan. She must not entertain a man if she is alone in the house. An unmarried girl must never spend a night unchaperoned. On the other hand, a woman has the exclusive right or duty of making the earthen grind-stone[1] or earthen hearth. It is her business to make and use a fire-pot. Only she may wear the woman's ornaments and clothes. If her husband puts them on, he may be fined by the other villagers.

Some of these rules and restrictions are obviously connected with woman's function as the bearer of children. The prohibition on tying up bundles and weaving the strings of a cot is intended to avoid danger at the time of delivery when, on the principles of sympathetic magic, anything that has been shut up or tied up

[1] If a man makes a grindstone or carries a pot of water on his head, he is called *dauki-nandan* (jar of women), *chulha-choda* (hearth copulator, a name given to an uxorious husband who sits by the fire watching his wife cook) or Mahara (weaver: a caste whose men remain indoors with the women).

may be injurious. The rules about the entertainment of visitors are intended to protect a woman's reputation.

Although women of certain other tribes, notably the Saora and Baiga, are sometimes famous as priestesses, I do not know of any Pardhan woman who has become a Pujari or has performed the functions of a Panda. On the other hand it is quite common for women to be Baruas. Budhiya of Sanhrwachhappar is a well-known Barua and she may often be seen swaying to and fro, jerking her body in trance. Women also of course accompany and play an important part in supporting their husbands on the Mangteri expeditions, though they do not actually take any share in the ceremonies and songs.

A very common word used to describe a wife is *mal*, property. Woman herself is perhaps the most valuable piece of property that a man can own. This should not, however, be understood as meaning that the Pardhan has a low opinion of woman or looks down upon her. We do not generally, as a matter of fact, despise our most valuable possessions. The feminist may think that it is derogatory for a woman to be possessed by man but where she is so free and independent as in Pardhan society, the sense of being possessed is something treasured even by the woman herself.

For this freedom is a very real thing. Pardhan women go in groups to the hills and forests for wood and leaves and fruit. They can go to the bazaars without their husbands. They can join freely in the dances. They can initiate the complicated series of activities that lead to a divorce.

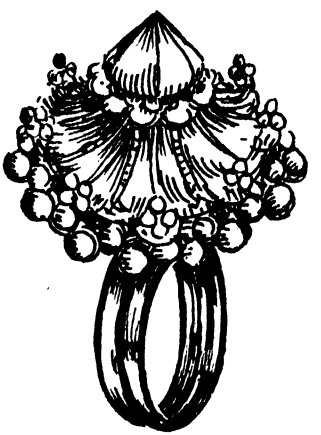


Fig. 14. A ring made by a Hindu silversmith for a Pardhan woman

As a wife the Pardhan woman is at once a source of supreme delight and intense anxiety to her husband. Whatever else the Pardhans may be, they are not humdrum. A Pardhan lives in perpetual fear of his wife. If she is beautiful and a hard worker, there are many young men who will notice her and if they are better-looking and have more to give her, the girl may not only have love affairs with them but may leave her husband altogether.

'A wife longs for good clothes and ornaments. Every night she must have sexual excitement. If the husband cannot give it, she accuses him of having secret love affairs or of not loving her properly. His wife will ruin his reputation when she goes down to the well, for there she will tell the other women how impotent he is.'

We have already seen how the Pardhan admires the virtue of chastity. He has an enormous reverence for the high caste Hindu woman, whom he regards as a Sati. Sarju once described a Hindu woman thus: 'Once a Hindu girl is married, her husband knows that she is his as long as he lives. He does not worry every time he goes anywhere for fear she is flirting or will elope with a better-looking man than himself. However badly he may treat her or whatever infidelities he may himself commit, she will remain his. But we poor Pardhans never have peace of mind.' On the other hand, however, Pardhans are critical of the social and domestic qualities of the women of the towns. They are believed to cook during the menstrual period. 'They pass wind and relieve themselves in public. They suffer from itch. They do not remove the pubic hairs—and when the midwife goes to them she cannot find her way to the well for the thick grass growing round it. Their clothes are too loose.' And if a town woman does become unfaithful at all, says the Pardhan, she becomes a regular prostitute.

Some husbands treat their wives very brutally and, as we shall see in the section on jealousy, there is a type of Pardhan man who is as possessive and suspicious as any in the world. But generally, Pardhans are very tolerant of their wives and even when they deceive them or run away with other men, they forgive them and try to bring them back.

I do not want to give the impression that the Pardhan woman is a woman of loose character. Since her sexual freedom within the tribe is more or less socially recognized there is an absence of psychological conflict. If so-called civilized people lived in the same way they might become very degraded, but a Pardhan woman never gives the impression of being loose or immoral. Perhaps it is because she does not sell her favours for money; perhaps it is because, as the Pardhans themselves say, 'If we do not believe a thing to be sin, it is not a sin and does not have the consequence of sin.'

In many cases, indeed, the relations of Pardhan men and women are of an almost ideal character. If a Dasondi has to leave his wife at home, he tells her on the eve of beginning his expedition: 'Go and bathe today, for tomorrow I go to the *karam kheti*, the field of fate which only bears a crop if our luck is good.' The wife makes him sit in her lap and feeds him with special food. 'Fie on god', she says, 'who has given us such a field to till, a field that separates us for months.' They swear to each other that they will be faithful, and as they part he gives her a turban which she will look at daily and keep always clean and ready for his return. She gives him a ring or bangle to remind him of her.

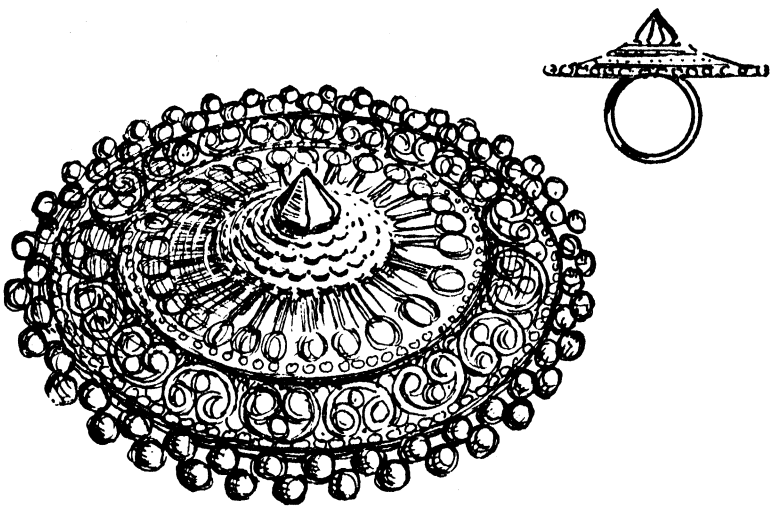


Fig. 15. An elaborate silver ring sometimes worn by Pardhan women

A Dasondi sometimes has to leave his wife in a Thakur's house on the way—if she is not well or unable to continue the journey. Then before he leaves he prays to Bara Pen to keep her in a continual menstrual period so that she will be permanently protected.[1]

As a mother the Pardhan woman is affectionate, careful and industrious. Her delight in a son is unbounded. Her whole life is his. How chill and aloof compared with this is the relation of a sophisticated or Western mother to her child—the feeding bottle, the nurse, the hygienic arrangements of lavatory and nursery, the

[1] This, it is said, was how Sita's virtue was preserved during her captivity in Lanka.

constant absence of the mother in social entertainment or business. Here the child spends his whole time with the mother and her entire energy and life is for him. She is his washerwoman, his sweeper, his first teacher, his chief playmate, his inseparable companion.

There is a drawback to this intense family devotion. It destroys initiative in later life. Children are so attached to their homes that they become incapable of adventure—except that of sex. Yet the thing itself is beautiful.

The mother feeds her child for several years; weaning is not generally practised until the mother is well advanced in pregnancy with the next child. The Pardhan mother appears to enjoy the task of nursing her baby and the child loves to fondle and play with the breasts and one of the first words it learns to say is *dudo*, breasts.

While a son is particularly loved by the mother during babyhood it is the daughter who naturally becomes the mother's companion and supporter when she grows a little older. The boy follows his father behind the plough and tries to be a man with a small axe or a toy hoe. The girl on the other hand goes with a tiny pot to fetch water from the well and soon learns to help her mother cleaning the house, cooking simple dishes and stitching leaf-plates.

A daughter swears by her father and says, 'If I am my father's daughter, I will not do this or that'. But a son swears by his mother: 'If I am my mother's son.' Yet a boy also says proudly, 'I am my father's tiger cub'.

II. The Character of a Pardhan's Love

The Pardhans, like the Baiga and other tribes at this stage of decadence, tend to be over-occupied with sex. It is hard to get them to talk on any other subject. It is necessary, however, to dispel the widespread fallacy that aboriginal love is 'merely physical'. The Pardhans have the intelligence to realize that the physical basis of love is enormously important and their erotic technique is far better than that of their neighbours. The Pardhan, for example, recognize what very few aboriginals and even civilized people recognize, that a man is not to seek his own pleasure but to give pleasure to his partner if he wants real happiness. A beautiful song illustrates this attitude,

My singer,
From that earthen drum
What sweet music you bring.
From the earthen drum of my body
Who can bring such music
As you, my singer?
Take, take me in your arms,
Sling me about your neck,
Play on me, on my body
Till I give the drum's sweet note.

The Pardhans, unlike the Baiga for example, know how to kiss.[1] They practice the love-bite and I know a youth whose whole body was covered with tiny marks of teeth a week or two after his marriage. The Pardhans laugh at the Gond's ignorance of love-technique. 'A Gond does not know how to do it. He cannot kiss. He does not even remove his cloth properly. He has his wife as if someone was after him, hurriedly as if he was in a field.' A great many Pardhan love songs have already been printed in *Songs of the Forest* and *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* and in these often beautiful poems it is possible to see how the natural physical approach to love blends with the spiritual affection that is not unknown to these simple people. The following songs have not previously been printed and they too illustrate the same thing.

Buy a beautiful sari
For the beautiful body you love,
I will wear it
And my body will be more beautiful
In your eyes.
I will wear it
While my body lasts;
Tomorrow when my body is cold
It will wear the earth
On which you tread.
Buy a sari while you can
For the body you love.

[1] Some Pardhans who are strict on the 'leavings' question, refuse to practice very intimate mouth or tongue kissing. 'If you allow her saliva to enter your mouth, you have eaten her leavings and are defiled.'

O lover wake!
Your bed sparkles with diamonds.
In their light look at me.
Let your eyes shine when you see me.
You must climb the steep hills,
Beyond which lie the joys of life.
Come climb them quickly,
And as you descend exhausted,
Lie beside me, and with my soft hands
That you adore
I will soothe your tired limbs,
With my soft hands.
I have sung Karma songs
As the line of dancers swayed under the moon.
I have sung Dadaria songs
As the girls picked mangoes in the forest.
With many a lovely girl
I have conversed in song,
But I have not known love
Till I met you today.[1]

How does love begin in the heart of a young Pardhan? A boy's romance is well illustrated by an actual description given me by a youth at Patangarh:

'When a boy falls in love with a girl he watches her whenever he can. At first he just gazes at her. He thinks in his mind, 'If only I can win her, I will bite her with my teeth'. His mind shakes and trembles for her. Gradually he becomes bolder and as she lives in his eyes and in his thoughts, he imagines things about her until he cannot resist speaking to her. One day he meets her alone as she is bringing water from the well. 'Girl,' he says, 'for days my heart has been in you.' 'No, boy,' she says. 'Do not enter my life, for there is trouble there. My husband will make life unbearable for us.' 'But he will never know and if he does, I will run away with you anywhere you like.' 'But how do I know,' replies the girl, 'that your love is deep? It may be shallow water and after enjoying me you will leave me in sorrow.' 'No, girl, no, girl, I want to live all my life looking at you.' And indeed if it is real love the boy forgets everything else and waits for a chance to be alone with her until the girl gives in and agrees to meet him. When they have at last

[1] For the final version of these songs I am indebted to Verrier Elwin.

arranged to meet somewhere, the boy is there waiting hours before she is due to arrive. He forgets his fear of wild animals or ghosts and stays happily in the pitch darkness. There he stays saying to himself, 'Now I will have her, I will have a new girl, I will bite her as I bite gram'.

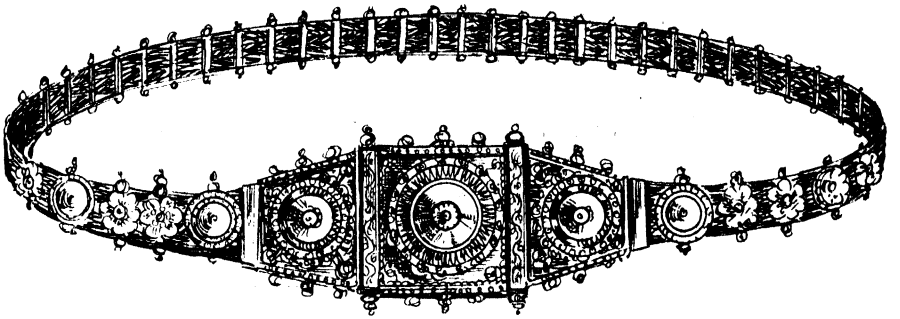


Fig. 16. A belt made by a Hindu silversmith and worn by Pardhans and other villagers

The Pardhans say that one of the reasons that they are so successful in love is because they are trained in their Mangteri tours to be sweet-tongued. 'We always have to flatter people or otherwise how could we get our Dan?' This is perhaps one reason why the Pardhans are such good poets. There is no doubt that their poetry makes a very great appeal to women and the Gonds have to take special precautions to protect their girls from their sweet tongues.

The influence of the dance on the erotic life of aboriginals should not be exaggerated. The dance is a sexual stimulant and by giving opportunity for the two sexes to meet in the exciting atmosphere of rhythm and music, it undoubtedly promotes love-affairs. But there are many other occasions when lovers can meet and I believe that a bazaar leads to far more irregular attachments than a dance, for at a dance a girl's husband and other relatives are usually present. But the following poem, recorded by me and translated by Verrier Elwin, shows how intimate and how exciting a dance can sometimes be.

Why will she not
Join her dark eyes to mine?
I go round and round her
With my drum hungrily.

I gaze at her
As the line circles round.
Why will she not
Join her dark eyes to mine ?
As she comes towards me dancing
I press my foot on hers.
I squat with my drum,
My eyes on her fair face.
But she avoids my eyes,
She has eyes for everyone but me.
I press my drum against her,
I press my free hands against her breasts,
I swing and leap and press my hands
Against her breasts.
Why will she not
Join her dark eyes to mine ?
Unless she looks at me,
The thunder of the drums, the song
Is like the croak of frogs,
The altercation of a flight of crows.
Why will she not
Join her dark eyes to mine ?

The Pardhan, like everyone else, is capable of loving a lot of other people and then of concentrating his entire affection in an overwhelming, all-absorbing disastrous passion for one person.

Many of the stories given in this book reveal in the first place an attitude to sexual love that in civilized man would be called promiscuous, for both men and women appear to shift their affections with very little difficulty. They divorce and remarry rather lightly. At certain festivals and bazaars it is said that there is a good deal of freedom between the younger men and women. For example, some years ago, there was a regular relationship between two whole villages. The men of Patangarh fell in love with the girls of Ghata, a village fifteen miles distant. The girls of Ghata would visit Gorakhpur bazaar in the neighbourhood of Patangarh and then spend the night in the open with the men, eating and drinking and lying together without embarrassment. One night the girls of Patangarh came to

know of it and followed their men and there was a pitched battle in which the Ghata girls were driven away.

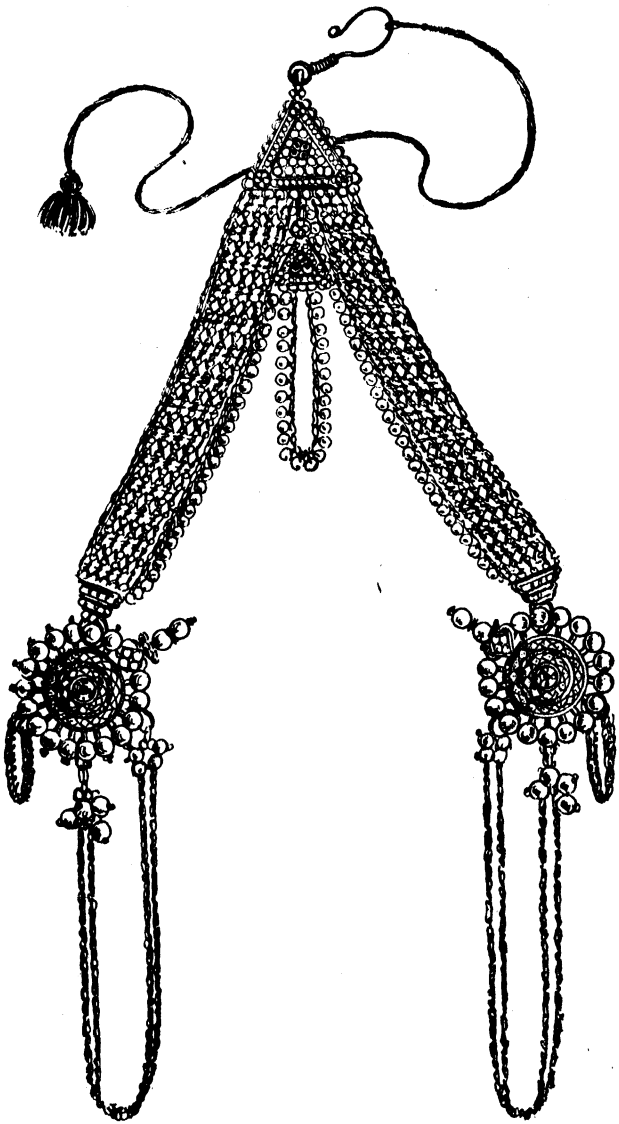


Fig. 17. *Dhar* and *sutia*, elaborate silver ornaments for head and ears

But at the same time—and this is what is interesting and important—this dissipation of sexual energy does not seem to impair the Pardhan's capacity for intense personal affection. There are scores of stories of famous lovers and many records

of faithful and devoted married couples. Take, for example, a pathetic case from Patangarh. A Pardhan youth fell in love with a beautiful girl, for whom his younger brother was serving as Lamsena. His younger brother was turned out because the girl's father disliked him, and the older boy went in his place, an action which was against tribal custom and aroused considerable opposition from the villagers and his own father. He was removed from the house by force and parted from the girl he loved. He almost went mad. He declared that he had become a Jogi and used to go about stark naked, begging from door to door for alms. He smeared his body with ashes and it was only when the whole village protested that he agreed to put on a small loin-cloth.

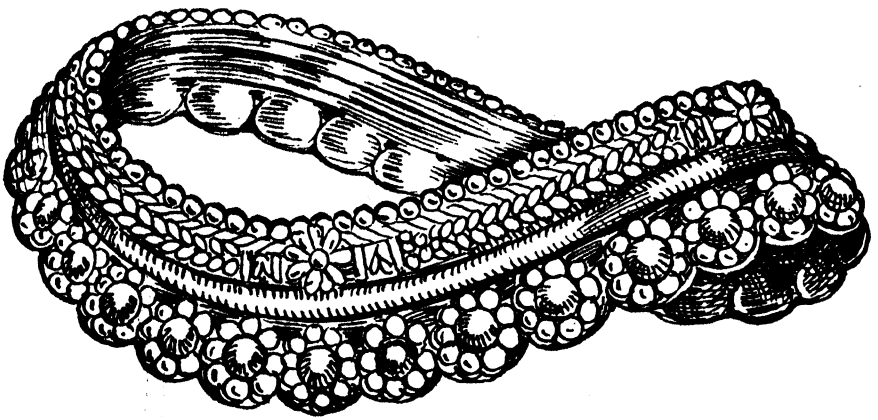


Fig. 18. An anklet

These drastic measures succeeded, for soon no one was talking of anything but the boy's broken heart and in time even his father relented. He was allowed to return to the girl's house and worked there as Lamsena. For a time the two lovers were inseparable, but after a year the girl wearied of him and fell in love with his own nephew. One day he returned home unexpectedly and found his girl sleeping with the boy while a friend was guarding the door. It is said that his heart was broken and he was unable to speak for several days. Ultimately the girl eloped with yet another man and for a long time her lover lived disconsolate and lonely, declaring that he would remain a bachelor for ever. After some time, however, he found a woman, an older woman who made him an admirable and affectionate wife and in later life he was very happy.

