THE

TRIBES AND CASTES

OF THE

CENTRAL PROVINCES OF INDIA

BY

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ARTICLES ON CASTES AND TRIBES OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

The articles which are considered to be of most general interest are shown in capitals

RĀJPŪT CLANS

ILLUSTRATIONS IN VOLUME IV

PRONUNCIATION

a has the sound of u in *but* or *murmur*.

ā „ „ a in *bath* or *tar*.

e „ „ é in *écarté* or ai in *maid*.

i „ „ i in *bit*, or (as a final letter) of y in *sulky*.

ī „ „ ee in *beet*.

o „ „ o in *bore* or *bowl*.

u „ „ u in *put* or *bull*.

ū „ „ oo in *poor* or *boot*.

The plural of caste names and a few common Hindustāni words is formed by adding *s* in the English manner according to ordinary usage, though this is not, of course, the Hindustāni plural.

NOTE.—The rupee contains 16 annas, and an anna is of the same value as a penny. A pice is a quarter of an anna, or a farthing. Rs. 1-8 signifies one rupee and eight annas. A lakh is a hundred thousand, and a krore ten million.

PART II

ARTICLES ON CASTES AND TRIBES

KUMHĀR—YEMKALA

KUMHĀR

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

Kumhār, Kumbhār.—The caste of potters, the name being derived from the Sanskrit *kumbh*, a water-pot. The Kumhārs numbered nearly 120,000 persons in the Central Provinces in 1911 and were most numerous in the northern and eastern or Hindustāni-speaking Districts, where earthen vessels have a greater vogue than in the south. The caste is of course an ancient one, vessels of earthenware having probably been in use at a very early period, and the old Hindu scriptures consequently give various accounts of its origin from mixed marriages between the four classical castes. "Concerning the traditional parentage of the caste," Sir H. Risley writes,[1] "there seems to be a wide difference of opinion among the recognised authorities on the subject. Thus the Brahma Vaivārtta Purāna says that the Kumbhakār or maker of water-jars (*kumbha*), is born of a Vaishya woman by a Brāhman father; the Parāsara Samhita makes the father a Mālākār (gardener) and the mother a Chamār; while the Parāsara Padhati holds that the ancestor of the caste was begotten of a Tili woman by a Pattikār or weaver of silk cloth. Sir Monier Williams again, in his Sanskrit Dictionary, describes them as the offspring of a Kshatriya woman by a Brāhman. No importance can of course be attached to 1. Traditions of origin.

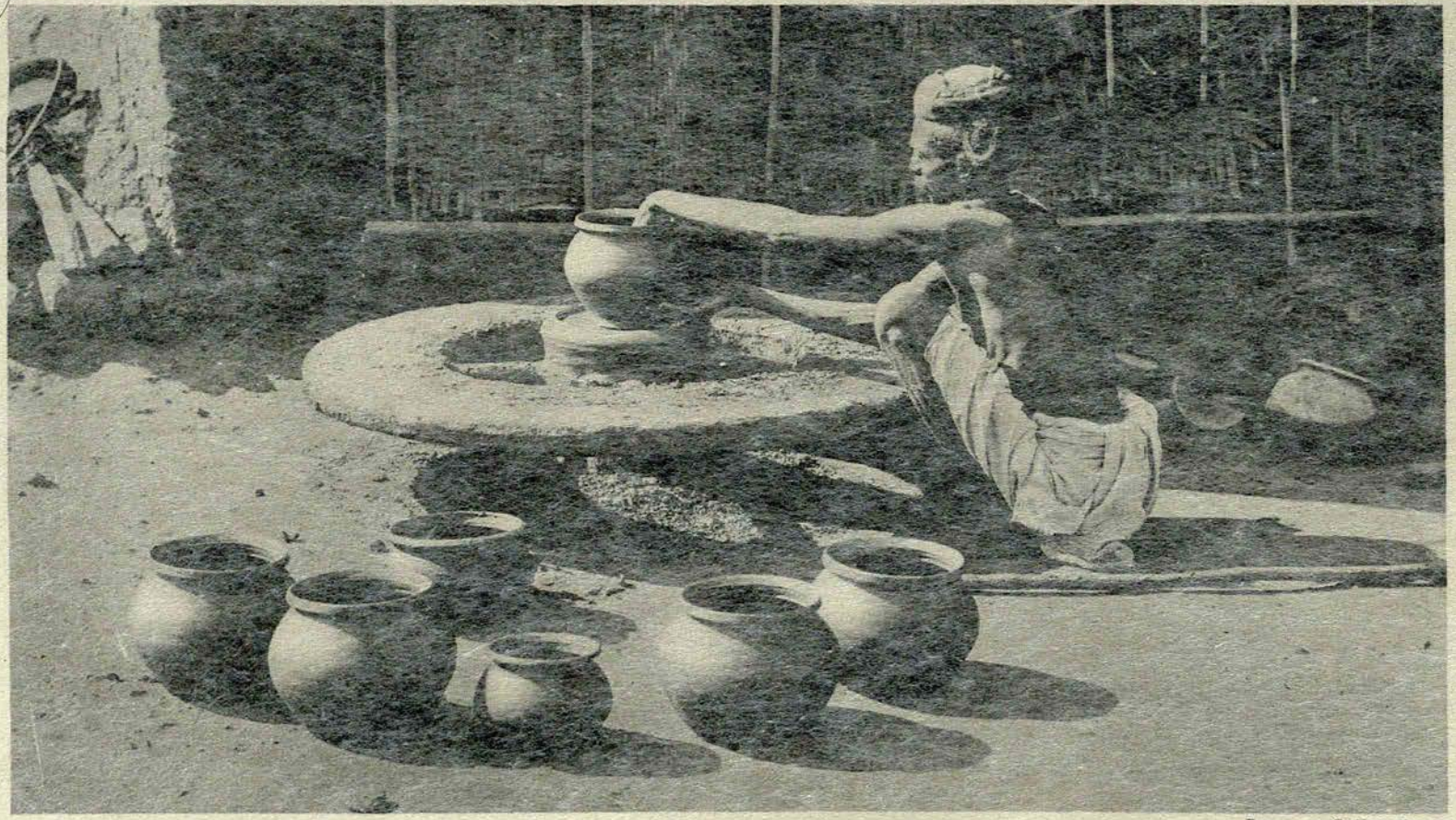
[1] *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, art. Kumhār.

such statements as the above from the point of view of actual fact, but they are interesting as showing the view taken of the formation of castes by the old Brāhman writers, and also the position given to the Kumhār at the time when they wrote. This varies from a moderately respectable to a very humble one according to the different accounts of his lineage. The caste themselves have a legend of the usual Brāhmanical type: "In the Kritayuga, when Maheshwar (Siva) intended to marry the daughter of Hemvanta, the Devas and Asuras[1] assembled at Kailās (Heaven). Then a question arose as to who should furnish the vessels required for the ceremony, and one Kulālaka, a Brāhman, was ordered to make them. Then Kulālaka stood before the assembly with folded hands, and prayed that materials might be given to him for making the pots. So Vishnu gave his Sudarsana (discus) to be used as a wheel, and the mountain of Mandāra was fixed as a pivot beneath it to hold it up. The scraper was Adi Kūrma the tortoise, and a rain-cloud was used for the water-tub. So Kulālaka made the pots and gave them to Maheshwar for his marriage, and ever since his descendants have been known as Kumbhakār or maker of water-jars."

2. Caste sub-divisions.

The Kumhārs have a number of subcastes, many of which, as might be expected, are of the territorial type and indicate the different localities from which they migrated to the Central Provinces. Such are the Mālwi from Mālwa, the Telenga from the Telugu country in Hyderābād, the Pardeshi from northern India and the Marātha from the Marātha Districts. Other divisions are the Lingāyats who belong to the sect of this name, the Gadhewāl or Gadhere who make tiles and carry them about on donkeys (*gadha*), the Bardia who use bullocks for transport and the Sungaria who keep pigs (*suar*). Certain endogamous groups have arisen simply from differences in the method of working. Thus the Hāthgarhia[2] mould vessels with their hands only without using the wheel; the Goria[3] make white or red pots only and not black ones; the Kurere mould their vessels on a stone slab revolving on a stick and not on a wheel; while the Chakere are Kumhārs who use the wheel (*chāk*) in

[1] Gods and demons. [2] *Hāth*, hand and *garhna*, to make or mould.
[3] *Gora*, white or red, applied to Europeans.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

POTTER AND HIS WHEEL.

localities where other Kumhārs do not use it. The Chhutakia and Rakhotia are illegitimate sections, being the offspring of kept women.

3. Social customs.

Girls are married at an early age when their parents can afford it, the matches being usually arranged at caste feasts. In Chānda parents who allow a daughter to become adolescent while still unwed are put out of caste, but elsewhere the rule is by no means so strict. The ceremony is of the normal type and a Brāhman usually officiates, but in Betūl it is performed by the Sawāsa or husband of the bride's paternal aunt. After the wedding the couple are given kneaded flour to hold in their hands and snatch from each other as an emblem of their trade. In Mandla a bride-price of Rs. 50 is paid.

The Kumhārs recognise divorce and the remarriage of widows. If an unmarried girl is detected in criminal intimacy with a member of the caste, she has to give a feast to the caste-fellows and pay a fine of Rs. 1-4 and five locks of her hair are also cut off by way of purification. The caste usually burn the dead, but the Lingāyat Kumhārs always bury them in accordance with the practice of their sect. They worship the ordinary Hindu deities and make an offering to the implements of their trade on the festival of Deothān Igāras. The village Brāhman serves as their priest. In Bālāghāt a Kumhār is put out of caste if a dead cat is found in his house. At the census of 1901 the Kumhār was ranked with the impure castes, but his status is not really so low. Sir D. Ibbetson said of him: "He is a true village menial; his social standing is very low, far below that of the Lohār and not much above the Chamār. His association with that impure beast, the donkey, the animal sacred to Sitala, the smallpox goddess, pollutes him and also his readiness to carry manure and sweepings." As already seen there are in the Central Provinces Sungaria and Gadheria subcastes which keep donkeys and pigs, and these are regarded as impure. But in most Districts the Kumhār ranks not much below the Barhai and Lohār, that is in what I have designated the grade of village menials above the impure and below the cultivating castes. In Bengal the Kumhārs have a much higher status and Brāhmans will

take water from their hands. But the gradation of caste in Bengal differs very greatly from that of other parts of India.

4. The Kumhār as a village menial.

The Kumhār is not now paid regularly by dues from the cultivators like other village menials, as the ordinary system of sale has no doubt been found more convenient in his case. But he sometimes takes the soiled grass from the stalls of the cattle and gives pots free to the cultivator in exchange. On Akti day, at the beginning of the agricultural year, the village Kumhār of Saugor presents five pots with covers on them to each cultivator and receives 2½ lbs. of grain in exchange. One of these the tenant fills with water and presents to a Brāhman and the rest he reserves for his own purposes. On the occasion of a wedding also the bridegroom's party take the bride to the Kumhārin's house as part of the *sohāg* ceremony for making the marriage propitious. The Kumhār seats the bride on his wheel and turns it round with her seven times. The Kumhārin presents her with seven new pots, which are taken back to the house and used at the wedding. They are filled with water and are supposed to represent the seven seas. If any two of these pots accidentally clash together it is supposed that the bride and bridegroom will quarrel during their married life. In return for this the Kumhārin receives a present of clothes. At a funeral also the Kumhār must supply thirteen vessels which are known as *ghāts*, and must also replace the broken earthenware. Like the other village menials at the harvest he takes a new vessel to the cultivator in his field and receives a present of grain. These customs appear to indicate his old position as one of the menials or general servants of the village ranking below the cultivators. Grant-Duff also includes the potter in his list of village menials in the Marātha villages.[1]

5. Occupation.

The potter is not particular as to the clay he uses and does not go far afield for the finer qualities, but digs it from the nearest place in the neighbourhood where he can get it free of cost. Red and black clay are employed, the former being obtained near the base of hills or on high-lying land, probably of the laterite formation, and the latter in the beds of tanks or streams. When the clay is thoroughly kneaded

[1] *History of the Marāthas*, edition 1878, vol. i. p. 26.

and ready for use a lump of it is placed on the centre of the wheel. The potter seats himself in front of the wheel and fixes his stick or *chakrait* into the slanting hole in its upper surface. With this stick the wheel is made to revolve very rapidly, and sufficient impetus is given to it to keep it in motion for several minutes. The potter then lays aside the stick and with his hands moulds the lump of clay into the shape required, stopping every now and then to give the wheel a fresh spin as it loses its momentum. When satisfied with the shape of his vessel he separates it from the lump with a piece of string, and places it on a bed of ashes to prevent it sticking to the ground. The wheel is either a circular disc cut out of a single piece of stone about a yard in diameter, or an ordinary wooden wheel with spokes forming two diameters at right angles. The rim is then thickened with the addition of a coating of mud strengthened with fibre.[1] The articles made by the potter are ordinary circular vessels or *gharas* used for storing and collecting water, larger ones for keeping grain, flour and vegetables, and *surāhis* or amphoras for drinking-water. In the manufacture of these last salt and saltpetre are mixed with the clay to make them more porous and so increase their cooling capacity. A very useful thing is the small saucer which serves as a lamp, being filled with oil on which a lighted wick is floated. These saucers resemble those found in the excavations of Roman remains. Earthen vessels are more commonly used, both for cooking and eating purposes among the people of northern India, and especially by Muhammadans, than among the Marāthas, and, as already noticed, the Kumhār caste musters strong in the north of the Province. An earthen vessel is polluted if any one of another caste takes food or drink from it and is at once discarded. On the occasion of a death all the vessels in the house are thrown away and a new set obtained, and the same measure is adopted at the Holi festival and on the occasion of an eclipse, and at various other ceremonial purifications, such as that entailed if a member of the household has had maggots in a wound. On this account cheapness is an indispensable quality in pottery, and there is

[1] The above description is taken from the Central Provinces *Monograph on Pottery and Glassware* by Mr. Jowers, p. 4.

no opening for the Kumhār to improve his art. Another product of the Kumhār's industry is the *chilam* or pipe-bowl. This has the usual opening for inhaling the smoke but no stem, an impromptu stem being made by the hands and the smoke inhaled through it. As the *chilam* is not touched by the mouth, Hindus of all except the impure castes can smoke it together, passing it round, and Hindus can also smoke it with Muhammadans.

It is a local belief that, if an earthen pot is filled with salt and plastered over, the rains will stop until it is opened. This device is adopted when the fall is excessive, but, on the other hand, if there is drought, the people sometimes think that the potter has used it to keep off the rain, because he cannot pursue his calling when the clay is very wet. And on occasions of a long break in the rains, they have been known to attack his shop and break all his vessels under the influence of this belief. The potter is sometimes known as Prājapati or the 'The Creator,' in accordance with the favourite comparison made by ancient writers of the moulding of his pots with the creation of human beings, the justice of which will be recognised by any one who watches the masses of mud on a whirling wheel growing into shapely vessels in the potter's creating hands.

6. Breeding pigs for sacrifices.

Certain Kumhārs as well as the Dhīmars make the breeding of pigs a means of subsistence, and they sell these pigs for sacrifices at prices varying from eight annas (8d.) to a rupee. The pigs are sacrificed by the Gonds to their god Bura Deo and by Hindus to the deity Bhainsāsur, or the buffalo demon, for the protection of the crops. Bhainsāsur is represented by a stone in the fields, and when crops are beaten down at night by the wind it is supposed that Bhainsāsur has passed over them and trampled them down. Hindus, usually of the lower castes, offer pigs to Bhainsāsur to propitiate him and preserve their crops from his ravages, but they cannot touch the impure pig themselves. What they have to do, therefore, is to pay the Kumhār the price of the pig and get him to offer it to Bhainsāsur on their behalf. The Kumhār goes to the god and sacrifices the pig and then takes the body home and eats it, so that his trade is a profitable one, while conversely to sacrifice a pig without partaking

of its flesh must necessarily be bitter to the frugal Hindu mind, and this indicates the importance of the deity who is to be propitiated by the offering. The first question which arises in connection with this curious custom is why pigs should be sacrificed for the preservation of the crops; and the reason appears to be that the wild pig is the animal which, at present, mainly damages the crops.

7. The goddess Demeter.

In ancient Greece pigs were offered to Demeter, the corn-goddess, for the protection of the crops, and there is good reason to suppose that the conceptions of Demeter herself and the lovely Proserpine grew out of the worship of the pig, and that both goddesses were in the beginning merely the deified pig. The highly instructive passage in which Sir J. G. Frazer advances this theory is reproduced almost in full:[1]

"Passing next to the corn-goddess Demeter, and remembering that in European folklore the pig is a common embodiment of the corn-spirit, we may now ask whether the pig, which was so closely associated with Demeter, may not originally have been the goddess herself in animal form? The pig was sacred to her; in art she was portrayed carrying or accompanied by a pig; and the pig was regularly sacrificed in her mysteries, the reason assigned being that the pig injures the corn and is therefore an enemy of the goddess. But after an animal has been conceived as a god, or a god as an animal, it sometimes happens, as we have seen, that the god sloughs off his animal form and becomes purely anthropomorphic; and that then the animal which at first had been slain in the character of the god, comes to be viewed as a victim offered to the god on the ground of its hostility to the deity; in short, that the god is sacrificed to himself on the ground that he is his own enemy. This happened to Dionysus and it may have happened to Demeter also. And in fact the rites of one of her festivals, the Thesmophoria, bear out the view that originally the pig was an embodiment of the corn-goddess herself, either Demeter or her daughter and double Proserpine. The Thesmophoria was an autumn festival celebrated by women alone in October, and appears to have represented with mourning rites the descent of Proserpine (or Demeter) into the lower world, and with joy her return

[1] *Golden Bough*, ii. pp. 299, 301.

from the dead. Hence the name Descent or Ascent variously applied to the first, and the name *Kalligeneia* (fair-born) applied to the third day of the festival. Now from an old scholium on Lucian we learn some details about the mode of celebrating the Thesmophoria, which shed important light on the part of the festival called the Descent or the Ascent. The scholiast tells us that it was customary at the Thesmophoria to throw pigs, cakes of dough, and branches of pine-trees into 'the chasms of Demeter and Proserpine,' which appear to have been sacred caverns or vaults.

"In these caverns or vaults there were said to be serpents, which guarded the caverns and consumed most of the flesh of the pigs and dough-cakes which were thrown in. Afterwards—apparently at the next annual festival—the decayed remains of the pigs, the cakes, and the pine-branches were fetched by women called 'drawers,' who, after observing rules of ceremonial purity for three days, descended into the caverns, and, frightening away the serpents by clapping their hands, brought up the remains and placed them on the altar. Whoever got a piece of the decayed flesh and cakes, and sowed it with the seed-corn in his field, was believed to be sure of a good crop.

"To explain this rude and ancient rite the following legend was told. At the moment when Pluto carried off Proserpine, a swineherd called Eubuleus chanced to be herding his swine on the spot, and his herd was engulfed in the chasm down which Pluto vanished with Proserpine. Accordingly, at the Thesmophoria pigs were annually thrown into caverns to commemorate the disappearance of the swine of Eubuleus. It follows from this that the casting of the pigs into the vaults at the Thesmophoria formed part of the dramatic representation of Proserpine's descent into the lower world; and as no image of Proserpine appears to have been thrown in, we may infer that the descent of the pigs was not so much an accompaniment of her descent as the descent itself, in short, that the pigs were Proserpine. Afterwards, when Proserpine or Demeter (for the two are equivalent) became anthropomorphic, a reason had to be found for the custom of throwing pigs into caverns at her festival; and this was done by saying that when Pluto carried off Proser-

pine, there happened to be some swine browsing near, which were swallowed up along with her. The story is obviously a forced and awkward attempt to bridge over the gulf between the old conception of the corn-spirit as a pig and the new conception of her as an anthropomorphic goddess. A trace of the older conception survived in the legend that when the sad mother was searching for traces of the vanished Proserpine, the footprints of the lost one were obliterated by the footprints of a pig; originally, we may conjecture, the footprints of the pig were the footprints of Proserpine and of Demeter herself. A consciousness of the intimate connection of the pig with the corn lurks in the legend that the swineherd Eubuleus was a brother of Triptolemus, to whom Demeter first imparted the secret of the corn. Indeed, according to one version of the story, Eubuleus himself received, jointly with his brother Triptolemus, the gift of the corn from Demeter as a reward for revealing to her the fate of Proserpine. Further, it is to be noted that at the Thesmophoria the women appear to have eaten swine's flesh. The meal, if I am right, must have been a solemn sacrament or communion, the worshippers partaking of the body of the god."

8. Estimation of the pig in India.

We thus see how the pig in ancient Greece was worshipped as a corn-deity because it damaged the crops and subsequently became an anthropomorphic goddess. It is suggested that pigs are offered to Bhainsāsur by the Hindus for the same reason. But there is no Hindu deity representing the pig, this animal on the contrary being regarded as impure. It seems doubtful, however, whether this was always so. In Rājputāna on the stone which the Regent of Kotah set up to commemorate the abolition of forced taxes were carved the effigies of the sun, the moon, the cow and the hog, with an imprecation on whoever should revoke the edict.[1] Colonel Tod says that the pig was included as being execrated by all classes, but this seems very doubtful. It would scarcely occur to any Hindu nowadays to associate the image of the impure pig with those of the sun, moon and cow, the representations of three of his greatest deities. Rather it gives some reason for

[1] *Rājasthān*, ii. p. 524.

supposing that the pig was once worshipped, and the Rājpūts still do not hold the wild boar impure, as they hunt it and eat its flesh. Moreover, Vishnu in his fourth incarnation was a boar. The Gonds regularly offer pigs to their great god Bura Deo, and though they now offer goats as well, this seems to be a later innovation. The principal sacrifice of the early Romans was the Suovetaurilia or the sacrifice of a pig, a ram and a bull. The order of the words, M. Reinach remarks,[1] is significant as showing the importance formerly attached to the pig or boar. Since the pig was the principal sacrificial animal of the primitive tribes, the Gonds and Baigas, its connection with the ritual of an alien and at one time hostile religion may have strengthened the feeling of aversion for it among the Hindus, which would naturally be engendered by its own dirty habits.