A rather similar tale of unrequited love is provided by the history of a young man whom I will call Dasu and his wife Rupa. Even before marriage Dasu had been in love with the girl and had had relations with her. Indeed he was so fond of her that in spite of his parents' opposition he went to her house to serve as a Lamsena. His parents regarded this as an insult, for they thought they were more important than the girl's family, and so they married the boy to her immediately. Dasu told me, 'I was mad about her, but she did not care for me. I used to stay in a corner of the house like a basket, while she went about flirting in the village. The other boys used to laugh at me, though many of them were sorry for me. They nick-named me Bhadkhan. She treated me like a slave and I became as thin as an ox-goad. Soon she became so bold that she would laugh and talk to other men in my presence and so at last I left her and went back to live with my parents. But I have always longed for her and in spite of all that she has done (for later she even married a man of her own clan) I still love her.'

III. The Tradition of Pre-Nuptial Freedom

Before marriage both boys and girls live lives of almost complete freedom. Both begin their sexual life far too young. Even little children of four or five years indulge in erotic play together and most boys and girls have had their first experiences long before puberty. The children grow up in an atmosphere of sex, for in this particular part of India, the village dormitory or club, that admirable institution which still in Bastar and Orissa segregates and disciplines the youth of the tribe, does not exist and the children often sleep in the same room as their parents. They listen to sex conversation and some of the earliest words on baby lips are the filthiest abuses describing illicit relations or the private parts. Some children, filled with curiosity, develop an intense desire to watch their elders having intercourse. One little girl used to watch her father who had his own technique: he never lay with his wife before beating her first. The old women in the village would give sweets and ornaments to the child to get her to describe the scene. When Dani was a child he says he used to creep into people's rooms and hide under the beds in order to watch everything that happened.

Elder people are amused and tolerant of the sexual adventures of their children. They appear to object to any attempt to correct them. They take the line that such adventures did them little harm and that in any case youth is a time for freedom and experiment. Darbari told me how he once came home late and found his seventeen-year old son with a Gond girl. He said nothing at the time, but next morning warned the boy: 'Eat and drink, but be careful. Don't show off or you will come to grief. Don't do it in the house or someone may see you.' But that was all; it was commonsense advice without moral indignation.

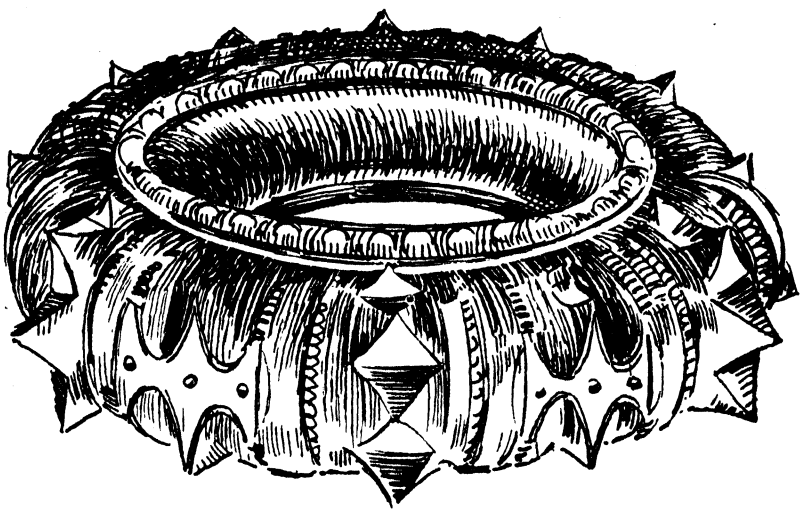


Fig. 19. A heavy silver bracelet

Of course, as boys and girls become mature, their adventures are of a more serious character. It is safe to say that almost every Pardhan girl has several fairly serious love affairs before her marriage. The existence of the hymen is unknown, for every girl has had it gradually and imperceptibly destroyed. Marriage, as in so many other tribes, is not the beginning of sexual experience; it is only the beginning of its discipline. But although men do not look for the 'tokens of chastity', they are apt to complain if a young wife has been too obviously possessed by others. A Lamsena once told me his intense disappointment and unhappiness when on the first night with his wife he found she was not a virgin. He had worked for her parents' family as a slave for three years. 'I was lost inside. My penis wobbled in

it like a ladle in a pot which has not a single grain of rice left in it.'

The one unforgivable sin for an unmarried girl is to conceive. The Pardhans, like the Murias I saw in Bastar State, are great hypocrites over this. Although they are well aware of the natural result of intercourse, they give every freedom to their girls to indulge it but should that natural result occur, they treat the unfortunate child as if she was the worst of criminals.

The first thing is to attempt an abortion. If this fails and the baby is actually born, it is sometimes quietly put out of the way. I heard of one case long ago where such a baby was left in the house by the mother and in her absence the grandmother mixed a little ash in water, gave it to the child and thus killed it. On another occasion, the old stale food that is set aside for the ancestors, and which is considered poisonous, was given to such a child and it died.

If the father is himself a Pardhan and does not stand in any forbidden relationship to the girl, less fuss is made, but if he is of the same clan or of another tribe or caste, then an elaborate and unpleasant ceremony must be performed 'to take her back into the lamp of the tribe'. The girl is taken down to the nearest stream and made to cross it. While she is going over, the people pelt her with dirt and cow-dung. She is made to drink a mixture of human dung and urine, goat's blood and one of her own pubic hairs. This hair is believed to go on twirling round and round in her body and thus to purify her. Her parents must pay a fine and they have to give the usual penalty fees to the village. Officially, the girl's head should be shaved. In practice, she is given the chance of 'buying her hair back' before this drastic action is taken. A relation pays the necessary fees, and the girl is let off with the loss of a few hairs.

IV. Pardhan Dreams

The dreams of the Pardhans, apart from the conventional dreams of warning and encouragement, appear to be generally compensatory for their poverty and somewhat inferior social position. In the dream world the Pardhan finds himself admired, wealthy, successful, potent. He is adored by lovely women. He is treated with respect by officials. He has the best of food and when he

goes on Mangteri, an attentive host. For example, a very poor Pardhan saw in a dream:

A great city of gold with three-storied houses. There were great beds with new mattresses and clean white sheets. There were girls dancing everywhere and they welcomed me with great cordiality, making me sit down and offering me a feast of rice and meat.

The dreamer told me that when he was woken up in the middle of this dream, he was so annoyed that he beat his son who roused him.

A middle-aged Pardhan of Patangarh had a similar compensatory dream. He saw himself as a famous Panda. He was so important that anyone who wished to speak to him had to climb up a ladder. He says that he saw myself and Verrier Elwin coming to him for consultation when we got ill.

Another informant had a curious dream about elephants which was associated in his mind with love.

One night I saw two elephants flying through the air towards me. They had no trunks but each had two large tusks. One of the elephants flew by but the other sat down near me. Suddenly I heard a beautiful Brahmin girl crying, 'O brother, save me from this elephant; it is trying to bite me'. I asked her what she would give me if I saved her. She stood shyly not looking at me and not speaking. I at once got up and drove the elephant away and took her in my arms. When I awoke I felt that what had happened was absolutely true.

Another erotic experience connected with an animal is found in the following dream which the dreamer, has regularly twice every month and which he says 'works like a tonic on him'.

I saw myself sleeping in a house which has two rooms and three doors. A girl comes in with a bit of broken earthenware which is burning hot. She puts it down in a corner of the room and then picks me up and carries me to a bed where we sleep together like husband and wife. Then she goes away and after a little while an enormous man carrying a long thick stick comes to the house and shouts from outside, 'Where is the Rani?' I am so frightened that I cannot utter a word. My mouth seems to be shut with nails. Then the man puts his long thick stick in through the door and moves it about, trying to find if the girl is hidden anywhere. When he cannot find her he goes away. Then comes a donkey which stands in front of the door and tries to kick me. What wakes me up is the noise of the donkey's kicks on the walls of the house.

Like other aboriginals the Pardhans have many experiences of intercourse with the ghost known as Churelin. This ghost, which is usually dangerous and malignant, has the power of taking the form of a beautiful girl. It approaches a man and robs him of his strength. Sometimes the ghost appears in the form of a man's mother or sister, sometimes of a legitimate lover, but never (I think) of a man's wife. The attitude of the Pardhans to these encounters is a curious blend of pleasure and alarm. The dream is known to be dangerous and yet it is difficult to resist the pleasant memory.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PARDHAN IN LIFE AND DEATH

I. Birth

The most striking thing about the Pardhan's attitude to childbirth is the absence of any kind of fear or excitement. It is regarded as something so natural that nobody should make a fuss about it. It is extraordinary to see how calmly and naturally even a young girl about to have her first baby faces the ordeal, without anxiety and of course without any kind of normal medical or surgical assistance. Preparations for delivery are unheard of. Usually the people are unable to calculate properly the expected time, for they have a theory that a girl is born in nine months and a boy in ten. They go on working till the last moment and sometimes children are delivered out in the jungle or by the path as the mother is coming home with a bundle of leaves. It is, however, considered improper for a child to be born outside the house and the father who allows it is penalized.

When the pains start and the mother knows that 'her weight is now to be lightened', women take her into the house, into the main room and keep her company, encouraging her by jokes, massaging her with oil. The Pardhans have no objection to the employment of midwives (even those belonging to other castes) and the midwife is sent for immediately. The thing that chiefly seems to engage the attention both of the midwife and the attendants is the expulsion of the placenta. There is a theory that the placenta is jealous of its little companion who is now going to live while it is doomed to death, and it is supposed that it tries to slip up into the womb and attack the liver, thus killing the mother. After the presentation of the child the midwife gives the mother some of her own hair and scraps of bitter gourd, thrusting the hair into her mouth to make her retch and strain. If this does not expel the placenta a clever midwife will insert her hand, feeling along the cord until she can gently draw it out.

The cord is usually cut by the midwife with a thick reed on a broken bit of earthenware. The cord and placenta are then buried inside the house near the place of birth and a special

fire called Sairi is lit above. This fire is kept burning as long as the umbilical stump remains on the child.

When a boy is born the people place a spear in the courtyard to show that a warrior (Kshattri) has come into the world. If a girl is born, a spear is set up in the house of the mother's parents, for they say that they have now got a daughter-in-law for one of the warriors in their own house—an interesting reference to cousin-marriage.

If a child sneezes immediately after birth, it is not considered lucky. This sneeze is called the *raktah-chhik,* 'the sneeze of blood', and it is supposed that in after life whenever anything is to be done the child will sneeze and thus give a bad omen. But if the child sneezes after he has been purified by the sprinkling of water it is considered lucky, for this is a clean sneeze.

Soon after delivery the child is bathed and anointed with oil. Sometimes a little black soot and a little dust from the father's toe is smeared on his face. He is not given the mother's breast immediately. If when the time comes he refuses it, it is supposed that the soul of one of his ancestors is troubling him and the child's feet are washed in a little liquor. After this, it is believed that the ancestor is pleased and allows the child to take his milk.

The Sairi fire must always be allowed to smoulder: it must not be fanned into a flame. If it burns brightly it is supposed to make the child a great breaker of wind in later life. This fire burns to the sixth day. On the second or third day the mother is given a ritual meal known as Path. When this food is offered her she is also given the root of the *tin-pania.* It is said that when this root is pulled up, if it comes unbroken the child will live long but if it is broken or has side-roots he will have a troubled life. The juice of the root is extracted and a sickle is made red-hot and dipped into it. The juice is given to the mother immediately before she has her food. This is said to build up her body and she gets pure milk for her baby. The food eaten consists of chickens, young bamboo-shoots or *barri* which are supposed to be special strength-giving things.

On the sixth day after birth the little Chhatti ceremony is celebrated. This is mainly intended for women, for the mother, the midwife and the immediate neighbours. There is liquor and some good food. The Sairi fire is now extinguished and even if there are bits of wood unconsumed they should be thrown

away. The whole house is cleaned. The mother's brother comes on this day and cuts two hairs from the back of the child's head and two from his forehead. A lamp is lit by the place of birth but the child must not be allowed to see it, for it is believed that if he does he will become cross-eyed. It is indeed a common way of teasing anyone afflicted with a squint to address him as 'You who saw the lamp'.

On the twelfth day the Barhi ceremony occurs. This is for everybody and it is on this day that the child's name is given. There is a feast, large or small according to the family's means, and there is plenty of liquor to drink and much jubilation.

It is supposed that if the umbilical stump of the child does not fall at the proper time he will become a great miser but if it falls too soon he is expected to be a spendthrift.

In case of difficult or delayed delivery the Pardhans follow the customs and adopt the remedies common to other aboriginal tribes. Most of these are based on the principles of sympathetic magic. The mother is given water in which a bit of a tree struck by lightning has been dipped; she is given water that has been passed down the barrel of a gun. In extreme cases a long line of people is made from the well to the house and a pot of water is passed up it and on to the roof when the husband lets it fall through a hole into the mother's mouth.

But the Pardhans do not only rely on supernatural means. They have considerable faith in the wisdom of the local midwives and doctors. For example, in Girari there is an Ahir man who has made many operations to save Pardhan women. He has his eyes tied so that he cannot see the woman's privates and where the child has died in the womb he cuts it out bit by bit. A woman called Makkaya, a Sahis of Manikpur, was famous at this kind of operation. Dayaram, the very old Pardhan of Patangarh, was once present when a Pardhan girl's baby died in the womb. Makkaya was sent for. When she came she first removed the bangles and ornaments from her hands. She filed her nails on a stone and covered her hands with a lot of oil. Then taking a very sharp blade about two inches long and very narrow between two of her fingers, she inserted her hand into the womb and cut the foetus into little bits and brought them out. She was paid five rupees for this and was fed for two days on ghee, milk and rice. But the mother died and turned into a Churelin. The

poor ghost is said to have grown feathers on her body and people recall how she used to fly to and fro above the grave of her child and tried to carry away any living child that was so rash as to approach.

II. Marriage

I do not propose to give an account of a Pardhan marriage since this has already been given in great detail in *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, but a number of additional details and aspects of the marriage ceremony may well be stressed.

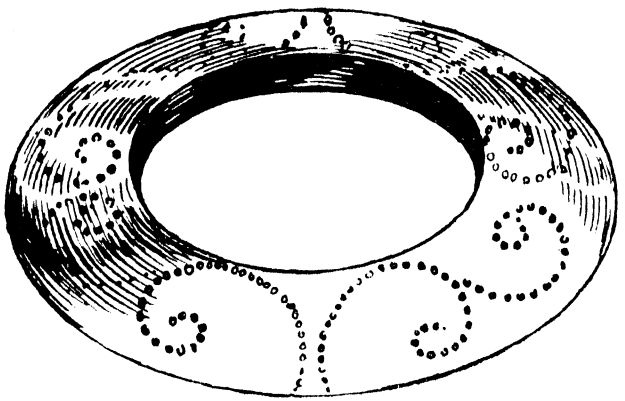


Fig. 20. A light brass bracelet

Marriages among the Pardhans are always arranged by the parents. This does not mean, of course, that a boy or girl is going to spend his life with the partner chosen by his family, for in many cases, more frequently perhaps among the Pardhans than among the Gonds, the official formal marriage is only a prelude to a life of romantic adventure. The official wife sometimes counts for comparatively little in a youth's thoughts and desires. After a few experiments he may find another girl who is herself officially married to some one else, and may decide that she is his true *jori* or yoke-fellow. If he has found such a partner he is generally extremely faithful to her. But in other cases family ties are strong. The marriage is frequently arranged between a boy and his mother's brother's daughter and this union of two families thus leads to much convenience and is a useful working arrangement for daily life.

The business of betrothal is largely dependent on the work of an intermediary who is generally called the Adhiya (other names for him are the Mahil or Kuttari). I will give one example from Madhopur village. Juggu wanted to get a wife for his son. His wife's brother Deolal had a girl of suitable age, so Juggu called a friend, Anandi, and employed him as Adhiya to find out whether Deolal would be willing to give the girl. Anandi chose his time carefully and one day when Deolal was in the Bamhni bazaar he said to him : 'A guest is going to come to your house'. Deolal immediately realized what this meant and replied with the conventional formula, 'Why is the guest coming to my house ? Is there not trouble enough ? Let there be no naked fire in a palace or guest in a poor man's house'. 'No', said the Adhiya, 'there is nothing to worry about, it will be entirely for your profit.' 'These are the days of hunger. This guest may be coming to take a loan or to recover rent on behalf of the landlord and I am myself nothing but a beggar.' After a great deal more of this, Deolal at last said, 'Very well, let him come'.

All the time Juggu was hovering round anxiously, waiting to see how the dialogue would go and when he saw signs of agreement he came forward with a bottle of liquor. The three men went aside and sat down and Juggu folded a leaf into a little cup, filled it with liquor and handed it to Deolal. 'Why are you bothering to chase a poor man like me.' 'It has nothing to do with riches or poverty. It has simply to do with relationship (*nat*). A *nat's* daughter is married by a *nat*.' Then Deolal agreed that Juggu should come to his house the following day.

When Deolal went home that night he told his wife, 'Today some one has sought for our child'. The next morning the women were up early and cleaned the house and got ready to receive their future Samdhi. Presently Juggu arrived carrying two bottles of liquor. All through the day they sat and drank and in the evening they invited the village elders. First of all they offered some drops of liquor to the gods of the house. Then Deolal's wife said, 'Look, Samdhi, had we not better send first for the boy and let the boy and girl see each other ? We may be great friends but nothing can happen unless they like each other. We may be the greatest enemies but if they are one in heart they

will drag us together and make peace.' After a few days therefore Juggu sent his son to the house and the boy came in very shyly. 'Why are you looking so shy, my father', said Deolal. A chicken was killed in the boy's honour and apparently he liked his future bride and she liked him, for soon after the Sagai ceremony was held. This ceremony is first and foremost a business transaction. There was endless discussion about the exact amount of bride-price that was to be paid. It was finally settled at five *kuros* of *kodai,* two-and-a-half *kuros* of pulse, salt and grain, a tin of liquor, a pair of drums, two saris for the bride's mother, a cloth for the bride's grandmother and fifteen rupees in cash. This whole amount is known officially as *kharcha,* a word that is continually heard in the civil and criminal courts.

A very important moment in the preliminaries to the marriage occurs when the girl puts on a string of black beads which she receives at the hand of her future husband. This is the first official present from him and after she has received it, it is considered that she has joined the gods and ancestors of her husband's house and clan and has no more to do with those of her own house.