9. The buffalo as a corn-god.

It seems possible then that the Hindus reverenced the wild boar in the past as one of the strongest and fiercest animals of the forest and also as a destroyer of the crops. And they still make sacrifices of the pig to guard their fields from his ravages. These sacrifices, however, are not offered to any deity who can represent a deified pig but to Bhainsāsur, the deified buffalo. The explanation seems to be that in former times, when forests extended over most of the country, the cultivator had in the wild buffalo a direr foe than the wild pig. And one can well understand how the peasant, winning a scanty subsistence from his poor fields near the forest, and seeing his harvest destroyed in a night by the trampling of a herd of these great brutes against whom his puny weapons were powerless, looked on them as terrible and malignant deities. The sacrifice of a buffalo would be beyond the means of a single man, and the animal is now more or less sacred as one of the cow tribe. But the annual joint sacrifice of one or more buffaloes is a regular feature of the Dasahra festival and extends over a great part of India. In Betūl and other districts the procedure is that on the Dasahra day, or a day before, the Māng and Kotwār, two of the lowest village menials, take a buffalo bull and bring it to the village proprietor, who makes a cut on its nose and draws blood. Then it is taken all round the village and to the shrines of

[1] *Orphéus*, p. 152.

the gods, and in the evening it is killed and the Māng and Kotwār eat the flesh. It is now believed that if the blood of a buffalo does not fall at Dasahra some epidemic will attack the village, but as there are no longer any wild buffaloes except in the denser forests of one or two Districts, the original meaning of the rite might naturally have been forgotten.[1]

10. The Dasahra festival.

The Dasahra festival probably marks the autumnal equinox and also the time when the sowing of wheat and other spring crops begins. Many Hindus still postpone sowing the wheat until after Dasahra, even though it might be convenient to begin before, especially as the festival goes by the lunar month and its date varies in different years by more than a fortnight. The name signifies the tenth day, and prior to the festival a fast of nine days is observed, when the pots of wheat corresponding to the gardens of Adonis are sown and quickly sprout up. This is an imitation of the sowing and growth of the real crop and is meant to ensure its success. During these nine days it is said that the goddess Devi was engaged in mortal combat with the buffalo demon Mahisāsur or Bhainsāsur, and on the tenth day or the Dasahra she slew him. The fast is explained as being observed in order to help her to victory, but it is really perhaps a fast in connection with the growing of the crops. A similar nine days' fast for the crops was observed by the Greeks.[2]

11. The goddess Devi.

Devi signifies '*the* goddess' *par excellence*. She is often the tutelary goddess of the village and of the family, and is held to have been originally Mother Earth, which may be supposed to be correct. In tracts where the people of northern and southern India meet she is identified with Anna Pūrna, the corn-goddess of the Telugu country; and in her form of Gauri or 'the Yellow One' she is perhaps herself the yellow corn. As Gauri she is worshipped at weddings in conjunction with Ganesh or Ganpati, the god of Good Fortune; and it is probably in honour of the harvest colour that Hindus of the upper castes wear yellow at

[1] The sacrifice is now falling into abeyance, as landowners refuse to supply the buffalo.

[2] Dr. Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 368.

their weddings and consider it lucky. A Brāhman also prefers to wear yellow when eating his food. It has been seen[1] that red is the lucky colour of the lower castes of Hindus, and the reason probably is that the shrines of their gods are stained red with the blood of the animals sacrificed. High-caste Hindus no longer make animal sacrifices, and their offerings to Siva, Vishnu and Devi consist of food, flowers and blades of corn. Thus yellow would be similarly associated with the shrines of the gods. All Hindu brides have their bodies rubbed with yellow turmeric, and the principal religious flower, the marigold, is orange-yellow. Yellow is, however, also lucky as being the colour of Vishnu or the Sun, and a yellow flag is waved above his great temple at Rāmtek on the occasion of the fair. Thus Devi as the corn-goddess perhaps corresponds to Demeter, but she is not in this form an animal goddess. The Hindus worshipping Mother Earth, as all races do in the early stage of religion, may by a natural and proper analogy have ascribed the gift of the corn to her from whom it really comes, and have identified her with the corn-goddess. This is by no means a full explanation of the goddess Devi, who has many forms. As Pārvati, the hill-maiden, and Durga, the inaccessible one, she is the consort of Siva in his character of the mountain-god of the Himalayas; as Kāli, the devourer of human flesh, she is perhaps the deified tiger; and she may have assimilated yet more objects of worship into her wide divinity. But there seems no special reason to hold that she is anywhere believed to be the deified buffalo; and the probable explanation of the Dasahra rite would therefore seem to be that the buffalo was at first venerated as the corn-god because, like the pig in Greece, he was most destructive to the crops, and a buffalo was originally slaughtered and eaten sacramentally as an act of worship. At a later period the divinity attaching to the corn was transferred to Devi, an anthropomorphic deity of a higher class, and in order to explain the customary slaughter of the buffalo, which had to be retained, the story became current that the beneficent goddess fought and slew the buffalo-demon which injured the crops, for the benefit of her worshippers, and the fast was observed and the

[1] *Vide* article on Lakhera.

buffalo sacrificed in commemoration of this event. It is possible that the sacrifice of the buffalo may have been a non-Aryan rite, as the Mundas still offer a buffalo to Deswāli, their forest god, in the sacred grove; and the Korwas of Sargūja have periodical sacrifices to Kāli in which many buffaloes are slaughtered. In the pictures of her fight with Bhainsāsur, Devi is shown as riding on a tiger, and the uneducated might imagine the struggle to have resembled that between a tiger and a buffalo. As the destroyer of buffaloes and deer which graze on the crops the tiger may even be considered the cultivator's friend. But in the rural tracts Bhainsāsur himself is still venerated in the guise of a corn-deity, and pig are perhaps offered to him as the animals which nowadays do most harm to the crops.

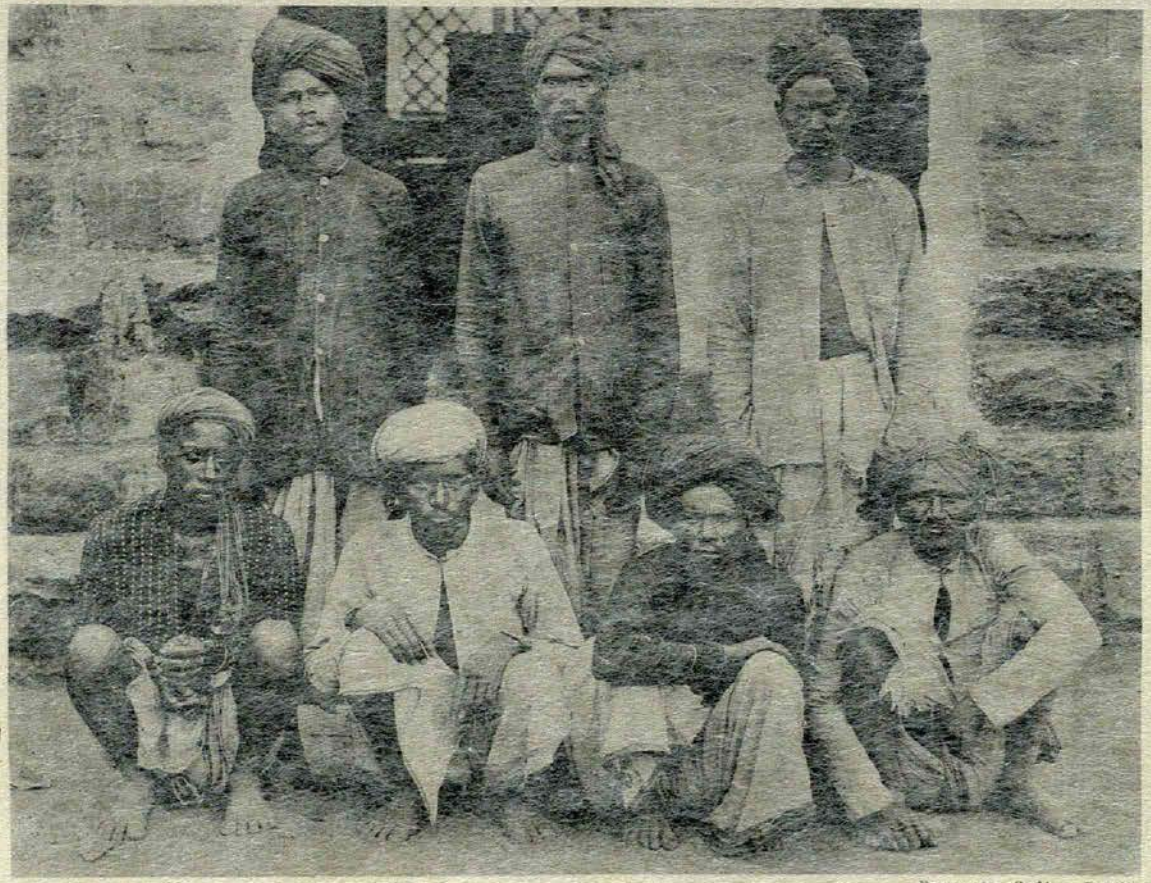
KUNBI

[This article is based on the information collected for the District Gazetteers of the Central Provinces, manuscript notes furnished by Mr. A. K. Smith, C.S., and from papers by Pandit Pyāre Lāl Misra and Munshi Kanhya Lāl. The Kunbis are treated in the *Poona* and *Khāndesh* volumes of the *Bombay Gazetteer*. The caste has been taken as typical of the Marāthi-speaking Districts, and a fairly full description of the marriage and other ceremonies has therefore been given, some information on houses, dress and food being also reproduced from the *Wardha* and *Yeotmal District Gazetteers*.]

LIST OF PARAGRAPHS

1. Distribution of the caste and origin of name.

Kunbi.—The great agricultural caste of the Marātha country. In the Central Provinces and Berār the Kunbis numbered nearly 1,400,000 persons in 1911; they belong to the Nāgpur, Chānda, Bhandāra, Wardha, Nimār and Betūl Districts of the Central Provinces. In Berār their strength was 800,000, or nearly a third of the total population. Here they form the principal cultivating class over the whole area except in the jungles of the north and south, but muster most strongly in the Buldāna District to the west, where in some tāluks nearly half the population



Bemrose, Collo., Derby

GROUP OF KUNBIS.

belongs to the Kunbi caste. In the combined Province they are the most numerous caste except the Gonds. The name has various forms in Bombay, being Kunbi or Kulambi in the Deccan, Kulwādi in the south Konkan, Kanbi in Gujarāt, and Kulbi in Belgaum. In Sanskrit inscriptions it is given as Kutumbika (householder), and hence it has been derived from *kutumba*, a family. A chronicle of the eleventh century quoted by Forbes speaks of the Kutumbiks or cultivators of the *grāms* or small villages.[1] Another writer describing the early Rājpūt dynasties says:[2] "The villagers were Koutombiks (householders) or husbandmen (Karshuks); the village headmen were Putkeels (patels)." Another suggested derivation is from a Dravidian root *kul*, a husbandman or labourer; while that favoured by the caste and their neighbours is from *kun*, a root, or *kan*, grain, and *bi*, seed; but this is too ingenious to be probable.

2. Settlement in the Central Provinces.

It is stated that the Kunbis entered Khāndesh from Gujarāt in the eleventh century, being forced to leave Gujarāt by the encroachments of Rājpūt tribes, driven south before the early Muhammadan invaders of northern India.[3] From Khāndesh they probably spread into Berār and the adjoining Nāgpur and Wardha Districts. It seems probable that their first settlement in Nāgpur and Wardha took place not later than the fourteenth century, because during the subsequent period of Gond rule we find the offices of Deshmukh and Deshpāndia in existence in this area. The Deshmukh was the manager or headman of a circle of villages and was responsible for apportioning and collecting the land revenue, while the Deshpāndia was a head *patwari* or accountant. The Deshmukhs were usually the leading Kunbis, and the titles are still borne by many families in Wardha and Nāgpur. These offices[4] belong to the Marātha country, and it seems necessary to suppose that their introduction into Wardha and Berār dates from a period at least as early as the fourteenth century, when these territories were included in the dominions of the Bahmani kings of Bījapur. A subsequent large influx of Kunbis into Wardha

[1] *Rāsmāla*, i. p. 100.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 241.
[3] *Khāndesh Gazetteer*, p. 62.
[4] *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. i. part ii. p. 34.

and Nāgpur took place in the eighteenth century with the conquest of Raghūji Bhonsla and the establishment of the Marātha kingdom of Nāgpur. Traces of these separate immigrations survive in the subdivisions of the caste, which will now be mentioned.

3. Sub-castes.

The internal structure of the Kunbi caste in the Central Provinces shows that it is a mixed occupational body recruited from different classes of the population. The Jhāre or jungly[1] Kunbis are the oldest immigrants and have no doubt an admixture of Gond blood. They do not break their earthen vessels after a death in the house. With them may be classed the Mānwa Kunbis of the Nāgpur District; these appear to be a group recruited from the Mānas, a primitive tribe who were dominant in Chānda perhaps even before the advent of the Gonds. The Mānwa Kunbi women wear their cloths drawn up so as to expose the thigh like the Gonds, and have some other primitive practices. They do not employ Brāhmans at their marriages, but consult a Mahār Mohtūria or soothsayer to fix the date of the ceremony. Other Kunbis will not eat with the Mānwas, and the latter retaliate in the usual manner by refusing to accept food from them; and say that they are superior to other Kunbis because they always use brass vessels for cooking and not earthen ones. Among the other subcastes in the Central Provinces are the Khaire, who take their name from the *khaīr*[2] or catechu tree, presumably because they formerly prepared catechu; this is a regular occupation of the forest tribes, with whom it may be supposed that the Khaire have some affinity. The Dhanoje are those who took to the occupation of tending *dhan*[3] or small stock, and they are probably an offshoot of the Dhangar or shepherd caste whose name is similarly derived. Like the Dhangar women they wear cocoanut-shell bangles, and the Mānwa Kunbis also do this; these bangles are not broken when a child is born, and hence the Dhanojes and Mānwas are looked down on by the other subcastes, who refuse to remove their leaf-plates after a feast. The name of the

[1] From *jihār*, a tree or shrub.

[2] *Acacia catechu.*

[3] *Dhan* properly means wealth, *cf.* the two meanings of the word stock in English.

Khedule subcaste may be derived from *kheda* a village, while another version given by Mr. Kitts[1] is that it signifies 'A beardless youth.' The highest subcaste in the Central Provinces are the Tirole or Tilole, who now claim to be Rājpūts. They say that their ancestors came from Therol in Rājputāna, and, taking to agriculture, gradually became merged with the Kunbis. Another more probable derivation of the name is from the *til* or sesamum plant. The families who held the hereditary office of Deshmukh, which conferred a considerable local position, were usually members of the Tirole subcaste, and they have now developed into a sort of aristocratic branch of the caste, and marry among themselves when matches can be arranged. They do not allow the remarriage of widows nor permit their women to accompany the wedding procession. The Wāndhekars are another group which also includes some Deshmukh families, and ranks next to the Tiroles in position. Mr. Kitts records a large number of subcastes in Berār.[2] Among them are some groups from northern India, as the Hindustāni, Pardesi, Dholewār, Jaiswār and Singrore; these are probably Kurmis who have settled in Berār and become amalgamated with the Kunbis. Similarly the Tailanges and Munurwārs appear to be an offshoot of the great Kāpu caste of cultivators in the Telugu country. The Wanjāri subcaste is a fairly large one and almost certainly represents a branch of the Banjāra caste of carriers, who have taken to agriculture and been promoted into the Kunbi community. The Lonhāre take their name from Lonār Mehkar, the well-known bitter lake of the Buldāna District, whose salt they may formerly have refined. The Ghātole are those who dwelt above the *ghāts* or passes of the Saihadri range to the south of the Berār plain. The Baone are an important subcaste both in Berār and the Central Provinces, and take their name from the phrase Bāwan Berār,[3] a term applied to the province by the Mughals because it paid fifty-two lakhs of revenue, as against only eight lakhs realised from the adjoining Jhādi or hill country in the Central Provinces. In Chhindwāra is found a small local

[1] *Berār Census Report* (1881), para. 180.

[2] *Ibidem.*

[3] *Bāwan* = fifty-two.

subcaste called Gādhao because they formerly kept donkeys, though they no longer do so; they are looked down on by the others who will not even take water from their hands. In Nimār is a group of Gujarāti Kunbis who are considered to have been originally Gūjars.[1] Their local subdivisions are Leve and Karwa and many of them are also known as Dālia, because they made the *dāl* or pulse of Burhānpur, which had a great reputation under native rule. It is said that it was formerly despatched daily to Sindhia's kitchen.

4. The cultivating status.

It appears then that a Kunbi has in the past been synonymous with a cultivator, and that large groups from other castes have taken to agriculture, have been admitted into the community and usually obtained a rise in rank. In many villages Kunbis are the only ryots, while below them are the village menials and artisans, several of whom perform functions at weddings or on other occasions denoting their recognition of the Kunbi as their master or employer; and beneath these again are the impure Mahārs or labourers. Thus at a Kunbi betrothal the services of the barber and washerman must be requisitioned; the barber washes the feet of the boy and girl and places vermilion on the foreheads of the guests. The washerman spreads a sheet on the ground on which the boy and girl sit. At the end of the ceremony the barber and washerman take the bride and bridegroom on their shoulders and dance to music in the marriage-shed; for this they receive small presents. After a death has occurred at a Kunbi's house the impurity is not removed until the barber and washerman have eaten in it. At a Kunbi's wedding the Gurao or village priest brings the leafy branches of five trees, the mango, *jāmun*,[2] *umar*[3] and two others and deposits them at Māroti's temple, whence they are removed by the parents of the bride. Before a wedding again a Kunbi bride must go to the potter's house and be seated on his wheel while it is turned round seven times for good luck. At seed-time and harvest all the village menials go to the cultivator's field and present him with a specimen of their wares or make obeisance to him, receiving in return a small present of

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Hindus of Gujarāt*, p. 490, App. B, Gūjar.

[2] *Eugenia jambolana.*

[3] *Ficus glomerata.*

grain. This state of things seems to represent the primitive form of Hindu society from which the present widely ramified system of castes may have expanded, and even now the outlines of the original structure may be discernible under all subsequent accretions.

5. Exogamous septs.

Each subcaste has a number of exogamous septs or clans which serve as a table of affinities in regulating marriage. The vernacular term for these is *kul*. Some of the septs are named after natural objects or animals, others from titles or nicknames borne by the reputed founder of the group, or from some other caste to which he may have belonged, while others again are derived from the names of villages which may be taken to have been the original home of the sept or clan. The following are some septs of the Tirole subcaste: Kole, jackal; Wānkhede, a village; Kadu, bitter; Jagthāp, famous; Kadam, a tree; Meghe, a cloud; Lohekari, a worker in iron; Ughde, a child who has been exposed at birth; Shinde, a palm-tree; Hagre, one who suffers from diarrhœa; Aglāwe, an incendiary; Kalamkār, a writer; Wāni (Bania), a caste; Sutār, a carpenter, and so on. A few of the groups of the Bāone subcaste are:—Kāntode, one with a torn ear; Dokarmāre, a killer of pigs; Lūte, a plunderer; Titarmāre, a pigeon-killer; and of the Khedule: Patre, a leaf-plate; Ghoremāre, one who killed a horse; Bāgmare, a tiger-slayer; Gadhe, a donkey; Burāde, one of the Burud or Basor caste; Nāktode, one with a broken nose, and so on. Each subcaste has a number of septs, a total of 66 being recorded for the Tiroles alone. The names of the septs confirm the hypothesis arrived at from a scrutiny of the subcastes that the Kunbis are largely recruited from the pre-Aryan or aboriginal tribes. Conclusions as to the origin of the caste can better be made in its home in Bombay, but it may be noted that in Canara, according to the accomplished author of *A Naturalist on the Prowl*,[1] the Kunbi is quite a primitive forest-dweller, who only a few years back lived by scattering his seed on patches of land burnt clear of vegetation, collecting myrobalans and other fruits, and snaring and trapping animals exactly like the Gonds and Baigas of the Central Provinces. Similarly in Nāsik it is stated that a large proportion of the Kunbi

[1] See the article entitled 'An Anthropoid.'

caste are probably derived from the primitive tribes.[1] Yet in the cultivated plains which he has so largely occupied, he is reckoned the equal in rank of the Kurmi and other cultivating castes of Hindustān, who in theory at any rate are of Aryan origin and of so high a grade of social purity that Brāhmans will take water from them. The only reasonable explanation of this rise in status appears to be that the Kunbi has taken possession of the land and has obtained the rank which from time immemorial belongs to the hereditary cultivator as a member and citizen of the village community. It is interesting to note that the Wanjāri Kunbis of Berār, who, being as already seen Banjāras, are of Rājpūt descent at any rate, now strenuously disclaim all connection with the Banjāra caste and regard their reception into the Kunbi community as a gain in status. At the same time the refusal of the Marātha Brāhmans to take water to drink from Kunbis may perhaps have been due to the recognition of their non-Aryan origin. Most of the Kunbis also eat fowls, which the cultivating castes of northern India would not usually do.

6. Restrictions on marriage of relatives.

A man is forbidden to marry within his own sept or *kul*, or in that of his mother or either of his grandmothers. He may marry his wife's younger sister but not her elder sister. Alliances between first and second cousins are also prohibited except that a sister's son may be married to a brother's daughter. Such marriages are also favoured by the Marātha Brāhmans and other castes, and the suitability of the match is expressed in the saying *Ato ghari bhāsi sūn*, or 'At a sister's house her brother's daughter is a daughter-in-law.' The sister claims it as a right and not unfrequently there are quarrels if the brother decides to give his daughter to somebody else, while the general feeling is so strongly in favour of these marriages that the caste committee sometimes imposes a fine on fathers who wish to break through the rule. The fact that in this single case the marriage of near relatives is not only permitted but considered almost as an obligation, while in all other instances it is strictly prohibited, probably points to the conclusion that the custom is a survival of the matriarchate, when a brother's property would pass to his sister's son. Under such a law of inheritance

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer, Nāsik*, p. 26.

he would naturally desire that his heir should be united to his own daughter, and this union might gradually become customary and at length almost obligatory. The custom in this case may survive when the reasons which justified it have entirely vanished. And while formerly it was the brother who would have had reason to desire the match for his daughter, it is now the sister who insists on it for her son, the explanation being that among the Kunbis as with other agricultural castes, to whom a wife's labour is a valuable asset, girls are expensive and a considerable price has to be paid for a bride.