The dominant business note of a Pardhan's bethrothal is evident also all through the beautiful and poetic symbolism of the actual wedding. A casual visitor to a Pardhan village is not likely to realize how completely the people are united and economically interdependent, until he sees them at a marriage or a funeral. The very first thing that a woman will probably say when the question of her daughter's betrothal is mooted is, 'The girl belongs to the *panch.* Let us ask them'. Below this saying is the feeling that the girl is ultimately the property of the village. There is also the desire, of course, to flatter the elders so that later during the marriage ceremony they will give every kind of help. And indeed at the time of a marriage the whole village comes forward with its assistance. Some of the women help in grinding turmeric, the young men and boys go willingly to cut wood for the marriage-booth. Everybody bustles round the place, excited and united.

In the bride's village there is an equal feeling of sorrow that a girl is going to leave her old companions. Her marriage means a loss not only to her own home but to all her neighbours. Her laughter will no longer be heard at the well. She will no more chatter gaily with the party of boys and girls going to fetch wood

or leaves from the jungle. So when the Water Carrier comes to fetch her for the marriage, the young girls trouble him in every possible way. 'You are taking our little friend away. Pay us for this breaking of friendship.' They give him a wrong girl and roar with laughter at his discomfiture. They jump on his back and make him carry them about. They throw mud and cow-dung

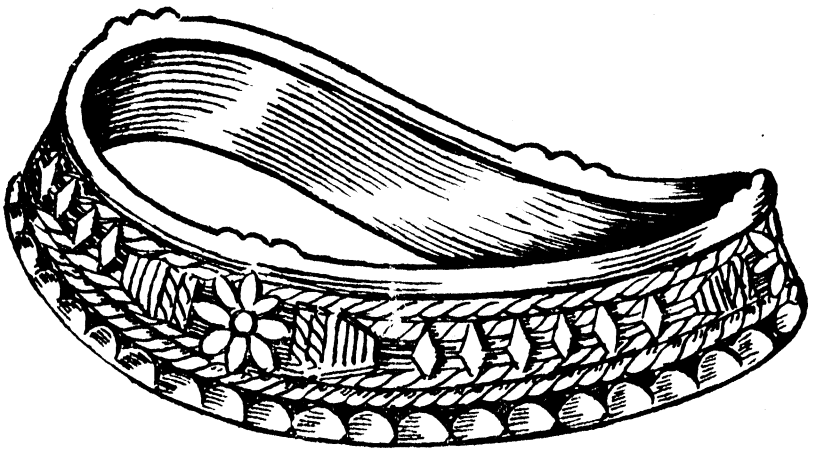


Fig. 21. An anklet of bell-metal

at him and force him to perform all sorts of undignified tasks. He is only able to take the bride away after giving many small presents. All this is conventional but it does indicate a real deep feeling of attachment for every person who has grown up in the village and reflects the very old custom of territorial exogamy rather than clan exogamy.

The economic aspect of the marriage is further illustrated by the incidents before the ceremony which are commonly known as Neng. The Neng is an occasion when people refuse to perform their ritual duties until they receive a special present for doing so. At every point of the marriage these Nengs occur and almost every one of the bride's relatives can claim a special Neng from the bridegroom's parents.

The bride's family is indeed almost unbearable during the whole process of the marriage. They feel that they are giving a girl away at a very cheap rate. All the time they are considering that they have not received a sufficient bride-price and that the entertainment they are given is inadequate and even insulting. The bride's father, her mother and her eldest brother behave

as if they were the only people who matter and sometimes the things they do and say lead to years of ill-feeling between the two families. When the bride's brother arrives at the bridegroom's village—and he always comes on horseback—several of the bridegroom's party must rush forward to hold his horse and assist him to alight as if he were a Raja. They shout 'Bring a garment quickly for the Bandhel horse, bring gram for the great horse Hansraj'. Even then the bride's brother shows every sign of dissatisfaction. He and the other members of the girl's party examine every detail of their entertainment with a critical and suspicious eye. The first thing they demand to see is the supply of liquor. One of them puts his leg into the pot and if the level of the liquor does not rise to his thigh, the party threatens to return home and to stop the ceremony. They usually expect a goat or a pig for their supper and this is carried out to their camp (which is always made outside the village), tied to a long pole carried on the shoulders of two men. Very poor people are often only able to give a cock but this too is hung on the pole and carried out as if it were a goat. Then the visitors laugh and say, 'How many legs has this wonderful goat of yours?'. Sometimes when they return back home the bride's party say, 'The bridegroom got a lovely bride for his bed, but all we got were the ashes of his hearth'. On one occasion I attended the marriage of a very poor man who could not afford to buy a goat or pig at any stage of the marriage ceremony. All he could give his visitors was rice and pulse. But the elders knew how poor he was and they said it would be sufficient if he hung a cock up on a pole in front of the people while they were feeding.

From the very beginning of the marriage there are conventional jokes which may be made and a good deal of horseplay is permitted. Those relations who stand in a joking-relationship to bride or bridegroom are able to indulge their sense of humour to the very full. I have already mentioned how the unfortunate Water Carrier is teased by everybody. The younger brothers and sisters of the bride or bridegroom and the parents-in-law play with haldi, throw dirt and ashes about, spray each other with water and often indulge in the obscenest kind of trick. Everybody loves to go with the wedding party which takes a girl to the bridegroom's house. It is indeed a pleasant show. The party goes at night and the

boys and girls dance and run along singing Dadaria at the top of their voices. When they approach the bridegroom's village, the old men come out waving empty bottles in the air and holding burning dung-cakes in their hands as a sign that they want liquor and tobacco. Everybody laughs and jokes. Later when the bride and bridegroom are getting ready inside the house, the only people permitted to be present are those in a joking relation to them and they push the bride on top of the groom, make them catch hold of each other and kiss each other, partly to embarrass them and partly, they say, to rouse love and desire in their hearts.

On the other hand, a marriage is often a scene of serious quarrels. I have already mentioned the offensive behaviour of the bride's attendants and their constant criticism of the hospitality that is offered them. It is the bride's mother who generally causes trouble, for she is full of complaints about the food, the liquor and the presents that she considers she should receive. But however bad a quarrel may be it is considered essential that nobody should leave the wedding in a huff. Should a man walk out of the house the elders follow him and spread a dhoti on the ground in front of him saying, 'Now spit three times and go away'. After this he has to return.

The abuse that is so freely poured out all through the ceremony is little more than a conventional test of wit. I doubt very much if it has any deeper importance and I am sceptical of the suggestion that it releases forces of fertility. Most of the people who give this abuse are slightly or entirely drunk and many of them do not even know what they are saying. The abuse is often given and received in the utmost good humour. The mock fight also which is a prominent feature of every marriage never leads to a real quarrel, unless someone should be so unfortunate as to let his turban fall on the ground, for it is considered very disrespectful to appear on a ceremonial occasion bareheaded. The friendly character of the fight is most clearly indicated by the fact that when it is over the two parties exchange drums and girls, and men of the bridegroom's party carry the drums of the bride's party and dance with the bride's girls.

The Pardhans are slowly beginning to marry their children young. The old custom was usually an adult marriage and indeed the marriage ceremony is essentially an adult performance and not an affair for children. But under the all-pervading influence of

popular Hinduism the age of marriage is becoming younger and younger all the time. There is a curious little ceremony when two young people, say children of six and seven years old, are married. They are taken by their attendants into a private room

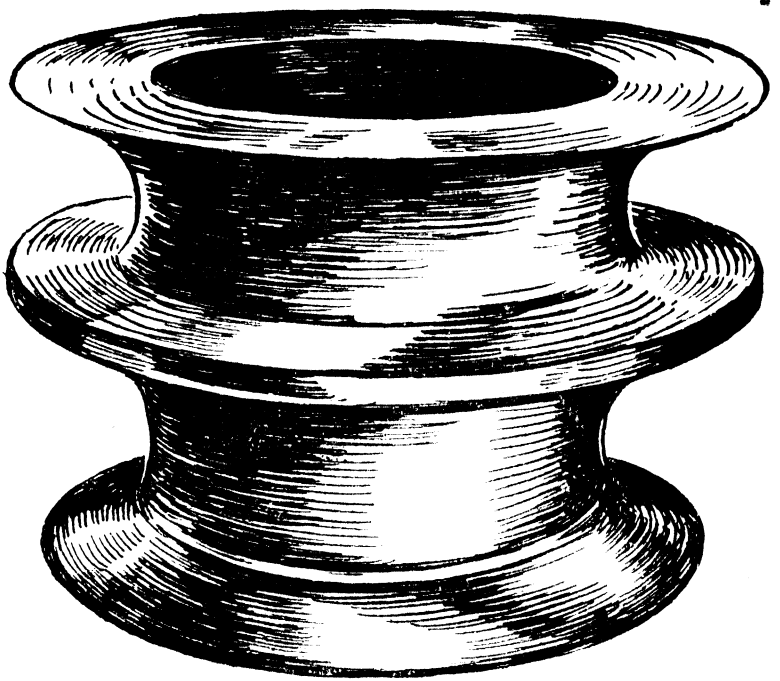


Fig. 22. Heavy brass anklet, now only rarely worn by Pardhan women

and the little girl is made to lie down and uncover herself. The little boy is made to sit between her legs and touch her private parts with his. The idea of this is that, whatever may happen later (and since the girl is not likely to go to live with her husband until she is fifteen or sixteen she will probably not be a virgin when she goes to him) he has at least possessed her virginity. The saying is that he has had her *arag*. The word *arag* means literally 'virgin'. It is applied especially to water that is brought from a stream or well very early in the morning before dawn, before anyone else has touched it or any bird has had the opportunity to let its droppings fall upon it.

III. Death

'Humanity is the crop sown by Bhagavan as human beings sow grain. Every time a man dies it means Bhagavan has had

to cut the crop, for he needs it in heaven to feed the gods.' This was told me by a very old and clever Pardhan who has seen hundreds of deaths in his life. 'But whatever happens to us after death, the life only leaves the body with great difficulty,' said he.

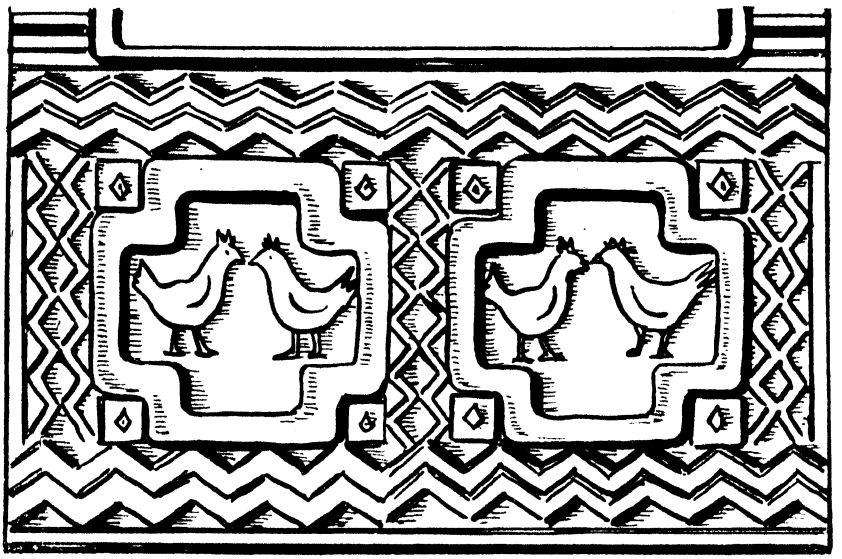


Fig. 23. Pardhan wall-decoration in mud relief

After death the soul is spoken of as going to Bhagavan, or as returning to the house to be reborn in a child, or as hovering about the village as an angry and dissatisfied ghost. The Pardhan theologians, like the theologians of all tribal India, are in a great muddle over this. They do not say expressly that the soul of a dead man disintegrates into three parts, one going to Bhagavan, one being reborn on earth and one remaining as a ghost. They do not put it like that in so many words. But that is what it comes to. First of all then the soul goes to Bhagavan and is there either rewarded or punished. If the deceased has been a particularly bad man, Bhagavan's messenger thrusts an iron spike up his bottom and carries him to the Upper World over his shoulder. There he is cut up with a long saw. He is given buckets of human pus to drink. If he has been lustful he is castrated. On the other hand, if he and his wife have been faithful to each other and loving, they are re-united in Bhagavan's house.

This is one aspect of the future life. But at the same time and quite inconsistently, the Pardhans say that the dead man will be reborn again, perhaps immediately afterwards, into the same family. When a child is born and he refuses to take his mother's milk, his feet are washed with milk and liquor. This represents the washing of the feet of a person after his return home from a long journey. It is supposed that the dead man who has been reborn in the child will be pleased by this and will allow him to take the mother's milk. Most of the Pardhans now also have adopted from Hinduism a belief in transmigration into animal form. If a man has killed a cow or has even been specially cruel to his cattle, he may be reborn as a bullock in an oilman's house. Some say that before he can reach ultimate release by being merged in Bara Deo, a man must pass through all the different forms of life.

Thirdly, as a study of the funeral ceremony immediately reveals, the people are desperately anxious to prevent the dead man's ghost from finding its way back to the house. They take many precautions against this and yet at the same time, on the tenth day, the women bring a fish which represents the Jiva or soul of the dead man and put it down inside the building. The Bhut or ghost is to be avoided. The Jiva or 'life' is to be tended and honoured.

The Pardhans, like members of other tribes, regard the dead and particularly the ancestral dead as continuing to play a part in human affairs. This part is generally an unpleasant one. The dead are irritable and easily offended and if they consider that they have not received proper attention they indicate their displeasure by sending diseases and tragedy upon a house or village. Offerings are made on all the chief occasions of life in honour of the dead and, after the Kunda ceremony, it is the special duty of the Pujari's wife to make an offering daily for all the dead of her clan.

When it is evident that death is approaching, the relatives of the dying man gather round to give him a strange and ominous last comfort. 'As we do not go unprepared on a Mangteri tour, so the dying man does not like to go without something for his journey.' When the family sees that there is no hope for the dying man they put a rupee with a little curd into his mouth and

try to make him swallow it. This last feast of the dying is called Samrahi.

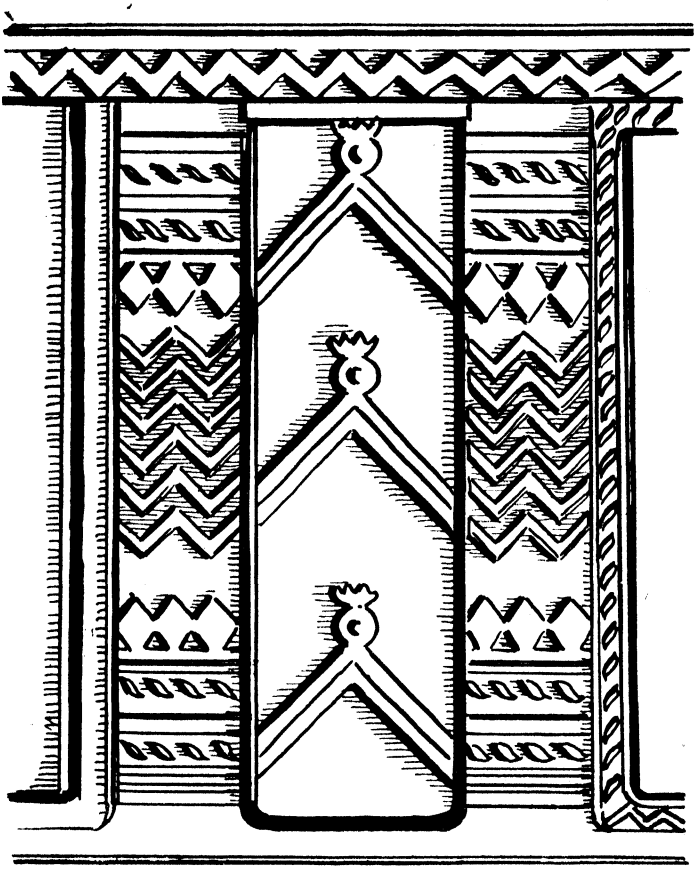


Fig. 24. Pardhan wall-decoration

When a man dies he is lifted off the bed on to the ground, which must be freshly cow-dunged. On each side of him sit two women fanning him with the ends of their saris and weeping; a mother says something like this: 'O my father, why have you left me and why have you run away from your mother. You have become a bird; where have you gone? Where will I find you again? In whose protection have you left me? O my life, O my life, O my life! Who will eat all you have earned? Who will help me to earn when I am starving?'

The singing at the time of death—for Pardhans when they weep usually sing to a very beautiful tune—is extremely heart-breaking

though it is pleasant to listen to. The poetry of the impromptu songs is natural and real. If the death is of a husband the woman says, 'O my ploughman, to whom will I show your drum? Who will play on it now? Who will use that turban? Who will wear your shirt? O my wise man, how splendid you used to look when you tied your turban? It was beautiful like a honeycomb, my great lord, O my great lord.'

Sometimes the songs sung by the mourners are of great beauty. Verrier Elwin once heard an old woman mourning for her dead child and noted down on the spot what she said.

My little son
Where have they hidden you?
My little son
Have they put you behind the grain-bin?
Have they hidden you down in the wheat-field?
Have they taken you to the forest
And covered you with leaves?
O where have they hidden you
My little son?

I will give two other examples which I have heard during funerals at Patangarh.

I

My son, while you lived I was a queen
For you lay between my breasts
As on a royal throne.
But now you are dead
I must lay you
In the hard ground.

II

So long as my Lord breathed
I lived upon the throne,
But since he died
How worthless are my bangles,
And the world is empty.

Then five people of the village gather and begin to discuss. They ask the eldest person in the house, 'What will you do?

Burn him or bury him?' If he is a very poor man and has no wood in the house, he quietly says, 'I will burn him. I will pull down my house to do so'. But some wiser man says, 'Why do you want to do that? We know you are poor'. And it is enough for the person to suggest that he will bury the body.

Meanwhile, outside the house the younger men are busy preparing the bier on which the dead body is to be carried on to the burial-ground. The first task is to buy a bit of land for the grave. Somebody is sent with one pice to buy it from the Domar. This is an old tradition. The idea is to purchase a little piece of land, which will only cost one pice, but which the dead man will possess eternally.

Before the body is taken out of the house it is smeared with a little haldi and the clothes and ornaments are removed. It is wrapped in a new cloth. Then one of the members of the house pulls at the string around his waist and breaks it saying, 'Go as you came, without any clothes'. When the body is being removed the eldest person in the family or the widow says, 'Go, take with you all your things that you loved so much in the world. Take your fire-pot, take the leaves for your pipe, take the little wooden seat that you used to sit on, take your earthen pipe, for you will need all these things in your lonely grave'.

This touching consideration for the corpse is always evident. As the bearers carry it to the burial-ground, they stop on their journey from time to time and rest for a moment or two. This is supposed to give, not the carriers but the dead body a little rest. When they reach the burial-ground, the people carry the corpse three times round the grave and then bury it. Everyone who comes from the village brings a few *sivla* twigs and throws them into the grave.

If the corpse is cremated, the twigs are given to the eldest son and he throws them on to the pyre. The dead man is always placed with his head towards the south. When the boy sets fire to the wood, he does so sitting with his back to the pyre with his hands behind him. Then when the pyre is burning one man stands by the head and another by the legs and they throw an axe to each other three times.

Then the company retires a little distance and the men sit there talking about the goodness and the merits of the dead man, while his corpse is burning. When they are sure that the body has been

completely burnt, they go down to the nearest stream and bathe. Here a *nat*-relative smears mud on the mourners' heads and presents them with twigs to clean their teeth. Two twigs are given; one the mourner can use and the other is of reed which he must take in his hand, split in two and throw into the water. The man with the axe or crowbar has his bath quickly and goes ahead and stands in the path waiting for the others to come. The eldest son leads the party and they follow him in a long line. When he comes to the path the eldest son picks up a little pebble with his left foot and quietly passes it on to the next man who is walking behind him and thus the pebble is passed from one to another till the last man takes it and throws it away without looking round. This is done to make sure that the dead man's soul does not follow the mourners back to the house. It is supposed that it gets into the pebble, which is thrown towards the river and no one looks behind. When the mourners reach the man who is standing with the axe or crowbar, the eldest son touches the axe or crowbar with the little finger of his left hand and walks on and the others follow his example.