7. Betrothal and marriage.

Girls are usually married between the ages of five and eleven and boys between ten and twenty. The Kunbis still think it a mark of social distinction to have their daughters married as young as possible. The recognised bride-price is about twenty rupees, but much larger sums are often paid. The boy's father goes in search of a girl to be married to his son, and when the bride-price has been settled and the match arranged the ceremony of Māngni or betrothal takes place. In the first place the boy's father proceeds to his future daughter-in-law's house, where he washes her feet, smears her forehead with red powder and gives her a present of a rupee and some sweetmeats. All the party then eat together. This is followed by a visit of the girl's father to the boy's house where a similar ceremony is enacted and the boy is presented with a cocoanut, a *pagri* and cloth, and a silver or gold ring. Again the boy's relatives go to the girl's house and give her more valuable presents of jewellery and clothing. A Brāhman is afterwards consulted to fix the date of the marriage, but the poorer Kunbis dispense with his services as he charges two or three rupees. Prior to the ceremony the bodies of the bride and bridegroom are well massaged with vegetable oil and turmeric in their respective houses, partly with a view to enhance their beauty and also perhaps to protect them during the trying period of the ceremony when maleficent spirits are particularly on the alert. The marriage-shed is made of eleven poles festooned with leaves, and inside it are placed two posts of the *sāleh* (*Boswellia serrata*) or *umar* (*Ficus glomerata*) tree, one longer than the other, to represent the bride and bridegroom. Two jars

filled with water are set near the posts, and a small earthen platform called *baola* is made. The bridegroom wears a yellow or white dress, and has a triangular frame of bamboo covered with tinsel over his forehead, which is known as *bāsing* and is a substitute for the *maur* or marriage-crown of the Hindustāni castes. Over his shoulder he carries a pick-axe as the representative implement of husbandry with one or two wheaten cakes tied to it. This is placed on the top of the marriage-shed and at the end of the five days' ceremonies the members of the families eat the dried cakes with milk, no outsider being allowed to participate. The *barāt* or wedding procession sets out for the bride's village, the women of the bridegroom's family accompanying it except among the Tirole Kunbis, who forbid the practice in order to demonstrate their higher social position. It is received on the border of the girl's village by her father and his friends and relatives, and conducted to the *janwāsa* or temporary lodging prepared for it, with the exception of the bridegroom, who is left alone before the shrine of Māroti or Hanumān. The bridegroom's father goes to the marriage-shed where he washes the bride's feet and gives her another present of clothes, and her relatives then proceed to Māroti's temple where they worship and make offerings, and return bringing the bridegroom with them. As he arrives at the marriage pavilion he touches it with a stick, on which the bride's brother who is seated above the shed pours down some water and is given a present of money by the bridegroom. The bridegroom's feet are then washed by his father-in-law and he is given a yellow cloth which he wears. The couple are made to stand on two wooden planks opposite each other with a curtain between them, the bridegroom facing east and the bride west, holding some Akshata or rice covered with saffron in their hands. As the sun sets the officiating Brāhman gets on to the roof of the house and repeats the marriage texts from there. At his signal the couple throw the rice over each other, the curtain between them is withdrawn, and they change their seats. The assembled party applaud and the marriage proper is over. The Brāhman marks their foreheads with rice and turmeric and presses them together. He then seats them on the earthen platform or *baola*, and ties their

clothes together, this being known as the Brahma Gānthi or Brāhman's knot. The wedding usually takes place on the day after the arrival of the marriage procession and another two days are consumed in feasting and worshipping the deities. When the bride and bridegroom return home after the wedding one of the party waves a pot of water round their heads and throws it away at a little distance on the ground, and after this some grain in the same manner. This is a provision of food and drink to any evil spirits who may be hovering round the couple, so that they may stop to consume it and refrain from entering the house. The expenses of the bride's family may vary from Rs. 60 to Rs. 100 and those of the bridegroom's from Rs. 160 to Rs. 600. A wedding carried out on a lavish scale by a well-to-do man is known as Lāl Biāh or a red marriage, but when the parties are poor the expenses are curtailed and it is then called Safed Biāh or a white marriage. In this case the bridegroom's mother does not accompany the wedding procession and the proceedings last only two days. The bride goes back with the wedding procession for a few days to her husband's house and then returns home. When she arrives at maturity her parents give a feast to the caste and send her to her husband's house, this occasion being known as Bolvan (the calling). The Karwa Kunbis of Nimār have a peculiar rule for the celebration of marriages. They have a *guru* or priest in Gujarāt who sends them a notice once in every ten or twelve years, and in this year only marriages can be performed. It is called *Singhast ki sāl* and is the year in which the planet Guru (Jupiter) comes into conjunction with the constellation Sinh (Leo). But the Karwas themselves think that there is a large temple in Gujarāt with a locked door to which there is no key. But once in ten or twelve years the door unlocks of itself, and in that year their marriages are celebrated. A certain day is fixed and all the weddings are held on it together. On this occasion children from infants in arms to ten or twelve years are married, and if a match cannot be arranged for them they will have to wait another ten or twelve years. A girl child who is born on the day fixed for weddings may, however, be married twelve days afterwards, the twelfth night being called Māndo Rāt, and on this

occasion any other weddings which may have been unavoidably postponed owing to a death or illness in the families may also be completed. The rule affords a loophole of escape for the victims of any such *contretemps* and also insures that every girl shall be married before she is fully twelve years old. Rather than not marry their daughter in the *Singhast ki sāl* before she is twelve the parents will accept any bridegroom, even though he be very poor or younger than the bride. This is the same year in which the celebration of marriages is forbidden among the Hindus generally. The other Kunbis have the general Hindu rule that weddings are forbidden during the four months from the 11th Asārh Sudi (June) to the 11th Kārtik Sudi (October). This is the period of the rains, when the crops are growing and the gods are said to go to sleep, and it is observed more or less as a time of abstinence and fasting. The Hindus should properly abstain from eating sugarcane, brinjals, onions, garlic and other vegetables for the whole four months. On the 12th of Kārtik the marriage of Tulsi or the basil plant with the Sāligrām or ammonite representing Vishnu is performed and all these vegetables are offered to her and afterwards generally consumed. Two days afterwards, beginning from the 14th of Kārtik, comes the Diwāli festival. In Betūl the bridal couple are seated in the centre of a square made of four plough yokes, while a leaf of the pīpal tree and a piece of turmeric are tied by a string round both their wrists. The untying of the string by the local Brāhman constitutes the essential and binding portion of the marriage. Among the Lonhāre subcaste a curious ceremony is performed after the wedding. A swing is made, and a round pestle, which is supposed to represent a child, is placed on it and swung to and fro. It is then taken off and placed in the lap of the bride, and the effect of performing this symbolical ceremony is supposed to be that she will soon become a mother.

8. Polygamy and divorce.

Polygamy is permitted but rarely practised, a second wife being only taken if the first be childless or of bad character, or destitute of attractions. Divorce is allowed, but in some localities at any rate a divorced woman cannot marry again unless she is permitted to do so in writing by her first

husband. If a girl be seduced before marriage a fine is imposed on both parties and they are readmitted to social intercourse, but are not married to each other. Curiously enough, in the Tirole and Wāndhekar, the highest subcastes, the keeping of a woman is not an offence entailing temporary exclusion from caste, whereas among the lower subcastes it is.[1]

9. Widow-marriage.

The Kunbis permit the remarriage of widows, with the exception of the Deshmukh families of the Tirole subcaste who have forbidden it. If a woman's husband dies she returns to her father's house and he arranges her second marriage, which is called *choli-pātal*, or giving her new clothes. He takes a price for her which may vary from twenty-five to five hundred rupees according to the age and attractions of the woman. A widow may marry any one outside the family of her deceased husband, but she may not marry his younger brother. This union, which among the Hindustāni castes is looked upon as most suitable if not obligatory, is strictly forbidden among the Marātha castes, the reason assigned being that a wife stands in the position of a mother to her husband's younger brothers. The contrast is curious. The ceremony of widow-marriage is largely governed by the idea of escaping or placating the wrath of the first husband's ghost, and also of its being something to be ashamed of and contrary to orthodox Hinduism. It always takes place in the dark fortnight of the month and always at night. Sometimes no women are present, and if any do attend they must be widows, as it would be the worst of omens for a married woman or unmarried girl to witness the ceremony. This, it is thought, would lead to her shortly becoming a widow herself. The bridegroom goes to the widow's house with his male friends and two wooden seats are set side by side. On one of these a betel-nut is placed which represents the deceased husband of the widow. The new bridegroom advances with a small wooden sword, touches the nut with its tip, and then kicks it off the seat with his right toe. The barber picks up the nut and burns it. This is supposed to lay the deceased husband's spirit and prevent his interference with the new union.

[1] This is the rule in the Nāgpur District.

The bridegroom then takes the seat from which the nut has been displaced and the woman sits on the other side to his left. He puts a necklace of beads round her neck and the couple leave the house in a stealthy fashion and go to the husband's village. It is considered unlucky to see them as they go away because the second husband is regarded in the light of a robber. Sometimes they stop by a stream on the way home, and, taking off the woman's clothes and bangles, bury them by the side of the stream. An exorcist may also be called in, who will confine the late husband's spirit in a horn by putting in some grains of wheat, and after sealing up the horn deposit it with the clothes. When a widower or widow marries a second time and is afterwards attacked by illness, it is ascribed to the illwill of their former partner's spirit. The metal image of the first husband or wife is then made and worn as an amulet on the arm or round the neck. A bachelor who wishes to marry a widow must first go through a mock ceremony with an *ākra* or swallow-wort plant, as the widow-marriage is not considered a real one, and it is inauspicious for any one to die without having been properly married once. A similar ceremony must be gone through when a man is married for the third time, as it is held that if he marries a woman for the third time he will quickly die. The *ākra* or swallow-wort (*Calotropis gigantea*) is a very common plant growing on waste land with mauve or purple flowers. When cut or broken a copious milky juice exudes from the stem, and in some places parents are said to poison children whom they do not desire to keep alive by rubbing this on their lips.

10. Customs at birth.

During her monthly impurity a woman stays apart and may not cook for herself nor touch anybody nor sleep on a bed made of cotton thread. As soon as she is in this condition she will untie the cotton threads confining her hair and throw them away, letting her hair hang down. This is because they have become impure. But if there is no other woman in the house and she must continue to do the household work herself, she does not throw them away until the last day.[1] Similarly she must not sleep on

[1] From a note by Mr. A. K. Smith, C.S.

a cotton sheet or mattress during this time because she would defile it, but she may sleep on a woollen blanket as wool is a holy material and is not defiled. At the end of the period she proceeds to a stream and purifies herself by bathing and washing her head with earth. When a woman is with child for the first time her women friends come and give her new green clothes and bangles in the seventh month; they then put her into a swing and sing songs. While she is pregnant she is made to work in the house so as not to be inactive. After the birth of a child the mother remains impure for twelve days. A woman of the Māng or Mahār caste acts as midwife, and always breaks her bangles and puts on new ones after she has assisted at a birth. If delivery is prolonged the woman is given hot water and sugar or camphor wrapped in a betel-leaf, or they put a few grains of gram into her hand and then someone takes and feeds them to a mare, as it is thought that the woman's pregnancy has been prolonged by her having walked behind the tethering-ropes of a mare, which is twelve months in foal. Or she is given water to drink in which a Sulaimāni onyx or a rupee of Akbar's time has been washed; in the former case the idea is perhaps that a passage will be made for the child like the hole through the bead, while the virtue of the rupee probably consists in its being a silver coin and having the image or device of a powerful king like Akbar. Or it may be thought that as the coin has passed from hand to hand for so long, it will facilitate the passage of the child from the womb. A pregnant woman must not look on a dead body or her child may be still-born, and she must not see an eclipse or the child may be born maimed. Some believe that if a child is born during an eclipse it will suffer from lung-disease; so they make a silver model of the moon while the eclipse lasts and hang it round the child's neck as a charm. Sometimes when delivery is delayed they take a folded flower and place it in a pot of water and believe that as its petals unfold so the womb will be opened and the child born; or they seat the woman on a wooden bench and pour oil on her head, her forehead being afterwards rubbed with it in the belief that as the oil falls so the child will be born. If a child is a long time before

learning to speak they give it leaves of the pīpal tree to eat, because the leaves of this tree make a noise by rustling in the wind; or a root which is very light in weight, because they think that the tongue is heavy and the quality of lightness will thus be communicated to it. Or the mother, when she has kneaded dough and washed her hands afterwards, will pour a drop or two of the water down the child's throat. And the water which made her hands clean and smooth will similarly clear the child's throat of the obstruction which prevented it from speaking. If a child's neck is weak and its head rolls about they make it look at a crow perching on the house and think this will make its neck strong like the crow's. If he cannot walk they make a little triangle on wheels with a pole called *ghurghuri*, and make him walk holding on to the pole. The first teeth of the child are thrown on to the roof of the house, because the rats, who have especially good and sharp teeth, live there, and it is hoped that the child's second teeth may grow like theirs. A few grains of rice are also thrown so that the teeth may be hard and pointed like the rice; the same word, *kani*, being used for the end of a grain of rice and the tip of a tooth. Or the teeth are placed under a water-pot in the hope that the child's second teeth may grow as fast as the grass does under water-pots. If a child is lean some people take it to a place where asses have lain down and rolled in ashes; they roll the child in the ashes similarly and believe that it will get fat like the asses are. Or they may lay the child in a pigsty with the same idea. People who want to injure a child get hold of its coat and lay it out in the sun to dry, in the belief that the child's body will dry up in a similar manner. In order to avert the evil eye they burn some turmeric and juāri flour and hold the newly-born child in the smoke. It is also branded on the stomach with a burning piece of turmeric, perhaps to keep off cold. For the first day or two after birth a child is given cow's milk mixed with water or honey and a little castor oil, and after this it is suckled by the mother. But if she is unable to nourish it a wet-nurse is called in, who may be a woman of low caste or even a Muhammadan. The mother is given no

regular food for the first two days, but only some sugar and spices. Until the child is six months old its head and body are oiled every second or third day and the body is well hand-rubbed and bathed. The rubbing is meant to make the limbs supple and the oil to render the child less susceptible to cold. If a child when sitting soon after birth looks down through its legs they think it is looking for its companions whom it has left behind and that more children will be born. It is considered a bad sign if a child bites its upper teeth on its underlip; this is thought to prognosticate illness and the child is prevented from doing so as far as possible.

11. Sixth- and twelfth-day ceremonies.

On the sixth day after birth they believe that Chhathi or Satwai Devi, the Sixth-day Goddess, comes at midnight and writes on the child's forehead its fate in life, which writing, it is said, may be seen on a man's skull when the flesh has come off it after death. On this night the women of the family stay awake all night singing songs and eating sweetmeats. A picture of the goddess is drawn with turmeric and vermilion over the mother's bed. The door of the birth-room is left open, and at midnight she comes. Sometimes a Sunār is employed to make a small image of Chhathi Devi, for which he is paid Rs. 1-4, and it is hung round the child's neck. On this day the mother is given to eat all kinds of grain, and among flesh-eating castes the soup of fish and meat, because it is thought that every kind of food which the mother eats this day will be easily digested by the child throughout its life. On this day the mother is given a second bath, the first being on the day of the birth, and she must not bathe in between. Sometimes after child-birth a woman buys several bottles of liquor and has a bath in it; the stimulating effect of the spirit is supposed to remedy the distension of the body caused by the birth. If the child is a boy it is named on the twelfth and if a girl on the thirteenth day. On the twelfth day the mother's bangles are thrown away and new ones put on. The Kunbis are very kind to their children, and never harsh or quick-tempered, but this may perhaps be partly due to their constitutional lethargy. They seldom refuse a child anything, but taking advantage of its innocence will by dissimulation make it

forget what it wanted. The time arrives when this course of conduct is useless, and then the child learns to mistrust the word of its parents. Minute quantities of opium are generally administered to children as a narcotic.

12. Devices for procuring children.

If a woman is barren and has no children one of the remedies prescribed by the Sarodis or wandering soothsayers is that she should set fire to somebody's house, going alone and at night to perform the deed. So long as some small part of the house is burnt it does not matter if the fire be extinguished, but the woman should not give the alarm herself. It is supposed that the spirit of some insect which is burnt will enter her womb and be born as a child. Perhaps she sets fire to someone else's house so as to obtain the spirit of one of the family's dead children, which may be supposed to have entered the insects dwelling on the house. Some years ago at Bhāndak in Chānda complaints were made of houses being set on fire. The police officer[1] sent to investigate found that other small fires continued to occur. He searched the roofs of the houses, and on two or three found little smouldering balls of rolled-up cloth. Knowing of the superstition he called all the childless married women of the place together and admonished them severely, and the fires stopped. On another occasion the same officer's wife was ill, and his little son, having fever, was sent daily to the dispensary for medicine in charge of a maid. One morning he noticed on one of the soles of the boy's feet a stain of the juice of the *bhilawa*[2] or marking-nut tree, which raises blisters on the skin. On looking at the other foot he found six similar marks, and on inquiry he learned that these were made by a childless woman in the expectation that the boy would soon die and be born again as her child. The boy suffered no harm, but his mother, being in bad health, nearly died of shock on learning of the magic practised against her son.

Another device is to make a *pradakshana* or pilgrimage round a pīpal tree, going naked at midnight after worshipping Māroti or Hanumān, and holding a necklace of *tulsi* beads in the hand. The pīpal is of course a sacred tree, and is the abode of Brahma, the original creator of the world.

[1] Circle Inspector Ganesh Prasād. [2] *Semicarpus anacardium*.

Brahma has no consort, and it is believed that while all other trees are both male and female the pīpal is only male, and is capable of impregnating a woman and rendering her fertile. A variation of this belief is that pīpal trees are inhabited by the spirits of unmarried Brāhman boys, and hence a woman sometimes takes a piece of new thread and winds it round the tree, perhaps with the idea of investing the spirit of the boy with the sacred thread. She will then walk round the tree as a symbol of the wedding ceremony of walking round the sacred post, and hopes that the boy, being thus brought to man's estate and married, will cause her to bear a son. But modest women do not go naked round the tree. The Amāwas or New Moon day, if it falls on a Monday, is specially observed by married women. On this day they will walk 108 times round a pīpal tree, and then give 108 mangoes or other fruits to a Brāhman, choosing a different fruit every time. The number 108 means a hundred and a little more to show there is no stint, 'Full measure and flowing over,' like the customary present of Rs. 1-4 instead of a rupee. This is also no doubt a birth-charm, fruit being given so that the woman may become fruitful. Or a childless woman will pray to Hanumān or Mahābir. Every morning she will go to his shrine with an offering of fruit or flowers, and every evening will set a lamp burning there; and morning and evening, prostrating herself, she makes her continuous prayer to the god: '*Oh, Mahābīr, Mahārāj! hamko ek batcha do, sirf ek batcha do.*'[1] Then, after many days, Mahābīr, as might be anticipated, appears to her in a dream and promises her a child. It does not seem that they believe that Mahābīr himself directly renders the woman fertile, because similar prayers are made to the River Nerbudda, a goddess. But perhaps he, being the god of strength, lends virile power to her husband. Another prescription is to go to the burying-ground, and, after worshipping it, to take some of the bone-ash of a burnt corpse and wear this wrapped up in an amulet on the body. Occasionally, if a woman can get no children she will go to the father of a large family and let him beget a child upon her, with or without the connivance of her husband. But only the more immodest women do this. Or

[1] 'Oh, Lord Mahābīr, give me a child, only one child.'

she cuts a piece off the breast-cloth of a woman who has children, and, after burning incense on it, wears it as an amulet. For a stronger charm she will take a piece of such a woman's cloth and a lock of her hair and some earth which her feet have pressed and bury these in a pot before Devi's shrine, sometimes fashioning an image of the woman out of them. Then, as they rot away, the child-bearing power of the fertile woman will be transferred to her. If a woman's first children have died and she wishes to preserve a later one, she sometimes weighs the child against sugar or copper and distributes the amount in charity. Or she gives the child a bad name, such as Dagharia (a stone), Kachria (sweepings), Ukandia (a dunghill).

13. Love charms.

If a woman's husband is not in love with her, a prescription of a *Mohani* or love-charm given by the wise women is that she should kill an owl and serve some of its flesh to her husband as a charm. "It has not occurred," Mr. Kipling writes, "to the oriental jester to speak of a boiled owl in connection with intoxication, but when a husband is abjectly submissive to his wife her friends say that she has given him boiled owl's flesh to eat."[1] If a man is in love with some woman and wishes to kindle a similar sentiment in her the following method is given: On a Saturday night he should go to a graveyard and call out, 'I am giving a dinner tomorrow night, and I invite you all to attend.' Then on the Sunday night he takes cocoanuts, sweetmeats, liquor and flowers to the cemetery and sets them all out, and all the spirits or Shaitāns come and partake. The host chooses a particularly big Shaitān and calls to him to come near and says to him, 'Will you go with me and do what I ask you.' If the spirit assents he follows the man home. Next night the man again offers cocoanuts and incense to the Shaitān, whom he can see by night but not by day, and tells him to go to the woman's house and call her. Then the spirit goes and troubles her heart, so that she falls in love with the man and has no rest till she goes to him. If the man afterwards gets tired of her he will again secretly worship and call up the Shaitān and order him to turn the woman's inclination

[1] *Beast and Man in India*, p. 44. But, according to the same writer, the Hindus do say, 'Drunk as an owl' and also 'Stupid as an owl.'

away. Another method is to fetch a skull from a graveyard and go to a banyan tree at midnight. There, divesting himself of his clothes, the operator partially cooks some rice in the skull, and then throws it against the tree; he gathers all the grains that stick to the trunk in one box and those that fall to the ground in another box, and the first rice given to the woman to eat will turn her inclination towards him, while the second will turn it away from him. This is a sympathetic charm, the rice which sticks to the tree having the property of attracting the woman.