In some cases the eldest son takes in his cloth a little water; he goes to the pyre on his way home and sprinkles the water on it. This is done to quench the thirst of the dead. This boy should keep a betel-cutter with him for three days, lest the evil ghost of the dead man attack him.

The party proceeds to the dead man's house and there the hostess gives each of them a little oil which they smear on legs and feet and head. This is to purify the body after coming from the funeral. Then a *nat* brings a bottle or two of liquor; this is supposed to wash away all the sorrows of the mourners. The *nat* also brings their food. This food is known as Golhatti. It is given for the next three days by different *nats*. The first time the *nat* brings it, he has to persuade the mourners to eat it. He takes every mourner's hand forcibly and puts it into his mouth with the words, 'This is not food, this is only putting a stick into the mouth of the gods', a curious saying which probably means that, 'You have to eat something to keep your body alive, for such is the rule of the gods'.

On the third day food is cooked inside the mourner's house by the *nat*. On this day fish is cooked and this is the first time the mourners can eat living things. Till then they are supposed to

take nothing but rice and pulse. After the meal is over, the day for the big Kam is settled. If the man is very poor and if he is unable to do it on the normal tenth day, he begs for some more time, but to get permission to do this, he usually has to give a rupee worth of liquor.

On the tenth day the big ceremony of Kam is performed. Kam is most essential because if it is not done, the life of the dead man hovers round the house and is not at all in peace. Early in the morning on the tenth day the women assemble and go to gather the ashes of the dead man which are thrown into the nearest river.

Then the *nat* goes to the far side of the river and cooks rice and a chicken. After this he makes a little hut of *salhe* branches. The women come to bathe, bringing *chilha roti* in their saris. With them there is a girl who is usually the daughter-in-law of the dead man; she carries a new pot completely covered with cloth. This cloth is put on the ground by three people and the women go into the water to fish. The girl with this new pot says as she tries to catch a fish, 'O father-in-law, if you really love me then come into my hands'. The women who are standing on the bank are pelted with mud by the women who are fishing in the water. While this is being done the man who has cooked food in the hut ties round it a cotton thread seven times.

When the women catch a fish they put it in the new pot believing it to be the soul of the dead man. The woman who carries it and her husband are tied together with a thin rope and they walk in this way home from the river. The food cooked is carried home. When they reach the house the girl with the new pot will not enter it. Her old mother-in-law says, 'The house is yours. Do whatever you like and eat as many times as you like'. But the girl replies, 'No, I won't go in unless something is given in memory of my father-in-law'. Some ornament is given to her and then she is ready to go into the house.

While the women are away bringing the soul back from the river the men have been getting a little temporary hut ready; they spread some flour and cover it with a new basket. When the woman comes in she puts the new pot with the soul in it near the basket. The men go now to bathe. A *nat* shaves the heads of the mourners. The water used to shave is put in a leaf-cup and before anyone is shaved he puts one pice into it,



Gogia Pardhan plays the bana

Plate X



Pardhan mother and child

which is afterwards used to buy liquor. Then before leaving the stream five leaves are put on the bank and five pieces of haldi and a little flour are placed on each. This is done by a *nat* and the mourners take a little flour and sprinkle it on the ground. Then they go home. When the men come home the daughter of the house enters the little hut and sits there till the mourners promise her a rupee or a calf or whatever it may be in remembrance of her father or grandfather. The *nat* then spreads blankets in the courtyard and the mourners and men of the same clan are made to sit there.

The ceremony of Pakhbandi now takes place. This means that the *nats* bring bits of new cloth which they tie on the mourners' heads, and each *nat* also brings with him a bottle of liquor. The liquor is served and when they have drunk everyone gets up and there is a ceremonial greeting. To divert the mourners' minds the *nat* takes them to their fields and shows them how much land they have and how they have to work and what the future may hold for them. Before they join in the feast someone goes and removes the basket and examines the flour to see if there are any footprints of any creature. There usually are some marks and they say the soul has returned. Then the water and the fish are thrown away. That evening there is a great feast and drinking and dancing goes on all night.

Three more ceremonies remain. Six months after the death a few of the relatives of the deceased gather together for a small feast. Twelve months afterwards the Barasi feast is also held when the dead man is again remembered. But the most important ceremony is what is known as the Kunda rite. This is similar to, and is probably a survival of the former custom of the Gonds, of visiting from time to time the headquarters of their clan god and there performing sacrifice for the repose of the dead and to ensure that the dead are merged with the other ancestors of the clan.

The Kunda ceremony may be performed any time after one year from the date of death. Sometimes, of course, people are unable to fulfil their duty punctually. They may be too poor or they may have other things to do. Then the ghost of the dead man generally attempts to bother the family by sending a snake to bite someone or by giving the children sore eyes. Sometimes

on a Mangteri tour the Bana may break and the Thakur will say, 'It is because you have not done the duty for the dead'.

When a number of deaths have occurred among members of the same clan, the eldest of the clan assemble and discuss what to do. 'We will collect four annas from everyone and buy a brown goat for it is the god of our house and of our ancestors. We have not performed his sacrifice for a long time.'

When the people are ready, everyone who has had a death in the house since the previous Kunda makes a little bundle which itself is called Kunda. This bundle consists of a copper coin, five turmeric roots and a little reed about three inches long, all tied together in a bit of cloth. Each household has to give a goat or at least a chicken, and later the sum of one rupee, with each Kunda. Sometimes there are as many as ten or twelve chief mourners each with a goat. It is said that however small the goat is, it must walk to the place. Members of the same clan from a number of different villages join together but there does not seem now to be any particular spot at which the ceremony is to be performed. The clan system of the Pardhans is considerably decayed and they no longer preserve any recollection of their clan headquarters which in any case might be too far distant for them to visit.

They choose therefore any convenient place outside the village, but it must be under a *saja* tree. If there is no *saja* tree there, a branch of the tree is cut from the forest and brought in and erected near the village. Then the people gather with their Kundas and their goats. The goats are tethered by the tree and the Kundas are hidden, some under grass, some in trees or bushes. The people begin to play the drums and the Bana. In addition to the members of the clan which is honouring its dead a certain number of people in the *nat* relationship are present and one of these sings praises of Bara Pen. 'Come O Bara Pen, today is your marriage. Come and be present, for what can we do without you?' Nobody knows who is to be the Barua or the Pujari on this occasion except that the Barua must be a *nat* relation and the Pujari a member of the clan which is offering the Kunda. After the drums have been sounding for a little while the god comes upon the man who will be the Barua. He falls into a trance and throws himself about in the conventional manner. He takes a little stick in his hand and runs about among the people until

it is revealed to him who is to be Pujari, whereon he hits the person chosen on the head with his stick. He does this several times and when he is certain that it is to be this particular man and no other, the Barua runs towards the village to find the Pujari's wife. It is a proof that the Barua is really possessed by the god if he is able to find her immediately. Sometimes the women hide her in a grain-bin but it is expected that he will go direct to the spot. Then the Pujari and his wife are brought to the *saja* tree and made to sit on a little platform. The Barua goes in search of the Kundas that have been hidden in the grass and bushes. He ought to be able to find them immediately and he hits each of them three times with his stick and brings them out.

The Barua now throws away the Kunda-bundles of people who have died through fire or water, of smallpox, cholera, snake-bite, dropsy or who have been hanged, and when the women see their relative's bundles thrown away they weep very bitterly. Then the Barua brings all the other Kundas to the Pujari who takes one rupee for each and puts them at the foot of the *saja* tree. He then sacrifices the goats and chickens in the usual way and the Pujari make a pile of the heads of the sacrificed animals. At this time women of the *nat* clan move with a bottle of liquor and ask for one of the heads as a present. This little ceremony is known as Khaniyari, a word that is usually applied to the collection by the Ahirs of their regular dues for grazing the cattle of a village.

The flesh of the goats and chickens is carefully divided into equal portions and a piece of liver is cooked on the spot by the Pujari. This is eaten by the Pujari and Barua and the people laugh at them saying, 'The gods are tired. Let them have plenty to eat'. Liquor is distributed and after the people have well drunk they return to their villages.

The Pujari hangs up the Kunda-bundles together in the *saja* tree. From this day onwards the responsibility for tending and placating the dead is shifted from the immediate relations to the Pujari and his wife. It is for this reason that each household gives him one rupee, for he has undertaken what may be a dangerous business though the duties are not onerous. He has to give something to feed the dead at every festival. Every day

his wife gives a grain of cooked food by the hearth in the name of the dead.

The result of the Kunda ceremony is to merge (the word used is *milana*) the dead in the great family of clan ancestors and in Bara Pen himself. Once this is done members of the family have no more trouble and it is believed that the soul is happy and at peace.

Special arrangements must always be made after an abnormal death. We have already seen that the Kundas of such persons are thrown away and are not merged with the ancestral dead.

The most important kind of abnormal death is that which creates a Churelin. A Churelin is the ghost of a woman who dies in pregnancy or childbirth, the child usually remaining in the womb. The ghost of such a woman is throughout India an object of fear and terror, though the Baiga believe that it can be tamed and made useful for domestic purposes. When the corpse is buried the Gunia puts on its head the upper part of a grindstone along with the twenty-two pieces of salt. Chillies are stuck in the earth round the grave and above it is placed a reed-conundrum, the solving of which is supposed to keep the ghost busy. After doing this the Gunia goes round the grave three times clockwise (which is the opposite of the normal) while he repeats the following Mantra :

I bind your head. I bind the crowbar that dug your grave. I bind the paths to the grave. I bind the boundaries of the village. I bind the power of Sukri Chamarin and Naita Dhobin and Lohkat Loharin, the witches. I bind the aid of Jhalakan Gondin, of the Gondin whose genitals are eaten by maggots. Who binds this charm ? I and Kappe Munda, Rai Munda and his Guru Dhanantar, whose disciple I am. My words are eternal—eternal. By their power the earth's movements and the thundering of the clouds are stopped. This is the Sath Bhajan. Go away, away.

After going round thrice the Gunia spits and cracks his fingers. He leaves the grave without turning round. He bathes and goes home.

If the skull of such a woman can be found it is highly prized as a remedy for cholera. It is buried in the middle of the main path to the village and everyone (except women in their monthly periods) should go past it. But anyone who steps on it gets a swelling in the private parts. The power of this skull is 'roused'

by being offered a black chicken. After fifteen days it is dug up again and is carefully preserved in case it is needed another time to guard the village against the invasion of disease.

If a child is still-born it is put in an earthern pot and covered with broken earthenware and buried in a corner of the house. This act is called *bhandar dena.*

If an unmarried man dies he is supposed to turn into a ghost called Raksha. This ghost is specially feared by women and especially by unmarried women, for he is supposed to come at night and have intercourse with girls, leaving them thin and exhausted. When such a man's body is buried, the Gunia removes a few hairs from his tuft hair. These are tied into seven knots and are put by the head of the corpse. *Mandia* grain is ground with an anti-clockwise movement and the flour is sprinkled round the grave. On the breast a cotton string of seven threads tied with seven knots and smeared with haldi and oil is placed. Then this is broken and the Gunia says to the dead body, 'Now you are married, do not bother us any more'.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PARDHAN AND HIS FAMILY

I. Domestic Realities

In this chapter I attempt to discover the realities of Pardhan domestic life. The interaction of relatives in a little household is full of drama; the opposition of co-wives, the love of a girl for her husband's younger brother, the affectionate kindness of the *nanand* for her brother's wife, the intricacies of the serving-marriage, provide fascinating material for study, and we see here in these little huts of mud and wattle the same great principles of love and hate, loyalty, jealousy and possessiveness that may be found in the greatest palaces.

I have noticed references in many a learned work to these matters, but in India at least the authors generally give the impression that they themselves have lived uncomplicated and carefree domestic lives. They show little interest and less knowledge of the difficulties of a normal home. There is very little to show us how people really feel and think.

Take, for example, a subject on which Westermarck and Briffault have argued so learnedly, the problem whether there is some deep-rooted psychological reason for the common primitive custom of taking a wife from another village. There may be such an impulse, but the Pardhans themselves prefer to give very obvious and practical reasons for the custom. They say, 'If we marry a girl in our own village, we will know far too much about her and she will know far too much about us. Again, if we see her every day we may get tired of her'. When a girl lives in another village, visitors come from time to time and give reports about her, saying how beautiful or how virtuous she is, and in this way, interest and excitement is created. A very important point is that if a man marries a girl in his own village, it means that his parents-in-law will be his neighbours and there is a danger that his wife will constantly go to their house with complaints or, even worse, will smuggle food and grain from his house to their's.

Some of these points, such as the point that a youth may get tired of his future wife if he sees her every day before their marriage, are psychological, but other questions regarding the

relation of the wife to her own parents can only be elicited by a prolonged study of the realities of domestic life.

I will use throughout this chapter the Hindi words employed by the Pardhans, which are more convenient than their English equivalents. *Dewar* means husband's younger brother; *bhauji*, elder brother's wife; *jeth*, husband's elder brother; *jethani*, husband's elder brother's wife; *dewarani*, husband's younger brother's wife; *sas* or *mami*, mother-in-law, *sasur* or *mama*, father-in-law. *Nanand* is a husband's younger sister.

II. Domestic Jealousy

The Pardhan, as lithe and wiry in his emotions as in his body, is a more jealous person than the Gond, who generally takes the irregularities of domestic life with comparative calm. Yet even for the Pardhan it is not possible to lay down a general rule. In some cases the neighbours deliberately try to excite a husband. They say, 'Look here, beware of such and such a person; he is laughing with your wife far too much; he has been with her to the jungle to get wood or leaves. If you are not careful, you may lose her'. The etiquette appears to be that the husband must not rebuke his wife unless he actually sees her in the arms of another man. Dani once said to his wife, 'O Lakshmi, they may suspect you and may tell me anything about you, but I don't listen. So long as you save my eyes I will be happy'. But once the husband's mind is poisoned he becomes very restless and he may strictly keep a watch on his wife's movements. One Pardhan told me, 'I would rather see my wife lying with her lover than be tortured with these suspicions. Once I catch her I can beat her or turn her out of the house and then I will have peace of mind'. But there is a type of husband who actually takes pride if his wife is sought after by other men. He regards it as a sort of compliment and feels pleasure that he should have such a beautiful wife. Some are so simple and love maddens them to such a degree that they will forgive their wives anything. Another sort of man only wants peace in the home and a well-ordered household. He does not mind particularly what his wife does in her spare time provided she cooks properly, looks after the children and works hard.

But on the whole it is the jealous type of husband that predominates among the Pardhans. There are a great many stories about such men.

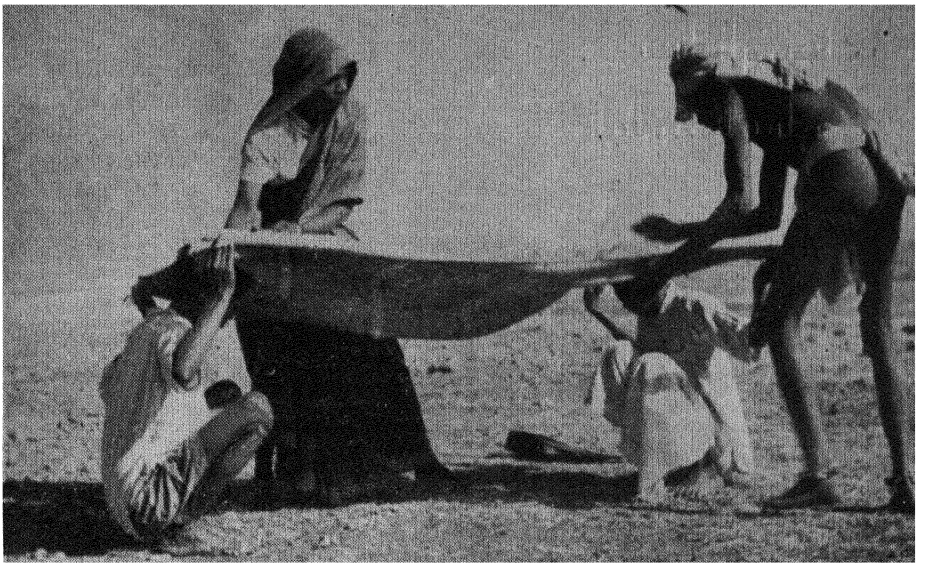
A Pardhan of Jhanki had a very faithful and chaste wife but he would never believe in her. Every day when he came back from work he used to beat her on suspicion even though he had locked her into the house all the time that he was away. One day the poor girl had nothing to eat in the house and seeing a merchant riding by on a camel with a sack of gram, she called to him to sell her two pice worth. Since the door was locked the merchant had to give one grain at a time through the crack of the door. The husband full of jealousy and suspicion watched the scene and when the merchant had gone, came into the house and thrashed the unfortunate woman. The woman fell ill and pretended to be possessed by a spirit. But an old woman who saw what had happened was very angry; she sent for the Gunia who shut the merchant up in a box and made the husband carry it on his shoulders to his wife's room. The wife was so annoyed at her husband's suspicions that she allowed the merchant to do what he would.

There is another story of a Pardhan woman who had a husband much older than herself and who repelled her physically. She described how

My husband once thought that I was having an affair with a young man in the jungle and actually followed me with a rope intending to hang me. When he found I had not done anything he was disappointed and he spread leaves on the ground under a tree and slept on them himself. Then he brought his mother to the place and pointing to the leaves said he had caught me lying there with a Gond boy. Whenever a horse neighed outside the house, he used to say, 'Go quickly, there is a man calling you'.

The punishments inflicted by husbands are often very severe. A man in Chhuriamatha used to make his wife stand in a pit up to her waist. The earth was rammed round her and she was left there for hours. An old woman in Patangarh told me that her husband used to flog her till the flesh started from her body. 'I have been beaten', she said, 'by a whip, a stick, by shoes and by a ladle. I have run like a bullock before him to save myself from being killed. Yet all this I endured for the sake of my children.'

A famous Pardhan who died in our Leper Home had the reputation of being very cruel to his wives, of whom he had three.



Pardhans imitating weavers

Two Pardhans, one dressed up as a woman, pretending to be drunk



Plate XI



Two Pardhans, pretending to be a Baiga and his wife, stage a quarrel for the entertainment of the village

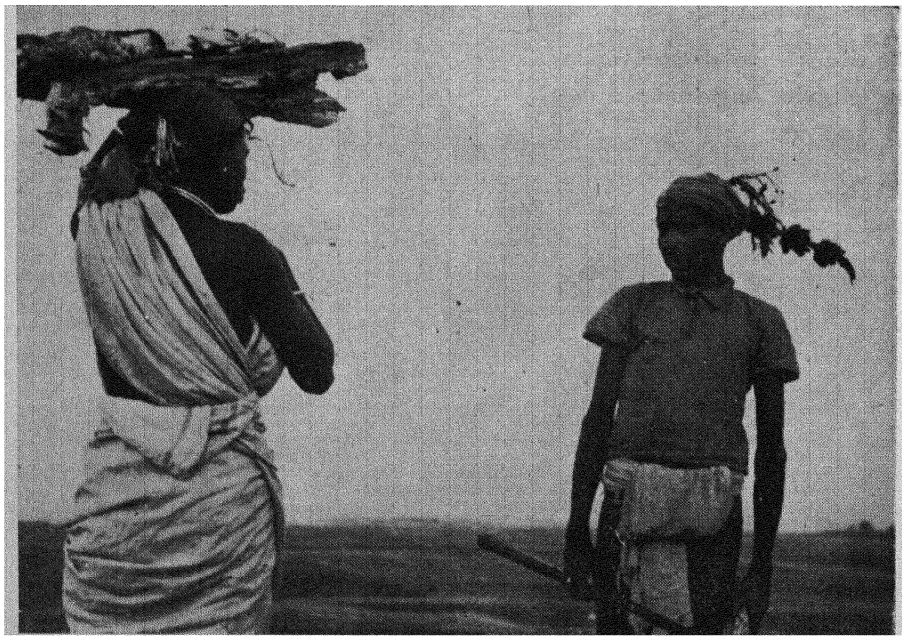


Plate XII

It was his eldest wife who suffered most. The Pardhans say that he treated his cows as badly as his wives. He had one barren cow which he used to yoke to the plough and if it did not go properly, he used to put salt and chilli into its privates.

Once his wife ran away but he discovered where she was and he pursued her. He caught her hiding underneath a creeper. He picked three thorny branches and drove her back to his house, beating her all along the way. She was covered with blood when she reached home. He used to use his ox-goad on his wife. He never beat her without first shutting the door and gagging her so that she could not cry out.

But the people do not approve of such treatment and when this man contracted leprosy it was regarded as a punishment for his cruel and unjust behaviour.

A common punishment is to put salt or chilli into the vagina, and this can cause exquisite pain. Once an angry husband inserted a lot of hair and the woman suffered greatly before it was all removed.

It is said that a Pardhan who wishes to revenge himself on a rival will kill his bullock or run away with his wife. But he will not go off with a daughter or a sister, for this would ultimately unite the families.

III. The Plough Punishment

Although women are permitted to use the plough in certain other aboriginal areas such as Bastar, there is a strict taboo on their using or even touching it in Mandla. The result is that the association of women with the plough acquires a magical significance which can sometimes be put to important use. The best known use of this kind is where at a time of serious failure of rain, two young naked girls are yoked to a plough at night. They are driven across a field down to the nearest stream and pelted with cow-dung. To save themselves, they duck under the water and scream, 'It will rain'. It is believed that this is an infallible means of bringing rain.

The plough, however, is also used for the purpose of domestic discipline when angry men punish idle or unfaithful women by yoking them along with a bullock to a plough, and drive them round a field. For example, a Pardhan of Bitanpur made his son plough with his daughter-in-law. The reason in this case was the girl's

idleness. When the father and son ploughed in the fields the girl always brought their food late. One day the old man lost his temper and said to his son, 'This wife of yours knows very well how tired we get and how our backs grow loose with the work we have to do. She does not bring the food from her own father's house. Now take her by her hair and put her in the plough.' At first the boy refused but the father threatened to beat him and so he tied the girl to one side of the plough and drove her round the field.

Another incident of the same kind occurred in the life of a very notorious young woman whom I will call Adri. She was a famous singer and dancer and would spend night after night dancing with the young men of her village. For this she was beaten time and again, but nothing cured her. After a number of matrimonial adventures, she married a Gond youth who was madly in love with her. He was of course excommunicated for marrying a Pardhan girl but he gladly gave up his parents and relatives and all his possessions for her sake. But even then he found that Adri was very troublesome. One day an old lover who had joined the army came on leave and when Adri saw him in his uniform she completely lost her head. She went to his village telling her husband that she was visiting her mother's house, and danced there with him for the whole night. She returned home early next morning and cooking her husband's food in a great hurry carried it out to him in the field. 'Eat this as quickly as you can, for my mother has sent for me to go to her house.' 'But I thought you had already spent all night in your mother's house. I am not going to let you go again.' Adri, however, took no notice and began to go down the path to her mother's village. But her husband had heard about his military rival and he unyoked one of his buffaloes and running after the girl, caught her and tied her to the plough. Then he drove her across the field, pricking her with his ox-goad. The girl's screams, however, brought the boy's elder brother to the scene and he united the girl and made peace.

On one occasion I witnessed the actual scene when an angry Pardhan husband who was in my employment, exasperated by the infidelities of his wife, took her to a lonely field and treated her in the same manner. It is evidently not a light punishment, for, apart from the indignity, the cow or bullock with whom the

girl is yoked seems to resent its unusual companion, and on this occasion it plunged about wildly and there was, it seemed to me, real danger the girl's neck might be broken.

It is not only, however, the romantic and rather passionate Pardhans who have this custom. It is not unknown also among the slow-moving, placid Gonds. Thus, Rusali had three wives, who were always quarrelling with each other; the eldest wife particularly tormented the two younger women and one day she did so with such effect that no one would cook the food. The husband was down working in the field and at last the eldest wife prepared something and took it to him. She was so late that in fury he yoked her to his plough and made her go twice round the field, pricking her with his goad all the way. Then he took her home and made her cook a proper meal. It is said that after this there were no more troubles in the family and the wives became friends with each other.

Another Gond, Bisdokara, had a wife who was in love with another man. In the month of May at a time of great heat, Bisdokara told his young wife to get him some water and bring it to him in the field, where he was ploughing. The girl's lover was drinking liquor that morning and he sent for the girl who joined him and began to drink also. She entirely forgot about her husband's order until a friend came running and told her that he was waiting full of anger down in the field. She was by now almost drunk but she managed to stagger down to the field with a pot of water. Meanwhile Bisdokara had been told what his wife had been doing, and angry both at her relation with her lover and her failure to bring him water, he unyoked his favourite bullock and drawing her to the plough, tied her in its place. Then with his goad, he drove her round the field. She cried, 'What is the matter with you? Have you gone mad?' He said, 'Don't speak to me, you widow, you don't weep when your lover pierces you. Why should you weep when I prick you with my goad?' The peasants from the neighbouring fields came running and rescued the girl.

An even more dramatic incident occurred in Lalpur. Here was an important Gond landlord who to show his dignity had five wives, all of whom lived together happily. The four younger women used to work in the fields and the eldest cooked. But one day the landlord fell in love with the wife of an Ahir and, being

rich and important, engaged her to fetch water in his house. The wives were very annoyed at this and one day they managed to catch the girl in their husband's room and beat her. They planned to get her excommunicated by the Ahirs but the woman's husband heard of it and took her away to another village. The landlord was naturally enraged at this and he took all his five wives down to his field, tied them to a plough and drove them across it all together.

It will be seen that the offences for which the plough punishment is most usually administered are those of infidelity, domestic quarrel or slackness in taking food or water to the weary ploughman in his field. The last cause is a very natural one, for the ploughman has his plough ready at hand and it is easy to fall into the temptation of using it. There was one other case where the ploughing was less of a punishment than a means of protection against the broken taboo. A Panka woman told me how, when she was a little girl of about fourteen she went once to her grandfather's field while he was ploughing. The old man was seated over a pipe while the plough stood nearby, with the bullocks yoked. The little girl was very mischievous and she took hold of the plough and began to drive it. The old man was aghast, for he believed that if any woman touched a plough in the field there would be a famine. To avert the danger he tied the child to the plough and drove her along for a few paces.

This form of punishment is not approved. In one case the girl's parents took her away and the husband had to give a penalty feast. Afterwards he found it difficult to get a bride for his younger son. It is said that when he went to ask for girls in betrothal, he used to receive the reply: 'Others earn their living by bullocks but you use your own daughter-in-law and we will not give our daughter for that.' The Gonds generally take at least one rupee worth of liquor as a fine for the panchayat after a case of yoking, and in the case of the landlord with his five wives it is said that immediately afterwards his fate deteriorated and he was driven to a course of action that sent him to jail for a year and brought about his early death.

IV. The Dewar-Bhauji Relationship

To the Pardhans, the relationship between a man and his elder brother's wife is equally important in the field of erotics and of

economics.[1] The convention, which allows great liberty to the younger brother and permits him after his elder brother's death to have access to the person and possessions of the widow, is akin to the Levirate. In India it goes back to Manu, and though more advanced societies in India have abandoned the tradition,[2] the aboriginals and the lower Hindu castes under their influence still maintain it.

One day, while I was discussing the relations between *dewar* and *bhauji* with an old woman, she exclaimed, 'The word *dewar* is poetry to us'. To realize the truth of this remark one has to imagine a young bride's mental picture of her new strange home. She is in awe of every member of it. No one in the house is very pleased with her, for her bride-price has meant a lot of money to the family. Everyone looks on her as an intruder. The parents think, if she is clever, she may soon split the family or she may get full control of their son. If there is a *jethani*, she has to see that the girl does all the hard work. Of course, she has to avoid the very shadow of her *jeth*. She must not be in the same room with him or even talk to him in company. The *nanand* is usually temperamental and you can never be sure of her behaviour. Very likely the new bride wins her affection, but it takes time before she is able to help her in her love affairs. But before that happens the *nanand* is not too pleased with the *bhauji* who has come to possess her brother. And then what young girl would not be frightened of the strange man, her husband? He may have looked forbidding, cruel; he may have been very rough at the wedding ceremony when he removed the *betel* nut from her tender hands, or he may have brutally trodden on her ankles while she was going round the pole. Then who is there in the new family to whom she can look as a supporter? There is only the *dewar*, her very Deo, her 'little god' in all her troubles. Perhaps she already knows him well. He is unmarried and young, if not by age, at least by his position. He is her 'half-husband' and he knows she is his. He is 'the consoler of her heart' always. He 'leads her to eternity'.

[1] I have given a fuller account of this relationship, considering it also in other tribes and some Hindu castes, in my article 'The Dewar-Bhauji Relationship', *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII (1943), pp. 157 ff.

[2] The great Hindi novelist Premchand has used the motif in his *Bare Ghar Ki Beti*.

Under such conditions, a tender and exquisite relationship rapidly develops. The husband connives at it so long as he does not catch the friends in the very act of love.

Both *bhauji* and *dewar* are mentally ready for a tremendous romance. But often it is the *bhauji* who tries to seduce the *dewar*, for he is generally much the younger. There are 'as many ways of seduction as beads in a necklace'. The girl may ask sometimes for a thing that she does not want. For example, the *dewar* may have a comb and she says, 'O brother, give me that comb', and he naturally refuses. Then she says, 'If you are so mean as not to give me that little comb, how will you satisfy my desires?' The *bhauji* may be in the river-bed, gone to get water or to wash clothes, and she may say, 'O my little brother, go away. I am going to be naked, for I want to have a bath' and may begin to undo her clothes. The poor boy, if he is shy, runs away, but if he is bold he will remain. If a *bhauji* finds that it is difficult to seduce the *dewar*, then she says to him, 'Ha, when we were of your age, we used to roast gram on the grass roof'. She may continuously tease him by saying, 'O my *dewar* is a *chhokra* (a young boy), but he can never be a *bakra* (a goat)' or 'Alas, my *dewar* is a *chhokra*, while his e'der brother is a *dokra* (an old man)'.

Once a *dewar* came to a girl and asked, 'Where is my brother?' 'He is playing in the village; come, let us also play together.' As they were playing the husband came and called from outside, 'What are you doing?' 'Little brother is playing Bottom-smacking', said the girl. The husband thought that they really were playing some sort of game and went on his way.

The *dewar* is the only person from whom the *bhauji* can get any sympathy. Her husband is faithless to her; he is too old; he doesn't care for her; but the quick heart of the youth is always hers.

On her part, the girl protects the *dewar* and looks after him very well. The poems are full of expressions like 'Do not touch him; do not beat my *dewar*'. 'Do not hurt him by hard words; do not make him a rag on which everyone wipes his hands, just because he is young.'

The real intimacy comes when a *dewar* is ill. The *bhauji* immediately becomes his nurse and doctor. She allows no one else to look after him. She gives him his bath, massages him, feeds

him. For everyone knows that, if she is his 'half-wife', she is also his 'half-mother'; and it is the duty of the mother to look after her child in sickness.

The *bhauji* is usually of the greatest help in the *dewar's* romances. He may not be in love with his wife and he goes and tells her so; he may have fallen in love with a girl in the village: she is his confidante. She makes it her business to excite love between them, and very soon the *dewar* to his great gratitude finds that his girl is even willing to leave her husband for him.

Whenever a *bhauji* runs away from the house—after a quarrel with her husband or a dispute with her parents-in-law—it is the *dewar's* privilege to go and fetch her back. Very often on the way he beats her for having troubled him to walk so many miles to fetch her. In Patangarh I know of one boy whose *bhauji* often used to run away. One day he went to fetch her and after they had come some distance, he rested on a river bank and had his food. But he made her stand in the water on one leg until he had finished. Often the *dewar* blackmails his *bhauji*, finding that is a good way of seducing a girl who does not yield to his desires. A Kotwar of Patangarh, when he was young, was one day so angry with his *bhauji* for singing and dancing the Karma that he took a huge stick and hit her, breaking her ear-ornaments and cutting part of the ear.

Once a *bhauji* ran away to her mother's house after a quarrel with her husband. After some time the husband went to fetch her back, and she would not return. Then the father-in-law went and she would not return. At last the *dewar* was sent and seeing him the girl was very pleased and she returned. As they were on the way, they began to talk very intimately and presently there was a field of hemp and these two went into the field and lay together. The girl was pleased with the sound of the hemp created by the movements of the *dewar* while he was having intercourse with her. That night she reached home and slept with her husband. As he embraced her, she missed the music of the hemp and said without thinking, 'The little brother always ties bells round his waist. Why don't you do the same?'

This relationship between a *dewar* and his *bhauji* is one of the so-called 'joking relationships' of anthropology. But this behaviour is strictly regulated. For example, the *dewar* is not allowed to address his *bhauji* in the familiar terms which the

husband can use. Among the Pardhans, if a man says 'O' to a girl, it means tremendous familiarity and intimacy. Children or brothers do say 'O' to their mother or sisters, but it is always followed with the relationship-term or the name of the person. They say, 'O mother'. But a husband simply says, 'Na O' to his wife when addressing her: this is his special privilege. But the *dewar* is not allowed to say 'O' to his *bhauji*. Nor can she say 'Re' to her *dewar*, for this is a term of familiarity for boys used amongst only very intimate friends, or by parents or elder people while addressing younger boys. A *dewar* can joke with his *bhauji* in front of her husband. But this too is controlled. The Gonds say that, even when a tiger springs on a deer, it does so from a hidden place. And though there are many jokes that are regarded as privileged, there is a definite limit that—in the husband's presence—must be observed.

The following conversations will give some idea of what a joking relationship means. Sometimes, like Mr Pickwick in the the presence of Mr Peter Magnus, we may feel envious of the ease with which our Pardhan friends are entertained.

I

DEWAR: O *bhauji*, someone has come for you.

BHAUJI: Perhaps it is your sister's husband.

DEWAR: If I am not your sister's husband, then whose husband am I?

BHAUJI: Hush, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Haven't you got any strength in your own loins? You have your own sister as your wife in this house. Try to satisfy her.

DEWAR: That is why your brother comes every few days rushing to this house, due to your magic charms. Why do you want to torture him? He is standing outside, come out now to meet him.

BHAUJI: Enough. You ought to be ashamed of talking like this.

DEWAR: Why should I be ashamed of myself? Have I had my nose cut off?

BHAUJI: There, there, your own wife is coming. *And the addressing her nanand, she says*: Come, come you flirt, your husband is calling you. The poo

man is burning with passion for you. Come and satisfy his heart for a moment.

II

DEWAR: O *bhauji*, your breasts are like cow-pats.

BHAUJI: Perhaps, but you won't ever get to the bottom of them.

DEWAR: Will I have to push a bamboo in ?

BHAUJI: I will let you know when your sister comes. Within a few days of her arrival you will become thin as a bamboo.

DEWAR: Very well. But first go and bring your own sister for me, and see if she can reduce me to such weakness.

BHAUJI: You impotent fellow. I do hope one day you will get a black bitch as your wife, and then you will be happy.

DEWAR: I will see when the time comes. But don't worry about me. O *bhauji*, why did your brother come last night when my brother was away ? I suppose you are trying to separate him from his wife and children and bring him here to live with us.

BHAUJI: This creature with privates diseased and rotting is now trying to pose as a stud bull. We must really get him a wife to keep him in order.

The humour, it will be noticed, is very different from what is common in Europe, where prostitution, perversion and adultery are the main themes of abuse and risky jokes. Here incest, especially the almost unknown brother-sister incest, is the central motif.

The *dewar* who does not take advantage of his position is greatly admired. The central legend of the Murias is about Lingo, their cult hero. He rose to this eminence by resisting the seductions of his six beautiful *bhaujis*. He was the youngest of seven brothers and all the six *bhaujis* tried their best to win his affection, but he took no notice. Ultimately they tried to take revenge by telling lies about him to their husbands who burnt him alive, and yet he was brought to life. He was buried alive but miraculously saved. At last he left the six brothers and established the Muria ghotul-dormitory.

Akin to this is a story I heard in Patangarh. The youngest of seven brothers is hard put to it to resist the wiles of his six *bhaujis*. But he takes no notice. His six brothers are very fond of him and will not allow their wives to make him do any work. But they torture him every minute of his life, until he leaves his house and goes away to a city where he becomes a great merchant.

There are cases where the *bhauji* looks upon her little *dewar* as if he was her younger brother or son, and the *dewar* responds in a like spirit. The relationship is then very charming, tender and intimate, yet free from the least suspicion of scandal.

How does the husband regard this relationship? He too is governed by conventions. He should never take any notice of scandal, unless he sees his young brother and his wife actually together—this helps a great deal in preserving peace in the families. But some brothers are so generous that, even if they see certain things, they connive at them. There was a good example of this in a neighbouring village. An absent husband returned unexpectedly at midnight and when he opened the door of his house, he found his younger brother and his wife sleeping together 'with their legs tucked into each other'. For a moment he felt like murder. But he quietly closed the door, went to the headman's house and called the elders. He said to them, 'Go and see it for yourselves. I will surely kill them both, but I want your advice first' The boy and the woman were beaten by the elders and other members of the family, and peace was made. Now they still live together and there are no quarrels at all.

But in spite of possible jealousy, a wise husband learns how to use his younger brother. He tells him to keep a watch on his wife's movements. The *dewar*, usually more jealous of the *bhauji* than the husband himself is always watching her, to see where she stands, what she does, with whom she talks. And if he finds her flirting with anyone, he rebukes her in very coarse language, and if it has no effect he threatens to report the matter to her husband. Very often he does report scandal and gets the poor *bhauji* into great trouble.

The relationship naturally does not escape the voice of scandal, as is shown by the following proverbs:

'A simpleton's wife is everybody's *bhauji*.'

'When a *bhauji* is alone in the house, she becomes a *chhokri*, a little girl.'

'When the husband goes to a bazaar, at home the *bhauji* has a *hazaar* (a thousand lovers).'

The real test of the *dewar-bhauji* relationship comes after the death of the elder brother. If the *bhauji* is young and beautiful, the *dewar* is very eager to marry her. But if she is old and with several children, then it is a great responsibility for him. However, the widow has to be protected and the children cared for.

At the time when the elders feast at the Kiria Karam, on the tenth day after a death, they say to the *dewar*, 'This is your house. You are to repair it. Care for the children. Let no harm come to them. Do not abuse or beat them. They are small and helpless. Make a home for them. Don't let the name of this house fail.' Then they say to the woman, 'Formerly you thought of this man as your son; now he is your lord. Go according to his order and serve him. As you cared for your first lord, so care now for this. As you obeyed that, so obey this.' Then if they agree to marry, on the fixed day, when food is eaten, they sprinkle haldi and water on the widow and put new bangles on her and begin to live in whichever house suits them.