14. Disposal of the dead.

The Kunbis either bury or burn the dead. In Berār sepulture is the more common method of disposal, perhaps in imitation of the Muhammadans. Here the village has usually a field set apart for the disposal of corpses, which is known as Smashān. Hindus fill up the earth practically level with the ground after burial and erect no monument, so that after a few years another corpse can be buried in the same place. When a Kunbi dies the body is washed in warm water and placed on a bier made of bamboos, with a network of *san*-hemp.[1] Ordinary rope must not be used. The mourners then take it to the grave, scattering almonds, sandalwood, dates, betel-leaf and small coins as they go. These are picked up by the menial Mahārs or labourers. Halfway to the grave the corpse is set down and the bearers change their positions, those behind going in front. Here a little wheat and pulse which have been tied in the cloth covering the corpse are left by the way. On the journey to the grave the body is covered with a new unwashed cloth. The grave is dug three or four feet deep, and the corpse is buried naked, lying on its back with the head to the south. After the burial one of the mourners is sent to get an earthen pot from the Kumhār; this is filled with water at a river or stream, and a small piece is broken out of it with a stone; one of the mourners then takes the pot and walks round the corpse with it, dropping a stream of water all the way. Having done this, he throws the pot behind him over his shoulder without looking round, and then all the mourners go home without looking behind them. The stone with which the hole has been made in the earthen pot is held to represent

[1] *Crotalaria juncea.*

the spirit of the deceased. It is placed under a tree or on the bank of a stream, and for ten days the mourners come and offer it *pindas* or balls of rice, one ball being offered on the first day, two on the second, and so on, up to ten on the tenth. On this last day a little mound of earth is made, which is considered to represent Mahādeo. Four miniature flags are planted round, and three cakes of rice are laid on it; and all the mourners sit round the mound until a crow comes and eats some of the cake. Then they say that the dead man's spirit has been freed from troubling about his household and mundane affairs and has departed to the other world. But if no real crow comes to eat the cake, they make a representation of one out of the sacred *kusha* grass, and touch the cake with it and consider that a crow has eaten it. After this the mourners go to a stream and put a little cow's urine on their bodies, and dip ten times in the water or throw it over them. The officiating Brāhman sprinkles them with holy water in which he has dipped the toe of his right foot, and they present to the Brāhman the vessels in which the funeral cakes have been cooked and the clothes which the chief mourner has worn for ten days. On coming home they also give him a stick, umbrella, shoes, a bed and anything else which they think the dead man will want in the next world. On the thirteenth day they feed the caste-fellows and the head of the caste ties a new *pagri* on the chief mourner's head backside foremost; and the chief mourner breaking an areca-nut on the threshold places it in his mouth and spits it out of the door, signifying the final ejectment of the deceased's spirit from the house. Finally, the chief mourner goes to worship at Māroti's shrine, and the household resumes its ordinary life. The different relatives of the deceased man usually invite the bereaved family to their house for a day and give them a feast, and if they have many relations this may go on for a considerable time. The complete procedure as detailed above is observed only in the case of the head of the household, and for less important members is considerably abbreviated. The position of chief mourner is occupied by a man's eldest son, or in the absence of sons by his younger brother, or failing him by the eldest son of an elder brother, or failing male relations

by the widow. The chief mourner is considered to have a special claim to the property. He has the whole of his head and face shaved, and the hair is tied up in a corner of the grave-cloth. If the widow is chief mourner a small lock of her hair is cut off and tied up in the cloth. When the corpse is being carried out for burial the widow breaks her *mangal-sūtram* or marriage necklace, and wipes off the *kunku* or vermilion from her forehead. This necklace consists of a string of black glass beads with a piece of gold, and is always placed on the bride's neck at the wedding. The widow does not break her glass bangles at all, but on the eleventh day changes them for new ones.

15. Mourning.

The period of mourning for adults of the family is ten days, and for children three, while in the case of distant relatives it is sufficient to take a bath as a mark of respect for them. The male mourners shave their heads, the walls of the house are whitewashed and the floor spread with cow-dung. The chief mourner avoids social intercourse and abstains from ordinary work and from all kinds of amusements. He debars himself from such luxuries as betel-leaf and from visiting his wife. Oblations are offered to the dead on the third day of the light fortnight of Baisākh (June) and on the last day of Bhādrapad (September). The Kunbi is a firm believer in the action of ghosts and spirits, and never omits the attentions due to his ancestors. On the appointed day he diligently calls on the crows, who represent the spirits of ancestors, to come and eat the food which he places ready for them ; and if no crow turns up, he is disturbed at having incurred the displeasure of the dead. He changes the food and goes on calling until a crow comes, and then concludes that their previous failure to appear was due to the fact that his ancestors were not pleased with the kind of food he first offered. In future years, therefore, he changes it, and puts out that which was eaten, until a similar *contretemps* of the non-appearance of crows again occurs. The belief that the spirits of the dead pass into crows is no doubt connected with that of the crow's longevity. Many Hindus think that a crow lives a thousand years, and others that it never dies of disease, but only when killed by violence. Tennyson's 'many-wintered crow' may indicate some similar

idea in Europe. Similarly if the Gonds find a crow's nest they give the nestlings to young children to eat, and think that this will make them long-lived. If a crow perches in the house when a woman's husband or other relative is away, she says, 'Fly away, crow; fly away and I will feed you'; and if the crow then flies away she thinks that the absent one will return. Here the idea is no doubt that if he had been killed his spirit might have come home in the shape of the crow perching on the house. If a married woman sees two crows breeding it is considered a very bad omen, the effect being that her husband will soon die. It is probably supposed that his spirit will pass into the young crow which is born as a result of the meeting which she has seen.

Mr. A. K. Smith states that the omen applies to men also, and relates a story of a young advocate who saw two crows thus engaged on alighting from the train at some station. In order to avert the consequences he ran to the telegraph office and sent messages to all his relatives and friends announcing his own death, the idea being that this fictitious death would fulfil the omen, and the real death would thus become unnecessary. In this case the belief would be that the man's own spirit would pass into the young crow.

16. Religion.

The principal deities of the caste are Māroti or Hanumān, Mahādeo or Siva, Devi, Satwai and Khandoba. Māroti is worshipped principally on Saturdays, so that he may counteract the evil influences exercised by the planet Saturn on that day. When a new village is founded Māroti must first be brought and placed in the village and worshipped, and after this houses are built. The name Māroti is derived from Marut, the Vedic god of the wind, and he is considered to be the son of Vāyu, the wind, and Anjini. Khandoba is an incarnation of Siva as a warrior, and is the favourite deity of the Marāthas. Devi is usually venerated in her incarnation of Marhai Māta, the goddess of smallpox and cholera—the most dreaded scourges of the Hindu villager. They offer goats and fowls to Marhai Devi, cutting the throat of the animal and letting its blood drop over the stone, which represents the goddess; after this they cut off a leg and hang it to the tree above her shrine, and eat the

remainder. Sometimes also they offer wooden images of human beings, which are buried before the shrine of the goddess and are obviously substitutes for a human sacrifice; and the lower castes offer pigs. If a man dies of snake-bite they make a little silver image of a snake, and then kill a real snake, and make a platform outside the village and place the image on it, which is afterwards regularly worshipped as Nāgoba Deo. They may perhaps think that the spirit of the snake which is killed passes into the silver image. Somebody afterwards steals the image, but this does not matter. Similarly if a man is killed by a tiger he is deified and worshipped as Bāghoba Deo, though they cannot kill a tiger as a preliminary. The Kunbis make images of their ancestors in silver or brass, and keep them in a basket with their other household deities. But when these get too numerous they take them on a pilgrimage to some sacred river and deposit them in it. A man who has lost both parents will invite some man and woman on Akshaya Tritiya,[1] and call them by the names of his parents, and give them a feast. Among the mythological stories known to the caste is one of some interest, explaining how the dark spots came on the face of the moon. They say that once all the gods were going to a dinner-party, each riding on his favourite animal or *vāhan* (conveyance). But the *vāhan* of Ganpati, the fat god with the head of an elephant, was a rat, and the rat naturally could not go as fast as the other animals, and as it was very far from being up to Ganpati's weight, it tripped and fell, and Ganpati came off. The moon was looking on, and laughed so much that Ganpati was enraged, and cursed it, saying, 'Thy face shall be black for laughing at me.' Accordingly the moon turned quite black; but the other gods interfered, and said that the curse was too hard, so Ganpati agreed that only a part of the moon's face should be blackened in revenge for the insult. This happened on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of Bhādon (September), and on that day it is said that nobody should look at the moon, as if he does, his reputation will probably be lowered by some false charge or

[1] The 3rd Baisākh (May) Sudi, the commencement of the agricultural year. The name means, 'The day of immortality.'

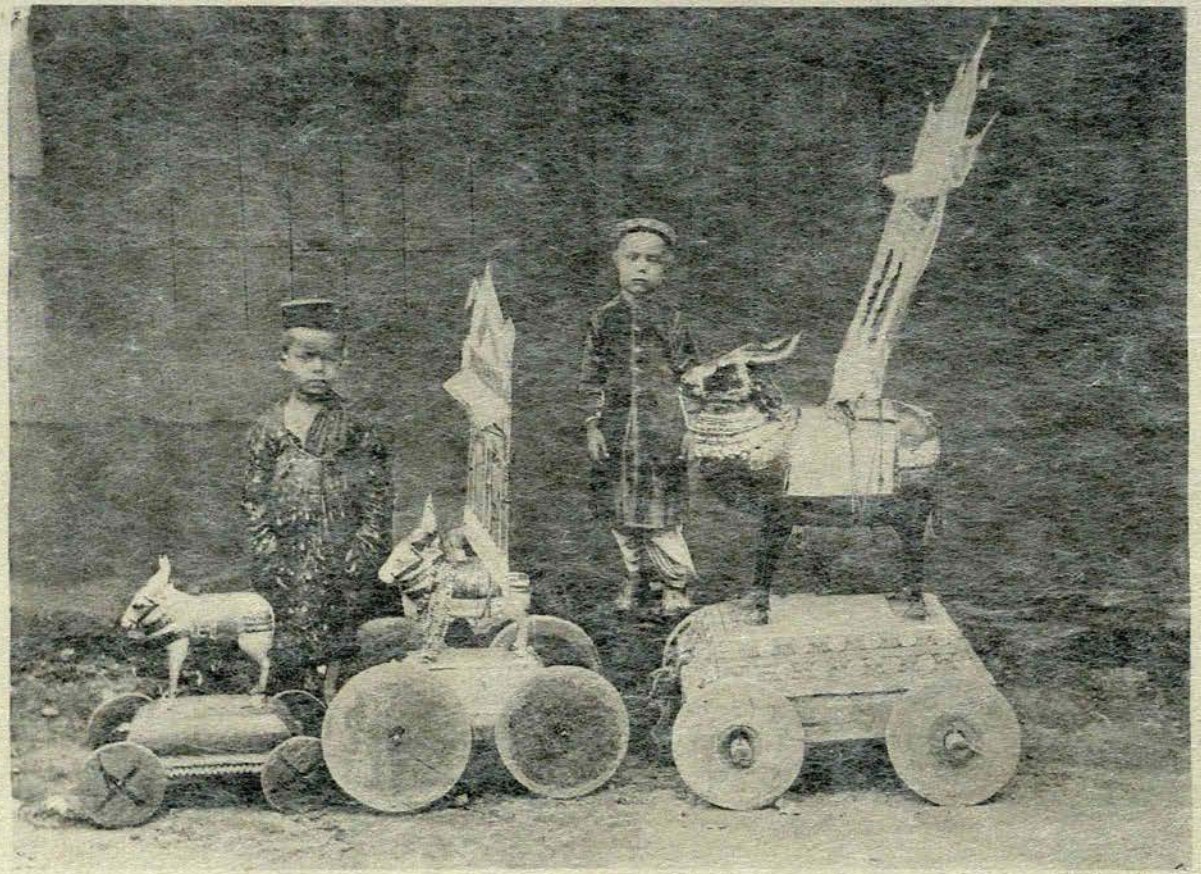
libel being promulgated against him. As already stated, the Kunbi firmly believes in the influence exercised by spirits, and a proverb has it, 'Brāhmans die of indigestion, Sunārs from bile, and Kunbis from ghosts'; because the Brāhman is always feasted as an act of charity and given the best food, so that he over-eats himself, while the Sunār gets bilious from sitting all day before a furnace. When somebody falls ill his family get a Brāhman's cast-off sacred thread, and folding it to hold a little lamp, will wave this to and fro. If it moves in a straight line they say that the patient is possessed by a spirit, but if in a circle that his illness is due to natural causes. In the former case they promise an offering to the spirit to induce it to depart from the patient. The Brāhmans, it is said, try to prevent the Kunbis from getting hold of their sacred threads, because they think that by waving the lamp in them, all the virtue which they have obtained by their repetitions of the Gāyatri or sacred prayer is transferred to the sick Kunbi. They therefore tear up their cast-off threads or sew them into clothes.