But if the woman refuses to marry her *dewar*, he can demand compensation from the man she marries afterwards.

In Patangarh there are two very old Pardhan women, wives of two brothers. The elder died some years ago. His widow is about seventy years old. Her *dewar*, aged about sixty-five, is blind. But when the elders asked the old man to marry and keep the woman in his house, he refused on the ground that he had always looked upon her as a mother, and the poor old woman was very hurt. When I talked to her about it, she said, 'If he could not keep me in his house, he could at least give me one sari a year'. In another village a man married his *bhauji* and kept her for nearly fifteen years. But then he fell in love with another woman and left her. The old woman was in misery. One day when she was expressing her feelings to her youngest *dewar*, she said, 'I may be old, but that part of my body is not old', and he laughingly replied, 'Then why don't you marry his horse?'

In some cases the marriages between a widowed *bhauji* and the *dewar* are unsuccessful. They desire to separate, but then

the problem of property arises. Many such cases are brought before the *panchayat* at Patangarh, and I will give a few examples.

The Pardhan Kotwar of Jhanki married his elder brother's widow, just because the elder brother had left fifty cattle. He went to the widow's house taking with him sweets and clothes and was very nice to her, and made many promises. She came to him with all her cattle. Within a month his wife began to quarrel. The poor widow was given no food. She had to work hard, and at last she wanted to run away. But he would not let her go. The *panchayat* restored to her half her property and allowed her to go and live separately.

A man married his elder son to a girl and he died. She was then married to her *dewar*. He also died. The father tried to marry her to his younger son. But she refused for, she said, her mother-in-law accused her of swallowing all her sons. So she married another man and they refused to pay for her on the ground that she had been driven out by the mother-in-law.

In the folk-tales of the world the youngest brother's position is always one of great privilege. He is the hero, tested, troubled, but rewarded in the end. Here we get this fairy-tale situation in real life. What are the reasons which lead tribal society to allow the younger brother such privileges ?

The first reason is the very natural love of the youngest son. Usually he is alone in the house with his old parents and the new *bhauji*, and everybody feels kind and generous. He excites the protective and maternal instinct in all the older women.

The second reason is economic. The widow has to be protected and this convention helps to avoid any dispute about inheritance. To get the *bhauji's* property, very young boys have married elderly women.

The third reason is that there is a sentiment about it. The Pardhans say, 'Keep the girl in the family'. She has been worshipping their clan god. She has lived with them for years. Marriage among these people is not a mere union of individuals, but an alliance of families. Even among the Hindus the widow does not leave her husband's family and return to her parents' house. She looks after the house and dies there. The *dewar-bhauji* union is a logical sequence to widow-remarriage.

So important is this relationship in primitive thought and sentiment that without a proper understanding of it, the songs and

stories, the domestic disturbances, even the crimes of aboriginal India cannot be properly appreciated.

V. Polygamy

Why do people embark on so dubious and difficult an adventure as polygamy? It might be supposed that the Pardhans with their remarkable knowledge of the female heart would have known that it was hopeless. Yet from time to time many Pardhans—and not by any means the wealthiest or the most potent—attempt it. They do not very often succeed, two or more wives may live together for a short time, but the taking of a *chhotki* (younger wife) generally implies the disappearance from the home of the *badki* (elder wife).

Many different reasons are given to explain why men try to make a success of plural marriage. One of the most important is the barrenness of the first wife. A man who in spite of this defect, loves his wife and does not want to lose her, may sometimes with her permission take a second wife in the hope of gettting a child. The permission is given, it is true, and the first wife will probably even assist at the marriage of the second, going round the pole and sitting together with her husband and her rival. It is said that often all goes well until the younger girl has a child. Then the older woman finds that the natural impulses of jealousy are too strong for her. Quarrels begin and she often returns to her parents' house or marries another man.[1]

Another reason why men take more than one wife is the desire for prestige. In Balaghat there is a Pardhan, greatly admired by the Pardhans of Dindori, who has kept no fewer than eight wives at a time. He eats his food from the hands of his eldest wife and sleeps with the youngest and the other six see to the work of the household. He goes to bazaars riding on his horse with all the eight women walking in procession behind him and it can well be understood how he is the most talked of man at any market that he visits. A Pardhan who succeeds in regulating a household of two or more wives is undoubtedly admired. He is considered to be a man of considerable capacity and moral force—which indeed he probably is—and the presence of several

[1] Barrenness, however, does not seem to be a bar to such a woman marrying again. One of the most frequently married girls in Patangarh has never had a child.

women in the house enables him to live more comfortably and improves his economic standing.

Love-affairs contribute to this kind of marriage less than we would expect. Few men will bring a lover into a house where she will have to live in an atmosphere of continual strife and where it will be impossible for him to enjoy her company in peace. Moreover the free atmosphere of Pardhan society makes so drastic a step unnecessary. Instances of this kind do occur but generally lead to an immediate departure of a former wife from the home.

A more common reason for polygamy is the rule which allows and even enjoins a younger brother to marry an elder brother's widow or which allows him to marry his wife's younger sister. Polygamy of this kind has the best chance of success, for the original wife can always console herself by thinking that her husband was actuated not by desire or because he was tired of her, but by his adherence to tribal custom.

There was a curious incident when a Pardhan whom I will call Ganpat took a second wife in order to recover a debt. He had a charming and pretty wife, Dongrahin, from whom he had several children. One day another Pardhan named Chainu borrowed thirty rupees from him in emergency. When the time came for repayment, Chainu had nothing to give except his young daughter. Ganpat and Dongrahin discussed the matter and Dongrahin agreed that the girl, who was still immature, should be accepted in place of the debt. When they were married, however, Dongrahin felt so upset that she took a stick to beat her husband, and delayed the marriage for some time. But he said, 'I am only doing this to recover our debt. I care nothing for the girl', and so she was appeased. After marriage Ganpat used to sleep with Dongrahin and the new wife with the children. But Dongrahin has told me how Ganpat used to say later at night, 'Look here, this girl after all is my married wife. Do let me go to her for a little while'. Dongrahin would permit it but would insist on sitting nearby and watching all that went on. The girl would scream if Ganpat touched her saying, 'I am not here for this. I will do the work in your house. You can give me food and clothing. That is all I want from you'. After a time Dongrahin got jealous and wanted to leave the house but Ganpat said, 'Don't leave me, Lakshmi. This house was

built by you. Because of you I am rich and have many children. If you go away, who will wear these ornaments? Whom will the children call mother?' It is said that today the two women live together in a very friendly manner.

A man who has never been officially married to the woman who lives with him may take a 'second' wife to regularize his position. There are sometimes middle-aged men who have never been properly married: they have kept someone else's wife or they have not been able to afford a regular ceremony. As they grow older they feel the reproach of this and they fear too the danger of dying 'unmarried'—for they will become Raksas. Their 'wives' allow them to marry young girls to regularize their social standing.

A final cause of domestic complication is when a girl comes as a Paithu to the house of a man who is already married. This is the custom which allows a girl, who is either in love with a man or who wants to avoid being married to another man or who despairs of being married suitably at all, to go to a man's house and enter it by force. She goes in and sits down by the hearth declaring that she has come as the man's wife. In many cases this is done by girls to unmarried youths with whom they are in love, but whom they cannot work up to the point of marriage, or when parents oppose the marriage. But it is also sometimes done to married men. Such a Paithu girl may obviously be an embarrassment or delight, according to who she is. But it is said to be very difficult for a man to reject the girl, for she will then go everywhere saying that he is impotent.

The realities of the polygamous marriage are nearly always unpleasant; contrary to the general belief, they are more unpleasant for the man than for the women. I have often noticed that two wives are perfectly friendly as long as the husband is absent. The two women do not quarrel. They work together, laugh, joke, gossip and of course complain against their lord. I know of one case where three women found their own animosity to their husband a strong bond of union. Trouble begins when the man is in the house. Then the wives immediately begin to fight with him and with one another. If he shows the slightest preference there is a quarrel and a stream of abuse. The unfortunate man soon finds life unbearable and sooner or later manages to get rid of all but his favourite wife.

I have recorded a number of typical quarrels between two wives. The following comes from Patangarh:

ELDER WIFE: You are the one who has got a husband. He sleeps day and night with you but he never even touches me.

YOUNGER WIFE: Why don't you take him away with you then? If you cannot, cut off his organ and tie it in your sari and keep it always with you. Then you will always have him and no one else will.

ELDER WIFE: But how can I? For he is only potent with you. For me he is impotent. Now my mind has gone sour and I am getting on here no better than a dung-beetle. But I am not going to stay here any longer.

YOUNGER WIFE: Am I the husband that you should say these things to me? Why do you bother me about it? Go and tell your husband and abuse him.

ELDER WIFE: If he was my husband, would he not have remained only with me? No, he is your husband and it is only you to whom he listens.

I was once given a vivid account of a quarrel between an original wife and a Paithu girl who came to her house. In such cases, of course, the first wife has a good deal of additional material with which to assail her rival, for the new girl must obviously be shameless and of loose morals or she would never come in such a bold manner to another person's house.

ELDER WIFE: I didn't come to *my* house with only one sari tucked under my armpit. Fie on you! At every stage while you were coming here, you must have slept with someone or other and now, having enjoyed yourself thoroughly, you come to my house to ruin me. Shameless creature, may your ashes soon fly in the air! Were you blind that you could not see that there was a wife here already

and a happy home? You wanton, were your eyes broken that you should jump into a house ready made for you? You lazy bitch, I did all the work to make this home and now you come to enjoy my labour.

NEW WIFE: Well, anyway here I am. I am not taking your husband all to myself. You can still have him with you when you want to. In any case, it was he who brought me.

ELDER WIFE: O no, he didn't. You have come entirely of your own accord, you Paithu. You must have seduced him lying on a little scrap of your upper cloth. You must have done it in hiding-places, secretly, in haste and fear. He was tired of you long ago and when he would not have you any more, and no one else would have you, you have come here.

THE HUSBAND (*mildly, not sure how his remark will be taken*): Yes, I did bring her; it is all my fault. How do you know I didn't bring her?

ELDER WIFE (*more angry than ever*): Then, go and spend the rest of your life sitting in her private parts. It will be sweet as a garden of roses.

After this, it is said the husband goes away for a good drink to console himself in the company of his male neighbours, while the elder wife prepares to depart to her mother's house.

VI. THE SERVING-MARRIAGE

The institution of the serving-marriage is probably less popular among the Pardhans than among the Gonds. This is natural in a tribe which owns little property and whose main business is in the Mangteri rather than in the fields. Yet the Lamsena (as the boy who serves for his wife is called) is a feature of Pardhan as of all Indian rural society. He is called Lamsena, Gahaniya (the boy who is in pawn), the Gharjaiya and the Dawaloti.

The subject of the serving-marriage can be approached from three angles, the boy's, his parents' and the girl's parents'.

Sometimes where a man and a woman have no son but only a daughter or daughters and particularly where they are eagerly attached to their daughter, the initiative for keeping a Lamsena comes from them. In this case they let it be known that such an arrangement will be acceptable to them and they treat the Lamsena boy, if he is satisfactory, almost as their own son and in certain cases he inherits his father-in-law's property after the latter's death.

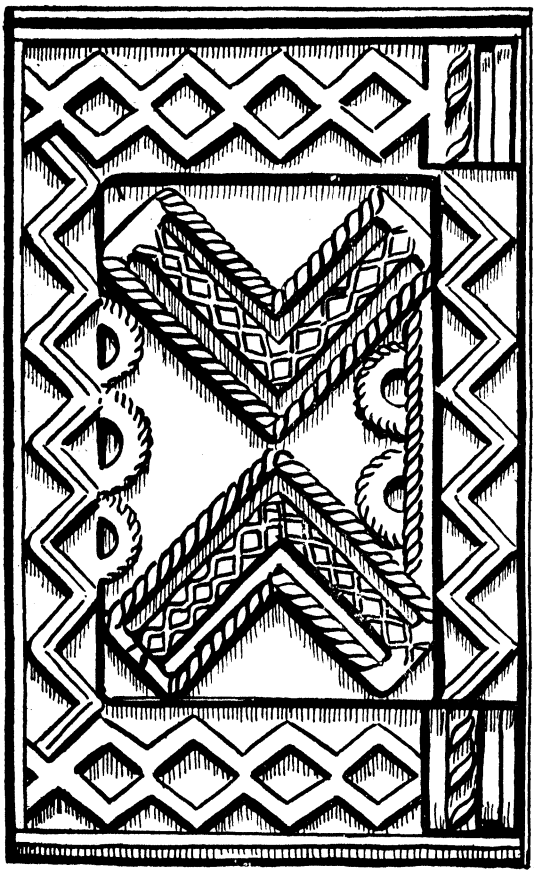


Fig. 25. Pardhan wall-pattern

More commonly, in this area at least, it is a boy's parents who try to find some family who will accept him as Lamsena. This is not considered to be a very dignified thing to do because it implies what is probably the fact, that the parents cannot afford to pay the necessary bride-price for their son's marriage.

But sometimes a boy may himself insist on becoming a Lamsena. This has happened in more than one case in Pardhan villages where a boy has fallen in love with a girl and believes that the only way of winning her is to live with her in the same house and work for her. Sometimes if a boy finds his parents are dilatory in arranging his marriage he says, 'I will break my hands and feet to get a wife', and he himself goes and offers to serve in somebody's house.

The success of the arrangement, of course, depends less on tribal rule and custom than on the character of the four people most concerned—the girl's mother and father, the girl and the boy himself. Any such difficult and delicate arrangement, which forces a young man and woman to live together in close proximity for a number of years under conditions which nominally at least forbid intimacy, and which exposes a boy before marriage to the criticism and examination of his parents-in-law, is obviously risky.

For example, the girl may not like the boy who is serving for her. In that case she refuses to speak to him. If he brings water for her she flings it away and fetches some for herself. Instead of serving him properly she throws his food down before him. There are many small ways in which she can make life unpleasant. She abuses him, 'Why have you come to my house? Have you come to eat my excreta?' and so on.

But if the girl likes her Lamsena there is trouble of another kind. She herself looks after him very well. When the rest of the family is away she gives him the best food. She steals grain and ghee for him without her parents' knowledge. She diverts small sums of money to buy him tobacco or liquor. She grants him intimacy, long before the date of marriage. The trouble in this case comes from the parents, who are not only afraid that the girl may become pregnant before the marriage but have the natural human resentment at having a boy, whom they rather look down on (for after all he comes from a poorer family), given better food and comfort than they get themselves. The father therefore at once begins to trouble the son-in-law for whom his daughter shows affection. He treats him harshly, gives him the heaviest tasks, abuses him and keeps him away from the girl as much as possible.

The third complication is where there is a simple and straightforward disagreement between the boy and his future parents-in-law. Not infrequently they find that they cannot get on together. The boy may be slack and careless in his work. The father-in-law may be a drunkard, he may be coarse and unpleasant in his language or behaviour. In such cases either the boy leaves the house or the father-in-law turns him out.

The period of the serving-marriage among the Pardhans varies from three to seven years. It is initiated by a simple ceremony when the boy's father gives liquor to the girl's father. Sometimes the period is shortened if the boy brings part of the bride-price—a sum of money or a bullock, for example. Should the arrangement break down on the side of the girl's parents, they ought to give some compensation to the boy according to the number of years that he has worked. If the boy himself resigns and goes away he generally gets nothing.

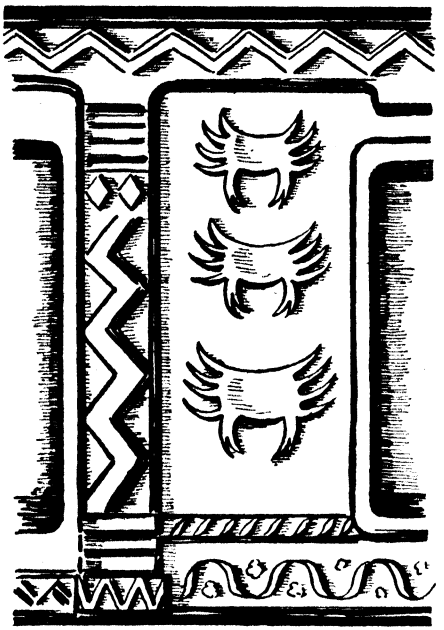


Fig. 26. Crab-motif in Pardhan wall-decoration

Should the boy and his future bride become intimate before marriage and should the girl conceive, then the couple are married as quickly as possible. In this case the full ceremony is probably not performed.

It is said that few Lamsena marriages are a success. The girl sees her future husband as a poor boy, working like a slave in her house, insulted by her family, and by the time she marries him she has often lost her respect for him.

There are many disadvantages in the Lamsena system. On the other hand, so long as the custom of bride-price continues it is not easy to see how boys of poor families and orphans could win their wives without it.

VII. Divorce

It is not accurate to call the rather frequent change of partners among the Pardhans by the modern and sophisticated word divorce.[1] Technically at least a divorce should precede rather

[1] Verrier Elwin has studied this subject in detail for the predominantly Pardhan village of Patangarh in his article, 'The Duration of Marriage among the Aboriginals of the Maikal Hills', *Man in India*, Vol. XXII (1942), pp. 11ff.

than confirm a new matrimonial arrangement, but in the majority of cases the Pardhans first establish a fresh relationship and then give it social recognition. A girl elopes with another man and it is when the new husband pays suitable compensation to the old that the original bond is regarded as broken.

The actual ceremony of divorce is rarely performed. In Patangarh it was only performed once in 78 recent cases of separation. It is considered necessary only when the new husband has to live in rather close proximity to the old one. The two men are made to stand facing one another in the presence of the elders of the village. The original husband should face the sunset and the new one the sunrise. Each holds a bit of grass in his hand and is made to break it. The original husband breaks a bit of earthenware, which is an obvious symbol of domestic life, and spits on it and they all say, 'Now you have spat, do not come back and try to lick it up'. The new husband pays over to the old one the necessary compensation and the two men then formally embrace and the woman can go to her new husband without ill feeling. Should the original husband refuse to accept any money for his wife, the new man has to bend down and pass underneath his raised leg.

Such a ceremony can only take place when there is no passionate attachment and a change of partner is desirable for family or economic reasons.

There are many other reasons that cause a woman to change her husband. Pardhan men say that the first reason is her insatiable desire for attention and excitement. There is a Pardhan proverb that the reasons for divorce are *Karma, Dadaria, mandi, chalan, moha, dhong.* This has been explained as meaning that a girl gets intrigued with the *Karma* dance and falls in love with a man there. She sings the *Dadaria* songs to men in the fields and forests. She goes to visit houses where young men are and is seduced by them. She gets a habit of deceiving her husband. She falls in love with someone else. She pretends that she cannot work or she desires an easier life than she is having at the time.

If a husband keeps a second wife, the first wife will very rarely remain. This is why true polygamy, in the sense of having more than one wife at a time, is comparatively rare.

It is not easy to give the reasons why women leave their husbands because they rarely tell the truth about it. A girl who is in love with someone else will give any other reason [1] but this for her desertion of her husband. She will say, 'He only fills half my stomach', or 'I have to do all the work in the house', or 'He is so jealous that even if he sees me near a stone he thinks I am flirting with it', or 'While other men treat their wives like precious ornaments, my own does nothing but beat me and makes me work all day'.

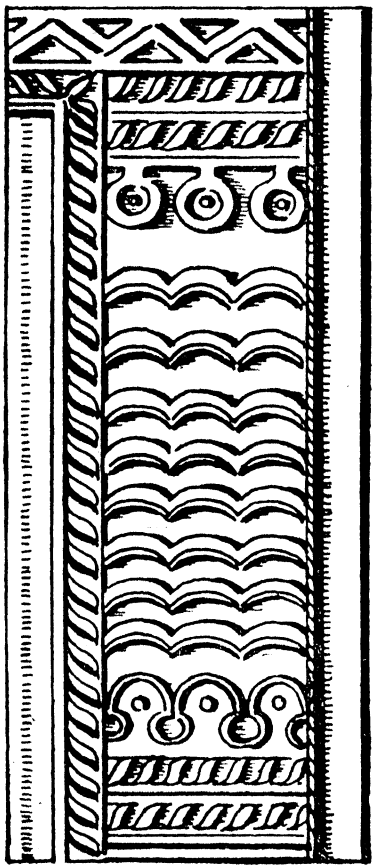


Fig. 27. Pardhan wall-pattern

On the other hand, a husband may take the initiative in bringing a marriage arrangement to an end. This probably is less common but cases are known. The refusal of a wife to work properly may be the cause of a divorce. Sometimes a husband is repelled by his wife. Dhanu of Patangarh used to say to one of his wives, 'If you don't like to work, at least keep your hair tidy and try to look nice. I don't mind doing the work in the house but at least try to please my eyes'. If a woman is barren the husband may get rid of her, probably by the convenient means of bringing another girl to the house. A woman who eats before her husband and thus makes the whole meal *jutha* should not be kept. Jai Singh's first wife was 'black as an umbrella', she used to smoke all day and did no work and he turned her out. Another of Dhanu's wives was called 'a ladder to heaven', she was so tall, soft-handed and ugly. It

[1] There is a proverb: '*Chhodaiya harwah nao jori panhi mangai*, a servant who wants to leave demands nine pairs of shoes', that is, he asks for the impossible so as to have an excuse for going.

is said that he did not mind her appearance but since she always did the opposite of what he told her he turned her out.

Sometimes, however, it is not very easy to do this. In one case a Pardhan of Jhanki who fell in love with another girl who would not come to his house unless he first got rid of his wife, used to beat her and make life unbearable in the hope that she would leave him. But she used to cling to the pillar in the middle of the house and refused even to leave the building. 'Find a new husband for me first', she would say, 'and then I will leave.'

It must not be supposed that men take the desertion of their wives lightly. It is said that there is no greater sadness in a house than to lose a daughter-in-law. It is regarded as an insult not only to the husband but to his relations. 'It is worse than the losing of a bullock in the month of June.' Once at least a husband will go after a wife who has eloped with another man. The tradition is that he should go to the seducer's house and on the first occasion at least he should not quarrel. Indeed he should pretend that nothing has occurred. He is supposed to say, 'My wife has come as a guest to stay with your mother. Let her come back with me now, for there is so much work to do in the house'. In many cases the erring wife returns. Sometimes, however, when the husband says that he understands that his property is in the house, the other man replies, 'Yes, I have your property and I am ready to pay for it'. The husband generally says, 'I would rather have my own property back at least once'. Then says the other man, 'Well, you may take it away if it is ready'.

When a husband succeeds in bringing his wife home from another man's house it is customary for her to take the most stringent oaths that she has not yielded her body to the seducer. But she adds, 'If you had not come in time I could not have resisted much longer'. To save his honour the husband readily supports this pleasant fiction and when he comes back to his village triumphantly tells his friends, 'I got there just in time to save my wife. Had I been a day later she might have slept with that dirty fellow. As it is I have got her back intact'.

If the girl refuses to go, the husband returns to his own village and after a week or so returns with a group of elders. These say to the new man, 'You have confessed that you have kept this girl. What do you propose?' The people of this village also

gather and there is a long discussion. The main question is one of prestige. On the one hand the seducer wants to save as much money as possible; on the other if he pays too little it looks as if he was a poor man or that he did not care about the girl. The husband is generally concerned to get as much of the original bride-price back as he can. This is not merely a matter of greed; he has to consider that if he loses one wife he has got to get another, for it is most unusual for any man to live as a bachelor.

When the husband goes to fetch his wife back he refuses to eat anything from the people of the village where she is staying and afterwards when everything is settled he refuses to eat from his supplanter unless an extremely good meal is provided. The attitude of the Pardhans in this matter is in fact extremely curious. I have seen a husband and his supplanter sitting together after matters had been settled to their mutual satisfaction and shouting with laughter, as they exchanged notes about the girl's behaviour. The original husband warned the new one that he had better keep a sharp watch on the girl; 'she has deceived me, one day she will deceive you'. The Pardhans are jealous people up to the moment when the economic transaction is completed. Then in the majority of cases all emotional and romantic feeling for the woman seems to die and a man can discuss matters objectively and even with humour.

VIII. Scenes of Daily Life

In the following dialogues I have tried to show, as accurately and vividly as possible, how the Pardhans talk to one another. The dialogues are not exactly fictitious, for I have 'listened in' to similar talk on many occasions; they should be regarded as a serious attempt in a new medium to describe the realities of village life.

A

(Birso is Aghnu's wife. Aghnu has recently married and brought his bride home after serving five years at her father's house at Huddatola as a Lamsena. Birso is not happy with Aghnu, for she is in love with a boy called Mithu in her father's village.)

Aghnu: Why don't you put your mind to any work you do?

Birso: What is the matter with my mind? I work as well as I can, but if you don't think it is good enough,

turn me out and bring some one whose work you can appreciate.

AGHNU : My God, these women ! You can't say a word without their shouting at you.

BIRSO : Yes, yes, it is much better to be frank from the beginning. I shall never be able to work to your satisfaction.

AGHNU (*seems hurt*) : I wish I could hit you, *hagri.*

BIRSO : If you don't hit me, you will have married your own mother.

AGHNU (*runs towards her and beats her*) : Does that satisfy you ?

(That night they sleep without saying a word to each other —on separate beds. At dawn Aghnu takes his bullocks to graze and Birso runs away to her father's village and hides in Mithu's house. When Aghnu comes back for his food he finds no one at home. He immediately starts for his father-in-law's village. On the way he passes a young girl called Bisahin working alone in a field. Aghnu takes no notice of her but is going on in a great hurry.)

BISAHIN : O brother, won't you give me a little tobacco ? Or don't you recognize a human being when you see one ?

AGHNU : Why shouldn't I recognize another human being ? Take, sister, take this tobacco.

BISAHIN : Acts like these go with us after death—what else does ? Brother, why are you in such haste ?

AGHNU : What should I tell you ? My wife has run away. Have you seen her ?

BISAHIN : What kind of sari is she wearing ?

AGHNU : A red Mandla sari.

BISAHIN : It isn't Birso ?

AGHNU : It is. How do you know her ?

BISAHIN : How can I tell you about her past ?

AGHNU : O do. Do sister.

BISAHIN : O it's nothing. You know what women are.

AGHNU : But do tell me something.

BISAHIN : I wish I hadn't said it. But don't you see, anyone may be watching us. If my husband heard about

this meeting, he would beat me till my flesh withered. That impotent one loves beating me.

AGHNU : Then come to that stream over there. No one will be able to see us there. You must tell me. I won't go on if you don't tell me. I don't mind if that *hagri* never returns again.

(Aghnu goes towards a lonely part of the stream and Bisahin —after looking in every direction in case someone is watching her—goes after him.)

AGHNU (*seeing himself alone with her in a lonely spot*) . Sister, I feel as if I never want to see my wife again—but just return home. Really.

BISAHIN (*ignoring his remark*) : No brother, why has your wife run away ? Did you beat her ?

AGHNU : Not at all. I just said something about her being careless in her work. That was enough for her to run away.

BISAHIN : Are you very much in love with her ?

AGHNU : I feel I am.

BISAHIN : But then she does not love you. She is in love with Mithu and is likely to be in his house now.

AGHNU : O is that so ? I will have the *hagri's* mother. I will teach her.

BISAHIN : O what a shame. You love her so much and your wife is like that. If only my husband loved me half as much as you love your wife, I would be his slave.

AGHNU : But he must be a big and good-looking man. You could never look at one like me ?

BISAHIN : Aren't you a man too ? You are not cattle ?

AGHNU : In this short life of two days, we should laugh and speak sweetly to one another. There are enough hardships to sadden our lives.

BISAHIN : O brother, why don't you stay tonight and we will sing and dance Karma ?

AGHNU : Karma we can sing tomorrow also. But today I must teach that *hagri* a lesson. But tell me why is my life drawn towards you so soon ? Do give

me the *phundra* in your hair that I may look at it with loving eyes as I look at you now.

BISAHIN : Give me your ring that I may look at it.

AGHNU : Take it off my finger if you have the courage.

(They struggle together and before long make love to each other. Both look round to see if they are being watched.)

BISAHIN (*arranging her hair and clothes properly*) : If you don't stay tonight, you will marry your own mother.

AGHNU : All right. I will stay.

(All night long they sing Karma. Early next morning Aghnu goes to his father-in-law's village. Birso has forced herself into Mithu's house. Aghnu goes to the headman and the village watchman and takes them to Mithu's house.)

AGHNU : Mukkadam Uncle, I am desirous to take back my goods. Ask this man to turn her out of his house.

MUKKADAM : You say well, my nephew. Such should be the attitude of a young man. Who does not go astray sometime in life ? What has the girl to say, Kotwar ?

KOTWAR : You are right, Mukkadam, and Aghnu is right. If a cow, our Lakshmi, goes astray but comes back to its shed even after a year or two—she is allowed to enter her home again. This Lakshmi has only left her shed for a night. Mithu, turn her out unless you want to get into trouble. (*Addressing Mithu's father-in-law*). It is best to be frank in the beginning, isn't that so, old man ?

MITHU : There she is, brother. Take her away.

MUKKADAM : Do you hear, O Birso ? Why have you come to his house ? Was it to help his family to husk grain or to grind or have you just come on a visit ?

BIRSO : What can I say uncle ? I have come.

MUKKADAM : But Aghnu has come to take you back.

BIRSO : Let him. I won't go. I have suffered a lot. I doubt if I would be still living if my mother-in-law had

not stopped him from beating me the day before yesterday.

AGHNU : Alas, alas, why do you load me with so much sin ? Give up these tricks and come, let us go back to our house. If you are afraid, I will take an oath on the sacred feet of the old men here that I will not touch you with one finger of the five fingers of my hand.

BIRSO : Go, go, go. I won't come with you. I have had enough happiness in your house. There I used to eat pearls and diamonds, but God will give me at least gruel here.

AGHNU : But come once at least.

BIRSO : Pulled-out teeth cannot be put back again.

MUKKADAM : You have heard what she has to say, nephew ? What can you do ?

AGHNU : What can I do ? Well, let her return what ornaments she is wearing and five crore rupees as my bride-price. If my feet are safe, I will get many sandals in life. Tomorrow I shall show what stuff I am made of.

BIRSO : O yes. Take these hollow ornaments of yours.

AGHNU : Also that red sari.

BIRSO (*throwing it at him*) : Take it. Let me see how long it will last you.

(Aghnu collects everything and returns. Bisahin is anxiously waiting for him in the same field.)

AGHNU : You were right. That noseless creature really had forced her way into another man's house. But take these ornaments and put them on quickly and let us run away together.

BISAHIN : How thoughtless and hasty you are. Have you enough strength in your loins ?

AGHNU : If I hadn't I would not be saying these things. By your blessing there are ploughs and bullocks in the house and you won't have to work so hard for your living as you have to in this house.

BISAHIN : Remember—good-looking men have teeth hidden in their stomachs. I will take advice from my Bhajali. We do whatever we have to do with each other's advice.

(But being a poor girl the temptation of the ornaments and the clothes is too much for her and she dare not refuse to go. That night Aghnu stays in the village and next morning at dawn they elope.)

AGHNU : See how I win you and run off with you within a few hours of our meeting.

BISAHIN : You are a strange man. I do not know how you won me so quickly.

AGHNU : I would have taken you even if that *hagri* also had come back to me.

BISAHIN : Many boys have tried to win me and been ready to die for me but I always refused.

AGHNU : Come, come. Who was your great lover ?

BISAHIN : Be careful or I'll be angry. Don't attribute such qualities to me.

AGHNU (*laughingly*) : How is it you run away with me without knowing me before ?

BISAHIN : You may not have known me but I have known and loved you for a long time.

B

(Mother of the house and daughter-in-law quarrel because the girl has broken an earthen pot accidentally.)

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW : Mother-in-law, the cooking-pot is broken by mistake.

MOTHER-IN-LAW : How did you do it ? You know we have no money to buy a new one. It was a new pot too. Is this all your parents taught you ?

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW : I am glad it is broken. If I had become a widow in the marriage-booth it wouldn't have been my fault. I have not broken the pot on purpose.

MOTHER-IN-LAW : Then go and get it from your parents. Are your hands eaten by maggots or what is the matter with them ?

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: May maggots get into your eyes and not into my hands!

MOTHER-IN-LAW: You daughter of naked parents. In your mother's house they have never been able to collect enough food even for one good meal.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: Where could they gather enough dirt to feed you when you go there? They are poor but happy.

MOTHER-IN-LAW: Run, run, run. Leave, leave, leave my house at once. I will marry my son to another girl. Tomorrow I will get the marriage-booth ready.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: Do, do. It won't hurt me a bit. I haven't come to this house for you or your house. I have come for the love of your son. He camped in my house ten days before the marriage. He used to stand on one leg offering liquor to my parents. Even then my parents said, 'No'. I haven't come as a *paithu*. After all how much have you paid for me?

(At this moment the son comes in.)

SON: What is all this quarrel about?

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: Your mother is turning me out of the house because I broke a pot by accident.

SON: Mother, you want to ruin my happiness and so you quarrel with her every day. It is over a year since we were married and she has not had a single new sari.

YOUNGEST SON (*who has been listening quietly upto now suddenly getting angry.*) You *bhosri*. You speak to your mother like that for your two rupees worth of a wife. What do I get, though I brought a cow and thirty rupees from this year's Mangteri? All that was wasted on your marriage. All I get is a dhoti and a shirt and food. But I never grumble for I realize our poverty and now you have become a loving husband and talk that way to mother. No. You get out of this house and earn your own living. We

them their share. Let them cook their food separately.

MOTHER-IN-LAW: Yes, yes. You and your wife look after yourselves. Go and recognize your own food and fate. This is my lastborn. I will hang round his neck or he may hang round my neck for the rest of my life. Let him save us or drown us. I will be content.

(And thus the families separate.)

C

(If a daughter is married in the same village, the son-in-law sometimes takes his father-in-law to the nearest drinking-house and treats him with liquor.)

SON-IN-LAW: Come uncle, let us go and have a drink.

FATHER-IN-LAW: But I haven't got a pie, nephew.

SON-IN-LAW: O come along. I am present.

FATHER-IN-LAW *(to his wife)*: Give me an anna. I also will contribute half a bottle.

MOTHER-IN-LAW: This boy's whole heart is in drinking. If he saved that money the children would get some sweets.

SON-IN-LAW: O that is going on everyday, aunty. By your blessing every one is happy.

SON-IN-LAW *(when they reach the shop, to the liquor contractor)*: Give us a bottle. Today we will drink, for I have come back from Mangteri. Today the Pathari has brought in his three years' crop and feels relieved of his anxieties.

(They bring from their waist-bands the leaves out of which they drink. The usual scene near a liquor shop. The topers sit in little groups—each with a smouldering cow-dung cake for lighting their pipes. They drink as they smoke. Usually the youngest person present stands with a leaf-cup full of liquor, and pours it into the uncle's mouth with the words, 'Babji Ram', and the son-in-law returns it 'Mamji Ram'. The 'leavings' of the cup are drunk by the son-in-law. Then after that there is continuous—'Take, Mama—take, Bhacha'.)

FATHER-IN-LAW (*after they are a little drunk*) : Go and get half a bottle. Your mother-in-law tied this anna in my dhoti. We will drink this and we will drink more today. By your blessing God has given me a lot. Your mother-in-law is not stingy. We eat well.

(After a little more drinking—they start falling at each other's feet or embracing each other.)

FATHER-IN-LAW : You are my wealth—you are my father—you are my true son.

(An acquaintance comes and they invite him with the warmest affection and the word 'come' is used at least six times. When they are really drunk, the son-in-law falls at his father-in-law's feet and holding them tight with both his hands addresses the newcomer.)

SON-IN-LAW : Where will I find a father-in-law like this ? If it is necessary I will waste every pie on him and there is none who can catch me by the hand and stop me from doing so.

FATHER-IN-LAW (*When the son-in-law's money is done, the father-in-law goes swaying drunkenly, yet without losing his dignity, to the liquor contractor*) : Come, bring, bring one more bottle. Come tomorrow at the thrashing-floor. I will give you what you need. If we don't drink, no one will have intercourse with your dirty liquor. You are Rajas because of us.

FATHER-IN-LAW : Come nephew, let us run away. Take a bottle for your mother-in-law, otherwise she will not give us any food. (*As they are approaching the house he shouts loudly to his wife*) Old woman, old woman !

MOTHER-IN-LAW : Come great warrior. What great victory have you won ?

FATHER-IN-LAW : Serve food to my son-in-law. He is my Brahmin. Such a son-in-law you cannot find in all the three worlds.

(Now the boy offers a leaf-cup to the mother-in-law.)

MOTHER-IN-LAW: No, no. I won't take it, Father (*an expression generally used in addressing a son-in-law*) At this age even two mouthfuls go to the head.

SON-IN-LAW (*here he has to take an oath to make her drink*): You will eat my flesh if you don't drink.

FATHER-IN-LAW (*to the wife*): O *bhosri*,—drink, drink—while your king lives. If I die even a dog will not take any notice of you.

(Then for some time there is tremendous flattery of each other while they run down everyone else and then the food is served. When the son-in-law reaches home he knows he is not going to get a good reception. He starts shouting from a long distance.)

SON-IN-LAW: Satula's mother, are you asleep?

WIFE: What should I do—you leavings of everyone? Why not keep a *chhotki* to look after your children and then I also could go about and wander about in the village? (*Then follows unprintable abuse of the liquor contractor.*)

SON-IN-LAW (*trying to make her laugh*): I know why you are angry. I am not so potent when I am drunk. But open the door. I have brought a horse with me.

IX. CONCLUSION

Such are the Pardhans, charming and wayward, lovable and exasperating. They have many faults: they are often idle, they drink too much, they are over-occupied with sex, they are not dependable. These are the characteristic sins of poets. And like true singers and poets, their virtues are those of generosity and affection. They hate the mean, the dull, the prig, the puritan. They treasure personal freedom as the first of human possessions. A song or a kiss is a richer prize than a bag of gold. It is refreshing to live among people whose values are generally not those of the modern world.

The future of the Pardhans is bound up with that of the great Gond community. It will be a tragedy if education robs these people of their literary and artistic genius. Most Pardhans who have been to school affect to despise the old songs and dances.

There must surely be some means whereby the riches of the ancient life can be carried over into the conditions of the modern world. For if ever a world will need poetry, it will be the world of tomorrow.

GLOSSARY

Ahir, the cowherd caste of the Upper Narbada Valley. Although members of this caste eat pigs and fowls, their association with the sacred cow is regarded as so purifying that even Brahmins take water from their hands.

badki, the senior wife of a polygamous husband.