17. The Pola festival.

The principal festival of the Kunbis is the Pola, falling at about the middle of the rainy season, when they have a procession of plough-bullocks. An old bullock goes first, and on his horns is tied the *makhar*, a wooden frame with pegs to which torches are affixed. They make a rope of mango-leaves stretched between two posts, and the *makhar* bullock is made to break this and stampede back to the village, followed by all the other cattle. It is said that the *makhar* bullock will die within three years. Behind him come the bullocks of the proprietors and then those of the tenants in the order, not so much of their wealth, but of their standing in the village and of the traditional position held by their families. A Kunbi feels it very bitterly if he is not given what he considers to be his proper rank in this procession. It has often been remarked that the feudal feeling of reverence for hereditary rights and position is as strong among the Marātha people as anywhere in the world.

18. Muhammadan tendencies of Berār Kunbis.

In Wardha and Berār the customs of the Kunbis show in several respects the influence of Islām, due no doubt to the long period of Muhammadan dominance in the country. To this may perhaps be attributed the prevalence of burial



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

FIGURES OF ANIMALS MADE FOR POLA FESTIVAL.

of the dead instead of cremation, the more respectable method according to Hindu ideas. The Dhanoje Kunbis commonly revere Dāwal Mālik, a Muhammadan saint, whose tomb is at Uprai in Amraoti District. An *urus* or fair is held here on Thursdays, the day commonly sacred to Muhammadan saints, and on this account the Kunbis will not be shaved on Thursdays. They also make vows of mendicancy at the Muharram festival, and go round begging for rice and pulse; they give a little of what they obtain to Muhammadan beggars and eat the rest. At the Muharram they tie a red thread on their necks and dance round the *alāwa*, a small hole in which fire is kindled in front of the *tāzias* or tombs of Hussain. At the Muharram[1] they also carry horseshoes of silver or gilt tinsel on the top of a stick decorated with peacock's feathers. The horseshoe is a model of that of the horse of Hussain. The men who carry these horseshoes are supposed to be possessed by the spirit of the saint, and people make prayers to them for anything they want. If one of the horseshoes is dropped the finder will keep it in his house, and next year if he feels that the spirit moves him will carry it himself. In Wardha the Kunbis worship Khwāja Sheikh Farīd of Girar, and occasionally Sheikh Farīd appears to a Kunbi in a dream and places him under a vow. Then he and all his household make little imitation beggars' wallets of cloth and dye them with red ochre, and little hoes on the model of those which saises use to drag out horses' dung, this hoe being the badge of Sheikh Farīd. Then they go round begging to all the houses in the village, saying, '*Dam*,[2] *Sāhib, dam.*' With the alms given them they make cakes of *malīda*, wheat, sugar and butter, and give them to the priest of the shrine. Sometimes Sheikh Farīd tells the Kunbi in the dream that he must buy a goat of a certain Dhangar (shepherd), naming the price, while the Dhangar is similarly warned to sell it at the same price, and the goat is then purchased and sacrificed without any haggling. At the end of the sacrifice the priest releases the Kunbi from his vow, and he must then shave the whole of his head and distribute liquor to the caste-fellows in order to

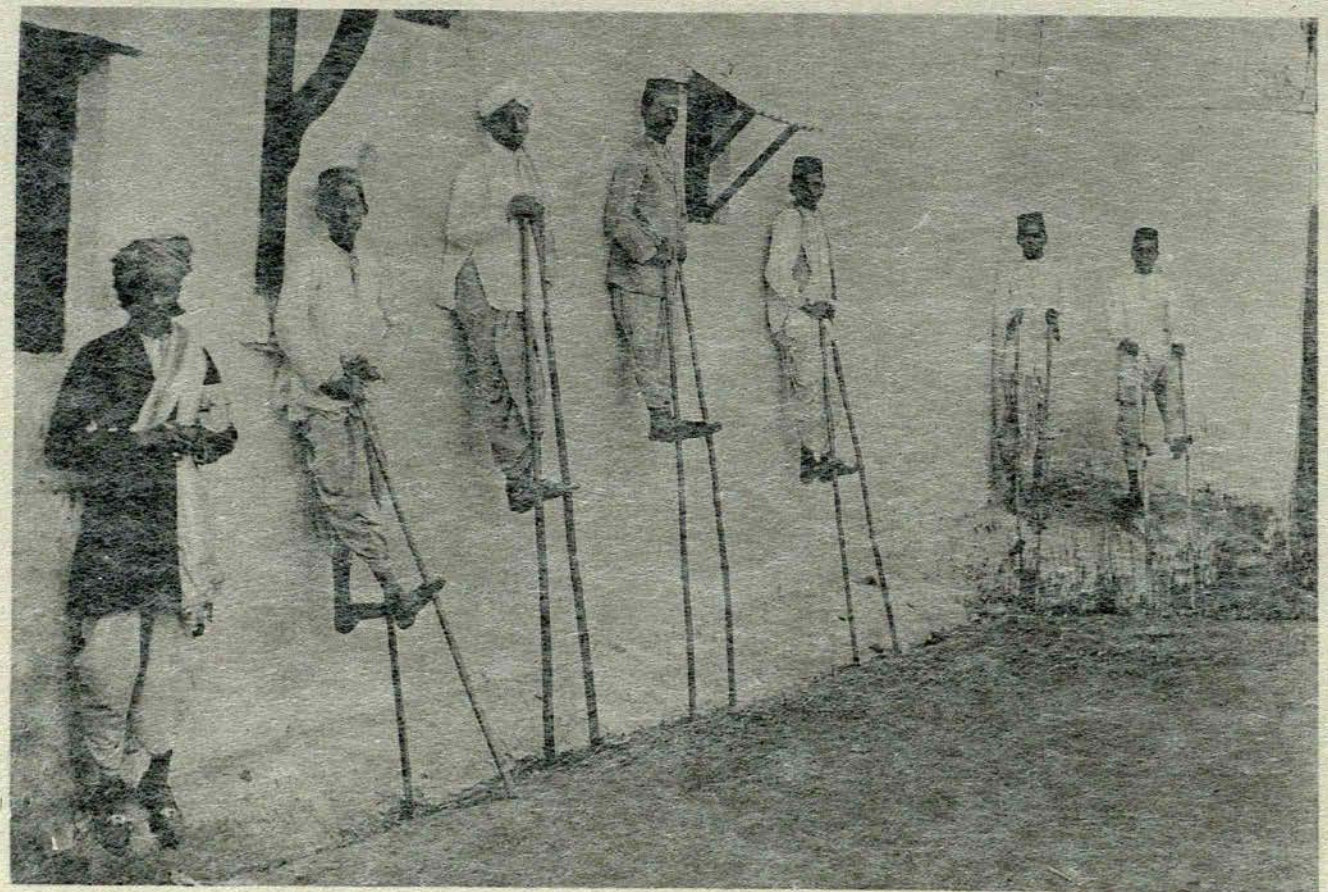
[1] Furnished by Inspector Ganesh Prasād.
[2] *Dam*: breath or life.

be received back into the community. The water of the well at Sheikh Farīd's shrine at Girar is considered to preserve the crops against insects, and for this purpose it is carried to considerable distances to be sprinkled on them.

19. Villages and houses.

An ordinary Kunbi village[1] contains between 70 and 80 houses or some 400 souls. The village generally lies on a slight eminence near a *nullah* or stream, and is often nicely planted with tamarind or pīpal trees. The houses are now generally tiled for fear of fire, and their red roofs may be seen from a distance forming a little cluster on high-lying ground, an elevated site being selected so as to keep the roads fairly dry, as the surface tracks in black-soil country become almost impassable sloughs of mud as soon as the rains have broken. The better houses stand round an old mud fort, a relic of the Pindāri raids, when, on the first alarm of the approach of these marauding bands, the whole population hurried within its walls. The village proprietor's house is now often built inside the fort. It is an oblong building surrounded by a compound wall of unbaked bricks, and with a gateway through which a cart can drive. Adjoining the entrance on each side are rooms for the reception of guests, in which constables, chuprāssies and others are lodged when they stay at night in the village. *Kothas* or sheds for keeping cattle and grain stand against the walls, and the dwelling-house is at the back. Substantial tenants have a house like the proprietor's, of well-laid mud, whitewashed and with tiled roof; but the ordinary cultivator's house is one-roomed, with an *angan* or small yard in front and a little space for a garden behind, in which vegetables are grown during the rains. The walls are of bamboo matting plastered over with mud. The married couples sleep inside, the room being partitioned off if there are two or more in the family, and the older persons sleep in the verandahs. In the middle of the village by the biggest temple will be an old pīpal tree, the trunk encircled by an earthen or stone platform, which answers to the village club. The respectable inhabitants will meet here while the lower classes go to the liquor-shop nearly every

[1] These paragraphs are largely based on a description of a Wardha village by Mr. A. K. Smith, C.S.



Benrose, Collo., Derby.

HINDU BOYS ON STILTS.

night to smoke and chat. The blacksmith's and carpenter's shops are also places of common resort for the cultivators. Hither they wend in the morning and evening, often taking with them some implement which has to be mended, and stay to talk. The blacksmith in particular is said to be a great gossip, and will often waste much of his customer's time, plying him for news and retailing it, before he repairs and hands back the tool brought to him. The village is sure to contain two or three little temples of Māroti or Mahādeo. The stones which do duty for the images are daily oiled with butter or *ghī*, and a miscellaneous store of offerings will accumulate round the buildings. Outside the village will be a temple of Devi or Māta Mai (Smallpox Goddess) with a heap of little earthen horses and a string of hens' feet and feathers hung up on the wall. The little platforms which are the shrines of the other village gods will be found in the fields or near groves. In the evening the elders often meet at Māroti's temple and pay their respects to the deity, bowing or prostrating themselves before him. A lamp before the temple is fed by contributions of oil from the women, and is kept burning usually up to midnight. Once a year in the month of Shrāwan (July) the villagers subscribe and have a feast, the Kunbis eating first and the menial and labouring castes after them. In this month also all the village deities are worshipped by the Joshi or priest and the villagers. In summer the cultivators usually live in their fields, where they erect temporary sheds of bamboo matting roofed with juāri stalks. In these most of the household furniture is stored, while at a little distance in another funnel-shaped erection of bamboo matting is kept the owner's grain. This system of camping out is mainly adopted for fear of fire in the village, when the cultivator's whole stock of grain and his household goods might be destroyed in a few minutes without possibility of saving them. The women stay in the village, and the men and boys go there for their midday and evening meals.

20. Furniture.

Ordinary cultivators have earthen pots for cooking purposes and brass ones for eating from, while the well-to-do have all their vessels of brass. The furniture consists of a few stools and cots. No Kunbi will lie on the ground,