Baiga, a forest tribe; its members are employed by the Pardhans to perform ceremonies and to assist in times of sickness.

bajuband, an armlet.

bana, the sacred musical instrument of the Pardhans.

barhi, a ceremony performed on the twelfth day after a child's birth.

bari, a cake of *urid* pulse and pulped gourd which is preserved for a year and used when wanted; *bara* is a simpler urid cake which is freshly made and fried in oil.

barua, a medium capable of spirit-possession.

benbaja, a term applied in scorn to the Gogia Bana; the word is usually used in India for 'band music', locally it is given to a mouth-organ.

betel, the leaf of the *piper betle*, Linn., which is wrapped round a bit of areca nut, smeared with lime and chewed.

bhacha, sister's or brother's son, or son-in-law.

bhacha dan, gift given to the Pardhan by a Thakur's sister after her first son is born.

Bhajli, often called Khujalaiya. A pretty festival observed by girls in August.

bhauji, elder brother's wife.

bhilwan, the marking-nut tree, *semecarpus anacardium*, L.F.

bhosri, a common term of abuse.

bhut, a ghost or evil spirit.

bihao dan, a gift given by a Thakur to the Pardhan when the former's daughter is married.

bindia, a beautiful silver ornament worn over the head. Mistakenly called *sutia* in Fig. 17.

bisti, literally 'the waterman'. Used of the man who goes to fetch the bride for her wedding.

Chamar, the untouchable caste of shoe-makers.

charota, the vegetable, *cassia obtusifolia*. Pardhan women use it as a clock, for when its petals close in the evening they know it is time to go home.

chench, a wild vegetable.

chhatti, a ceremony performed on the sixth day after a child's birth.

chhotki, the junior wife of a polygamous husband.

chila roti, fried cakes of rice- or wheat-flour.

churelin, the ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy or childbirth.

dan, alms. Here used for the official gift made by a Gond to his Pardhan Dasondi.

Dasondi, a Pardhan in his capacity as ritual beggar.
dewar, husband's younger brother.
dewarani, the *dewar's* wife.
dhan, unhusked rice.
dhar, silver shields, with chains attached, worn over the ears. See Fig. 17.
dumar, *ficus glomerata,* Roxb. It is so rarely that anyone sees the flower of this tree that the sight is considered extremely lucky. The milk is believed to have the same medical properties as icthyol.

gajara, a golden ornament worn round the neck.
gajaria, a silver bracelet.
garh, a fortress.
ghee, clarified butter.
ghopi, a trap used to snare partridges.
Gogia, one of the two main divisions of the Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley.
guggur, a creeper.
gugumbaja, a scornful term for the Gogia Bana.
Gunia, a magician and diviner.
gur, country sugar.

hagri, 'excreter', a term of abuse.
haldi, turmeric.
hasiadhapa, *baliospermum axillare.*

jajman, a host. Specially applied by the Pardhans to their Gond Thakurs in their capacity as ritual benefactors.
jeth, husband's elder brother.
jethani, husband's elder brother's wife.
jiwa, the life-principle or soul.
jogilatti, *asparagus racemosus,* Willd.
jugti-mohani, supernatural beings capable of clever tricks.
jutha, leavings of food; there are strict rules controlling the disposal of these leavings.

kabbadi, the common game played throughout India.
kaina, a daughter. Used by the Pardhans to indicate the unmarried 'princess' of a well-to-do family.
kajal, lamp-black.
kalsa, a globular pot on which a lamp is placed for a festival or wedding.
kam, feast given on the tenth day after death.
khamar, *trewia nudiflora,* Linn. The wood is used for the Pardhan Bana.
khoko, a common Indian game.
khoksi, a fish.
khurmi, a sausage-like roll of sweetened wheat-flour fried in oil.
kodon, the very popular millet, *paspalum scrobiculatum.*
koel, the Indian starling.
koelar, a popular wild vegetable.
Kotwar, a village watchman; the post is often held by the Pardhans.

kos, a measure of distance, two to three miles.

kunda, an iron or copper nail representing the soul of the dead which is tied with others of the same clan in a grass bundle to a pole and left there. After this the ghosts are no longer dangerous, for it is believed that they have been 'mingled' with Bara Pen.

kutki, the small millet, *panicum psilipodium* or *miliaceum*.

laddu, a popular Indian sweet—a saccharine ball of gram and sugar.

lakh 100,000. Often used in the sense of 'countless'.

lamsena, a youth who serves for his wife instead of paying the bride-price. He is generally either poor or is in love with the girl and adopts this as the only means of winning her.

lapsa, a semi-liquid rice-preparation.

mahua, *bassia latifolia*, Roxb. A valuable tree which gives the Pardhans liquor, food and oil.

mali, commonly known as *dikamali*. *Gardenia lucida*, Roxb. from the resin of which is made Gardenin ($C_{23}H_{30}O_{10}$). The Pardhans use it on their Banas as a demon-scarer.

malguzar, a landlord.

mama, mother's brother, father-in-law.

mandia, the important millet, *eleusine corocana*.

Mangteri, the ceremonial tour undertaken every third year by a Pardhan in search of his rightful dues from Gond Thakurs of his own clan.

Mata, a mother-goddess.

Mokasa, a title for Pardhans, now generally resented.

muar dan, the gift given to a Pardhan on the death of any member of a Thakur's family.

muthia, a preparation of food which is squeezed in the fist (*muth*) and put into the pan to fry.

nanand, husband's younger sister.

nat, the relationship between two clans which can intermarry.

Nengi, a name for the Pardhans.

paithu, a woman who enters a man's house and insists on marrying him.

pan, leaf. Usually applied to the entire delicacy of areca nut, lime, catechu and the leaf of the *piper betle*, Linn. wrapped up together.

panch, the council of five that settles the affairs of a village.

Panda, a priest who has his own private shrine in his house.

parsa, *butea frondosa*, Roxb. The Flame of the Forest. 'As the parsa all over the world has trifoliate leaves, so human nature is everywhere the same.'

pej, a gruel which is the Pardhans' staple food.

phundra, coloured balls of red, blue and green wool used for tying the hair.

pipar, the sacred fig tree, *ficus religiosa*, Linn.

Pujari, a priest. Here a Gond who performs the Kunda ceremony.

Raj-nengi, one of the two divisions of the Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley.

saga, two related clans, between the members of which marriage is not permitted.

saila, men's dance.

saja, *terminalia tomentosa,* W. & A. The sacred tree of Bara Pen.

salhe, *boswellia serrata,* Roxb. The Pardhans say that when Lakshman was killed by Meghnath he was restored by the juice of this tree. It is regarded as protecting from lightning those who stand below it in a storm. The wood is used for the sacred pillar of a Pardhan wedding and for the seat on which bride and bridegroom sit. A substitute for sandalwood.

samdhi, the relation between two parents-in-law.

sari, a woman's dress.

sas, mother-in-law.

sasur, father-in-law.

sarso, mustard.

Sawan, the Hindu month corresponding to July-August, when the rains are heavy and women are busy weeding in the fields.

sonne dan, a gift given when a Thakur's sister is married.

surteli, *woodfordia floribundia,* Salisb., a shrub with a bright red flower. The bow of the Bana is made with its wood.

tethari, a preparation of gram.

Thakur, a Gond in his ritual capacity as the host and benefactor of a Pardhan.

thua, a charm or rite which concentrates disease into a moveable object which can then be removed.

thuha, a medicinal shrub, probably one of the euphorbias.

tisala dan, the gift given by a Thakur every third year.

urid, the pulse, *phaseolus radiatus.*

INDEX

Abortion, 161
Abuse, 172
Adventures on the Mangteri tour, 60
Agarias, relationship with Pardhans, 11; myths, 34, 36, 38, 40
Age at marriage, 173
Animals, in dreams, 162; transmigration into, 175
Aurangzeb, 82 ff.

Badi acrobats, 28
Baghel clan, 35
Baigas, relationship of, with Pardhans, 11, 65, 103, 153; origin of, 22; clan system, 30; 128
Bana, origin of, 25 ff.; 8, 41, 44 f., 49; Chap. IV, *passim*, especially 66 ff.; 105
Bara Bathi Bengala, war against, 87 ff.
Bara Pen, 10, 23 f., 32 f., 35 f., 38, 41 f., 49 ff., 80, 84, 91, 93 f., 97, 104 f., 124, 151, 182, 184
Barrenness, treatment of, 108, 142; influence on polygamy, 201
Basors, origin of, 24
Begbie, L.F., 86 n.
Belt, silver, illustrated, 155
Bengal Legislative Council, 127
Betel-cutter, as totem, 31
Betrothal customs, 168 f.
Bhagadia clan, described, 31
Bhagavan, 20 f., 105 f., 173 ff.
Bhainsasur, 126
Bhandarkar, R.G., 128 n.
Bhimsen, 129 f.
Birth customs, 164 ff.
Blessing of Dasondi, 57
Blindness, due to witchcraft, 145
Bodding, P. O., qu.,66
Bodrahin, 32; illustrated, 56
Bondos, 30
Bose, P. N., qu.,8
Brahmins, the Pardhan attitude to, 61, 72, 115
Briffault, R., 186
Buffalo, as totem, 31, 63, 74, 126 f.
Bullocks, training of, 47

Castor plant, 43, 143
Cattle, care of, 46 f.
Census of India, 1931, qu., 2-3
Chamars, the Pardhan attitude to, 95 f., 131, 143
Chandagarh, legends of, 80
Character of Pardhans, 11, 44, 53, 61, 221
Chastity, ceremonial, 67, 119; a test of, 83 f.; Pardhan admiration of, 147 f., 160
Chaudhuri, N., 128 n.
Child, the Pardhan, 152, 159, 173, 175
Cholera, treatment of, 115, 184
Chor Deo, helper of thieves, 18
Churelin, 163, 184
Clan organization of the Pardhans, 29 ff., 182
Cleanliness, 44, 49
Cobra, as totem, 31
Cock, danger when one crows at night, 109
Cockroach, as totem, 30, 42
Combat, the magic, 96
Conceit of Pardhans, 61
Conception, danger of unwanted, 161, 208
Cows, attitude to, 41; lucky, 112 ff.; 63, 113, 175
Criminal, tribe, Pardhans classified as a, 3; tradition of former times, 13 ff.
Crocodile, as totem, 31
Curses, Pardhan, 64

Dalpat Sai, illustrated, 75; song about, 78 ff.
Dalton, E. T., 7, 128 n.
Dan, the first, 26; Chap. IV, *passim*
Dance, importance of the, 155 f., 210, 215
Dani Tekam, autobiography of, 112 ff.; on woman, 146 f.; as a child, 159
Dasondi, Chap. IV, *passim*
Death, customs and ideas, 173 ff.
Dewar-bhauji relationship, 192 ff.
Dhanwar tribe, origin of, 25
Dhiro, illustrated, 77; 79, 99
Dhulia, as Dasondi, 65
Dhurwa clan, described, 32 f.
Dialogues, 196 f., 204 f., 212 ff.
Dindori Tahsil, described, 3 f.
Disputes, 64. *See* Quarrels.
Distribution of Pardhans, 2
Divination, 59, 71, 106 ff.
Divorce, 149, 208 ff.
Domestic realities, 186 f.
Dormitory, absence regretted, 159; foundation by Lingo, 197
Dramatic skit on vegetarianism, 142
Draupadi, story about, 130 f.
Dreams, 161 f.
Dulha Deo, 124

Economic aspects of marriage, 169 f.
Eggs, use of in magic, 107 ff.
Ekti Festival, 119
Elopements, famous, 61
Elwin, Verrier, qu., 7, 10, 30, 34, 37, 38, 40, 128, 154, 155, 162, 177, 208
Erotic dreams, 115, 162
Evans-Pritchard, E. E., 144
Excommunication, 38, 41, 161

Festivals, 49, 118 ff.
Fire, ceremonial use of at birth, 165 f.
Fish, 49, 175
Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills, qu., 10, 153, 167
Forsyth, J., 7 n.
Freedom, of women, 149, 210
Functions of men and women different, 148
Funerals, incidents at, 29, 72, 145; gifts to Pardhans at, 54, 62 f.; customs at, 33, 41 f., 51, 178 ff.
Furer-Haimendorf, C. von, qu., 7

Garden, the Pardhan, 43 f.
Gayer, G. W., 8
Ghosts, fear of, 59
Goat, as totem, 33; in marriages, 34; in sacrifice, 35, 41, 182 f.
Gods, nature of, 103 ff.
Gogia, meaning of, 27; origin of, 28
Gonds, relationship with Pardhans, 1, 10 ff., 50 ff.; proposed union with Pardhans, 13; character compared with Pardhans, 11 f.; stinginess of, 60; dullness of Gond girls, 60; plough punishment among, 191 f.
Grigson, W. V., qu., 3, 32, 37
Guests, Pardhan attitude to, 47; Gond attitude to, 55, 58
Gugumbaja, 27
Gunthorpe, Major, 8 n.

Hair, ceremonial use of, 161
Hareli Festival, 119 f.
Hawk, as totem, 30
Hindus, origin of, 22 f.; relationship with Gonds, 22, with Pardhans, 16; influence of, 103, 119, 128, 175; women admired, 150
Hirakhan Raja, 17, 39, 53, 78 f., 86 ff.; illustrated, 77
Hiralal, 14, 125 n.
Hirde Sai, 84 ff.
Hislop, S., qu., 6, 20, 27
Hobby horses, in the Laru Kaj, 141 f.
Horse, as totem, 30
Human sacrifice, how superceded, 24
Humour, character of Pardhan, 1, 11, 56 f., 60, 77 ff., 172, 196 f.
Husband and wife, 151, 174

Infanticide, 161
Infidelity, 116 f., 150, 187 ff., 211
Inheritance, of priestly function, 106; of women, 148
Itch, averted, 123

Jawara Festival, 115
Jealousy, 149 f., 187 ff., 198
Joking relationships, 195 f.
Juangs, 30

Kaibur, 85
Kam ceremony for the dead, 180 f.
Kamal Hiro, 61, 77, 79, 86 ff.; illustrated, 86
Kari Rani, 81 ff.; illustrated, 75
Kawar Raja, 23 f.
Khusro clan, described, 34 f.
Kissing, 153
Kumra clan, described, 33 f.
Kunda ceremony for the dead, 10, 175, 181 ff.
Kurkus, 28

Lakshman, song of, 99 ff.; 109 f.
Lal Bijagar, humorous character, 78
Lamp, ceremonial use of, 58; divination by, 110; at birth, 166
Lamsena, 158, 205 ff.
Land Alienation Act, 3
Laru Kaj, 125 ff.
Lawrence, A. J., qu., 7 f., 15
Laziness of Pardhans, 44, 53, 211
Leprosy, 144 f., 189 f.
Lingo, 6, 67, 197; hill, illustrated, 48
Liquor, 17, 129; method of offering, 48; dialogue about, 219 ff.
Literature, the Pardhans in, 6 ff.
Love, character of Pardhan, 152 ff.
Love-bite, 153

Machhandar Kaina, song of, 99 ff.
Magician, the Pardhan, 106 ff.
McNeil, Captain, qu., 14
Mahangu, humorous character, 76 f.
Man in India, qu., 10, 125, 128, 193, 208
Mandla District, described, 4 f.; in ancient history, 23, 80 ff.
Mango, as totem, 35

Mangteri tours, Chap. IV, *passim*
Manu, 193
Marabi clan, described, 35, 37
Maradlangha, 76; illustrated, 74
Marakhan, *See* Mara Kshattri
Mara Kshattri, 36, 78 f.
Marhai Festival, 115, 124
Markam clan, described, 35 f.
Marriage, gifts at, 53; jokes at, 77; general customs, 167 ff.
Menstrual, disorders, caused by witch, 143, cure of, 108; taboos, 136; continual, 151
Midwife, duties of, 164 f.
Mokasi, position of, 15, 86
Mother, the Pardhan, 151 f.
Murias, 161, 197
Mussalmans, Pardhan relations with and attitude to, 4, 16, 37, 41, 74 f., 82 ff.
Mythology, Pardhan, 20 ff., 52, 129 f.

Nanga Baiga, 22, 24; his method of divination, 107
Nang Panchmi, 120 ff.
Narayan Deo, 25, 32, 70, 124, 127 ff.
Narbod, 123
Nawa Festival, 123 f.
Nelson, A. E., 133
North Indian Notes and Queries, 23 n.

Obscenity, 74, 106, 138, 159
Oil-seed, as totem, 31
Ojhas, 65 f.
Omens, 55, 165
Origin, of world, 20 ff; of Pardhans, 25 ff.
Ornaments, illustrated, 146, 147, 149, 151, 155, 157, 158, 160, 167, 170, 173

Paithu marriage, 203 f.
Palm, as totem, 30
Pandavas, stories about, 5, 103, 129 f.
Pankas, 24
Parteti clan, 17; described, 36 ff.
Parvati, 21
Pen Karsita, 124
Pigs, in a miracle, 33; in marriage, 34; in Pardhan life, 125 f.; sacrifice of, 127 ff.
Placenta, 37, 40, 97, 164
Plough punishment, 189 ff.
Pola Festival, 123
Police, relations of Pardhans with, 16 f., 19
Polygamy, 201 ff.
Porcupine, as totem, 40
Potta clan, described, 40
Poverty of Pardhans, reason for the, 52
Practical jokes, Pardhan love of, 76
Pregnancy, taboos, 148
Premchand, 193
Pre-nuptial freedom, tradition of, 159 ff.
Priestesses, 149
Promiscuity, 156 f.
Proverbs, 198 f.
Punishments for infidelity, 188 f.

Quarrels, at marriages, 172 f.; in a polygamous household, 201 ff; between husband and wife, 216; between a girl and her mother-in-law, 217 f.

Rajnengi Pardhans, origin of, 26; division from Gogias, 27 ff.; their Bana described and illustrated, 69 f.
Rama, 99 f.
Ramayana, 103
Ramgarh Pargana, 4
Rat Mai, 17, 32, 67, 124, 126
Rats, helpful, 84
Reformers, menace of, 126
Religion of the Pardhans, 103 ff.
Religious year, the, 118 ff.
Routine, daily, 44 ff.
Rudman, F. R. R., qu., 4, 14 f.; 27 n.
Russell, R. V. and Hiralal, qu., 7, 8, 14, 15, 27, 33, 42, 65, 66, 73

Salt, ceremonial use of, 33, 120; danger of insulting, 36
Satya Narayan, worship of, 61, 127, 142
Serving-marriage, the, 205 ff.
Shriyal Jango, 17, 67, 79; illustrated, 77
Sita, 99 ff., 151
Snakes, attitude to, 120 ff., 145
Sneezing, as omen, 165
Songs, of love, 153 ff.; of mourning, 177
Songs of the Forest, qu., 10, 153
Sonwani clan, 38
Soul, destiny of, 174, 184
Status of Pardhans, 2
Still-born child, burial of, 185
Stilts, 120, 123
Sun, worship of, 127 f.
Syam clan, described, 40 f.

Tail of witches, 143 f.
Teak, as totem, 3
Tekam clan, described, 41 f.
Temple, Sir R., 6

Thakur Deo, 72, 121
Thieves, methods of Pardhan, 16 ff.
Thomson, W.B., 7, 13
Tiger, as totem, 30, 34; transformation into, 144
Tortoise, as totem, 30, 38
Transmigration, 175
Trench, C. G. C., qu., 34, 37, 73
Tribal organization of Pardhans, 20 ff.

Uike clan, described, 42
Unfamiliar language, ceremonial use of, 138
Untouchables, some Pardhans classed as, 2
Urweti clan, described, 42

Village, the Pardhan, 43 ff.

Wall-patterns, illustrated, 43, 45, 48, 56, 74, 75, 77, 86, 174, 176, 206, 208, 210
Ward, H. C. E., 7
Westermarck, E., 186
Wheat, protection of, 108
Wild cat, as totem, 31
Witches, danger of, 43, 105, 109; fight against, 143 ff.
Woman, the Pardhan, 146 ff.

Younger brother, position of the, 200